

First Rwanda evacuees due in Paris on Sunday night

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PARIS, April 10 (AFP) - The first group of French nationals from war-torn Rwanda are due to arrive here Sunday night, the foreign ministry said, as France consolidated its airlift out of the central African country.

Ministry spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said the group was due to arrive at 11:30 p.m. (2130 GMT) and would be met at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport by ministry officials.

Meanwhile further groups of French expatriates left the Rwandan capital Kigali by air Sunday afternoon under the protection of French soldiers, said the director of the city's French school.

The operation was taking place under good conditions and "should be speeded up during the afternoon," said Alain Pierron, contacted from Paris by telephone.

By midday, some 80 expatriates had left the school, where around 150 people were gathered, he said, adding

that in all around 200 French nationals had been evacuated since the airlift began Saturday.

Almost 500 French soldiers arrived in Kigali by Sunday to ensure the safe evacuation of the 600-odd French citizens in Rwanda, where more than 1,000 people have been killed since Thursday in ethnic blood-letting.

France has put five Transall transport planes into service to carry out the evacuations as rapidly as possible, the French cooperation ministry stated on Sunday.

Those leaving by air are being ferried in a shuttle service to the Central African Republic capital Bangui.

"They feel reassured when they arrive here, as the school is well protected by the French army," said Pierron.

"They feel relief at being among (the soldiers) after spending several days trapped in their own homes ...

surrounded by gunfire.”

Pierron added that Kigali was relatively calm Sunday, apart from the sound of sporadic automatic gunfire, as the commander of Belgian UN forces in Rwanda reported a ceasefire agreement between rebels and gov-

ernment troops.

Separately in London, the Foreign Office said it had advised British nationals in Rwanda in a broadcast on the BBC World Service to leave the country via Kigali airport.

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