

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA

Formerly Africa Watch

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For immediate release

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Yesterday's decision by the Security Council to reduce the number of UN soldiers in Rwanda to a skeleton force of 270 will abandon some 20,000 to 25,000 Rwandan citizens, who have directly placed themselves under UN protection, to almost certain death. The mass slaughter being carried out by the presidential guard and government-trained militias is now directed almost exclusively at members of the Tutsi minority group, and amounts to a campaign of genocide. Most of those who are currently being protected by the soldiers of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) are Tutsis; to take away their protection contravenes the special duty of the international community to "prevent and punish" the crime of genocide.

Human Rights Watch calls on the Security Council to reconsider its decision. The UNAMIR forces remaining in Rwanda must not be reduced. The skeleton force now envisioned by the Security Council is a virtual invitation to slaughter those who have up to now enjoyed some protection from the presence of international troops. If the UN persists in its misguided decision to reduce the number of troops, it has a duty at minimum to ensure the protection of those Rwandans currently under its protection by some other means, whether by evacuating them or otherwise.



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