

Murdered minister buried as fragile truce holds

AFP, February 24, 1994

KIGALI, Feb 24 (AFP) - A murdered Rwandan government minister was buried Thursday as a fragile truce held after tribal clashes that left at least 30 people dead and 150 wounded.

The late public works minister, Felicien Gatabazi, who was gunned down here on Monday by unidentified attackers, was buried in his home village near Butare in the south of the country.

His assassination had led to the postponing of a bid to form a broad-based government for the central African nation wracked by ethnic strife, under an peace agreement with rebels of the Tutsi minority.

Most of the injured in days of tribal fighting in Kigali had been struck with pangas (machetes) or sticks, relief agency officials said.

After its first peaceful night this week, Kigali was "halfway back to normal," residents said, as traffic picked up, stores reopened and people gradually went back to work.

The transitional government, in which former rebels of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) are to have portfolios, was to have been sworn in Wednesday, with a new parliament.

But several political parties boycotted the ceremony, complaining that President Juvenal Habyarimana, Rwanda's formerly military ruler, had been arbitrary in his choice of ministers and deputies.

The day after the murder of Gatabazi, a Hutu from the south, an angry mob in Butare lynched hard-line Hutu politician Martin Bucyana, blaming his movement for the minister's assassination.

Rwanda has been ruled by Hutus from the north and Bucyana's party has opposed any power-sharing with the Tutsis, the historical overlords of the small highland nation.

Both current Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana and her successor-designate, Faustin Twagiramungu, were present at funeral ceremonies for Gatabazi, but Hab-

yarimana was represented by a senior aide.

The president has called a meeting among political party leaders for Friday in a bid to end the crisis in Rwanda, but Twagiramungu described this move as "useless".

"I don't think he (Habyarimana) has the right to call such a meeting,

which will lead us nowhere," Twagiramungu said.

The FPR, which signed the peace pact ending three years of civil war last August, has warned that it will "not remain doing nothing" in the face of what it described as "terrorism" by Habyarimana.

mgu-at/nb