

Parliamentary speaker sues opposition for slander

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BUJUMBURA, Dec 14 (AFP) - The speaker of Burundi's parliament, Jean Minani, on Wednesday said he had sued the main opposition party, which has accused him of inciting massacres of the country's Tutsi minority last year.

"The suit has been filed," Minani confirmed to AFP after announcing his decision in a broadcast late Tuesday. "I am innocent."

The Union for National Progress (UPRONA), dominated by Tutsis, has called for the resignation of Minani, a Hutu member of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU). He was elected national assembly speaker on December 1.

UPRONA has threatened to withdraw from a coalition government, formed in a bid to stave off ethnic bloodshed, and accused Minani of inciting Hutus to slaughter Tutsis after a coup bid by the Tutsi-dominated army in October 1993, in which Bu-

rundi's first Hutu president Melchior Ndadaye, was slain.

The government survived, but some 50,000 people lost their lives in a wave of carnage that swept the central African highland nation, which has frequently seen major bloodletting between Tutsis and Hutus, as in neighbouring Rwanda.

At the time of the coup attempt, Minani was in the Rwandan capital Kigali and he spoke on Radio Rwanda and the Hutu extremist station, Radio Mille Collines. His opponents say he called for the killing of Tutsis.

But Minani stated that he simply called on his compatriots to resist the coup plotters.

UPRONA's executive committee on Wednesday decided to give Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko, who is himself a member of the party, a date limit to resign, UPRONA vice-president Leonidas Ndoricimpa said.

He did not say what that limit

was. UPRONA has already called on the premier to resign but Kanyenki-ko has refused to bow to the demands of his party without holding further consultations.

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