

Red Cross official calls Burundi's war "medieval"

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BUJUMBURA, Oct 29 (AFP) - A "medieval" civil war is raging in Burundi, a top Red Cross official said here Friday as neighbouring heads of government called for the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force to stop the bloodletting.

"Farms and houses are burning, cattle have been slaughtered," Philippe Gaillard of the International Committee of the Red Cross told AFP.

"It is a medieval civil war," he said. "People are fighting with stones, spears, clubs, and the army with much more effective weapons."

The violence between the minority Tutsi tribe, which dominates the army that killed President Melchior Ndadaye in last week's coup, and the majority Hutu tribe, to which Ndadaye belonged, had spiralled into an

unending cycle of vengeance killing, Gaillard said.

Gaillard estimated the death toll to be in the thousands if not tens of thousands.

In Kigali, capital of neighbouring Rwanda, President Juvenal Habyarimana, Tanzanian Prime Minister John Malecela, Zairean Prime Minister Fautsin Birindwa and the Organisation of African Unity Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim urged the immediate deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force in Burundi.

Such a force, to be drawn largely from African states, should be mandated to restore security and public confidence to the central African nation, the heads of government said in a statement.

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