

Rwanda's neighbours challenge Kigali on reconciliation

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NAIROBI, 8 Jan (AFP) - Rwanda's neighbours have turned up pressure on the new Rwandan government, calling at a summit here for it to co-opt members of the ousted administration accused of organising last year's bloody massacres.

The leaders of seven central and eastern African countries including Rwanda met Saturday, and pressed the new regime in Kigali to introduce members of the ousted National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRND) into its administration.

The appeal apparently annoyed the Rwandan delegation which sees such a move as being an invitation to co-opt genocidal killers, rather than politicians, into their ranks.

At the end of the closed-session summit at Kenya's State House, delegation leader President Pasteur Bizimungu appeared in a corridor, scolding Zairean Prime Minister Kengo wa

Dondo over the call.

"You ask us to establish peace and democracy, but you haven't got them yourselves," a clearly angry Bizimungu protested.

The senior members of the MRND, set up by the late president Juvenal Habyarimana, are accused by the new authorities of having deliberately organised the massacre of Hutu opponents of the old regime and the attempted genocide of the minority Tutsi population.

After Habyarimana was killed on April 6 last year in a suspected rocket attack on his plane as it neared Kigali airport, at least 500,000 people were killed in a series of apparently coordinated killings across the country.

When the massacres started, the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front, led mainly by people from the minority Tutsi community, surged down from the north and forced troops and militias loyal to the old regime into flight,

sending with them hundreds of thousands of mainly Hutu refugees.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, more than two million Rwandas are still refugees with 1.2 million in Zaire, close to 600,000 in Tanzania, 260,000 in Burundi and 10,000 in Uganda.

The international community is aware of the risks of a sudden flare-up in fighting with such a mass of displaced people, who include former militiamen and government army soldiers who have been agitating in the refugee camps, threatening a return to war and stopping some refugees from returning home.

The Rwandans privately question the willingness of the Zaireans to stop the "agitators" from leaving and their scepticism was boosted by the absence from Nairobi Saturday of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko.

The six other countries present, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia were all represented by their presidents.

The final communique issued by the summit included a number of proposals supported by the Rwandan government.

The summit supported the creation by the UN of an International Criminal Tribunal to judge those responsible for the genocide and

supported the separation within the refugee camps of the "perpetrators" and innocent refugees.

The idea is not new but so far no UN member country has been willing to send its troops into the camps, notably in Zaire, to force the soldiers and militiamen thought responsible to leave.

The summit also called for the creation of "safe corridors" leaving from the camps to the Rwandan border and through into the country itself in order to convince refugees they would be safe to return.

It called for more UN support, in particular the sending of more human rights observer in the field.

The summit also demanded increased financial assistance to the severely cash-strapped Rwandan government.

Several governments, including France, have been accused of holding up the sending of financial aid while Kigali complains that without that aid it will not be able to reconstruct its ravaged country and operate a fair justice system as called for by the world.

Another regional conference is scheduled for next month in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi.

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