

Relief supplies for northern Rwanda to start moving again from Uganda

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KAMPALA, Jan 6 (AFP) - Relief supplies for 350,000 war-displaced, famine-stricken people in northern Rwanda will start flowing again on Thursday following an agreement between the Rwandan government and Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels, relief officials said here Wednesday.

The officials said the two sides had agreed to allow food convoys safe passage from Uganda into Rwanda.

A wrangle between the two sides stopped efforts by relief agencies two weeks ago to deliver badly needed food to victims of the 25-month-old armed conflict now living in some 18 refugee camps in the north of the country.

"The dispute is over, the first consignment of 660 tonnes would leave Thursday", International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation leader in Uganda, Francis Junod, told AFP on telephone.

It is understood that the agreement came only after strong United Nations pressure on both the Rwandan government and the RPF rebels, urging the two combatants to reach a quick settlement to allow safe passage for the food convoys.

The ICRC held closed door talks on Wednesday morning with U.N. officials in the Ugandan capital, informed sources here said.

The conflict in the tiny former Belgian colony of six million people started in October 1990 when Rwandan refugees living in Uganda, most of whom were minority Tutsis serving in the Ugandan army, absconded with their arms and invaded their in an attempt to topple the Hutu-dominated regime in Kigali.

Relief officials have warned that the population in northern Rwanda could face starvation in a couple of days if food did not reach them on time.

ICRC is leading efforts to deliver 16,000 tonnes of food affected region in the next two to three months, 10,000 tonnes of which has been bought in Uganda.

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