

# Rwandan refugee camps in crisis

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BUKAVU, Zaire, Feb 16 (AFP) - Six months after their exodus from inter-ethnic killing, Rwandan refugees in camps here in eastern Zaire are in a parlous state.

Food rations are meagre, wood for cooking is scarce, their clothes are fraying and there is mud everywhere.

The only viable solution is the return of the refugees to Rwanda, as UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata pointed out in a weekend visit to camps at Inera, Kashusha and Kibumba.

Ogata, who is attending a conference this week in Bujumbura on central Africa's 3.8 million refugees, said she hoped the situation would not last long and that repatriation could take place as and when security was restored in Rwanda.

As she spoke, some refugees held up banners stating "We are ordinary refugees," "No perpetrator of genocide in the camp."

Evidence either of collective amnesia or shameless propaganda, the

slogans coined by the camp chiefs neatly illustrated the dilemma of the relief agencies: they are feeding and treating innocent refugees but among the camp inmates are also the killers responsible for the massacre of more than 500,000 people last year and the flight of several million.

UNHCR station chief Patrick de Sousa said "We do not have the necessary resources to keep all these refugees here."

The main problem was firewood. Bukavu is fertile and well stocked with trees, but so many have been cut down that the Zairean authorities have raised the alarm about ecological damage, so wood has to be brought in from further afield.

"We are going to need one million dollars a month just for firewood, a logistical nightmare," de Sousa said.

Food supplies are erratic, and last month the daily ration which is supposed to be about 2,000 kilo-calories fell to 1,350. The World Food Programme, warning of riots and famine,

has issued a fresh emergency appeal for help in feeding nearly three million refugees and displaced persons. The 21 camps in this area house 350,000 refugees, and there are more than 800,000 in camps at Goma north of Lake Kivu.

So close to the border with Rwanda, they represent a big security risk. Last month former soldiers and militiamen launched an attack on Rwandan territory from Idjwi island north of here. There has been talk of moving the camps deeper into Zaire, "but that would be an enormous task," Ogata noted.

Meanwhile the first contingent of a planned 1,500 Zairean soldiers hired by the UNHCR to ensure camp security took up position several hundred metres (yards) from the Kibumba camp at an official ceremony on Sunday attended by Ogata and Zaire's deputy prime minister in charge of defence, Admiral Mavua Mudima.

The UNHCR is paying them three dollars a day and has provided the force with brand new tents and uniforms. Their mission is to protect refugees threatened by members of

the notorious Hutu "interahamwe" militia who led the slaughter of Tutsi last year and now intimidate fellow Hutu thinking of going back home. The Zairean force is also to guard aid workers, generally ensure law and order, and help repatriation to go smoothly.

Admiral Mudima told the first contingent of 150 men that the refugees were "not enemies but brothers and sisters in distress", and he asked them to uphold the honour of the army "which international opinion is always criticising."

Zaire's troops have an unenviable reputation for looting, and when refugees poured into the country last July, the soldiers invented all sorts of taxes for them to pay to the military.

It is the UNHCR's hope that by paying the special force, which is drawn from crack units, and having it officered by military advisers of different nationalities, the soldiers will resist the temptation to revert to bad habits.

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