

Rwandan government appeals for calm following Burundi coup

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KIGALI, Oct 24 (AFP) - The Rwandan government, fearing an outbreak of tribal violence after the coup in neighbouring Burundi, Sunday urged its citizens not "to be dragged into ethnic conflict," at a time when a peace accord was being implemented there.

Events in Burundi "must not affect" a peace agreement signed with rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) in Tanzania in August, the cabinet said in a statement after meeting late Saturday.

Rebel soldiers Thursday overthrew President Melchior Ndadaye, Burundi's first head of state from the majority Hutu people.

Burundi's previous rulers came from the minority Tutsi ethnic group.

The ministers said the coup in Burundi must not be used as a pretext to hinder the Rwandan peace accord between the government and mainly

Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front rebels who waged a three-year war against the Hutu-dominated government of President Juvenal Habyarimana.

They called for an end to the "massacre of innocent civilians" in Burundi and urged Rwandans to assist refugees arriving in the country.

Rwandan radio reporters said Saturday some 200 corpses of people presumably killed during the coup were lying around river Akanyaru.

"The cabinet urges all Rwandans to avoid falling into the trap of the enemies of peace and democracy by being dragged into troubles of an ethnic nature," the ministers added.

Rwanda and Burundi have a history of murderous outbreaks of strife between Hutu and Tutsi people. Both communities inhabit the densely populated, highland central African countries.

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