

# Security Council gets briefing amid fears for UN Congo mission

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AFP, September 9, 1997

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 9 (AFP) - The UN High Commissioner for Refugees was to update the UN Security Council on the Democratic Republic of Congo on Tuesday amid fears that a UN investigation into massacres could face further obstacles.

Human rights and UN sources said that despite President Laurent Kabila's written assurances to UN chief Kofi Annan that the inquiry can proceed without conditions, the UN team can expect new obstacles to be raised.

"Let's accept the (Kabila) letter at face value," UN spokesman Fred Eckhard insisted Monday. "Let's not assume conspiracies to obstruct justice."

But another UN source told AFP that "at every step, there'll be obstacles" and it is generally believed here that Kabila's Democratic Republic of Congo government does not

want the inquiry into the massacres in ex-Zaire to go ahead.

In addition to incriminating Kabila's Tutsi-led forces for killing mainly Hutu Rwandan refugees during a seven-month offensive, the UN investigators could also point the finger at his sponsors in Rwanda, western diplomats say.

Western diplomats note the expulsion of 780 Rwandan and Burundian refugees from a camp near Kisangani in the northeast just before Kabila confirmed that the UN team could start travelling to alleged massacre sites.

"One could suspect that potential witnesses have been got out of the way," one source said.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, is expected to brief the 15-member Security Council on the expulsions which she has described as a blatant violation of international law.

She is in New York to receive a medal on Tuesday from the Business Council for the UN, awarded annually to an individual or organisation for commitment to the ideals of the UN Charter.

UNHCR representative in New York Soren Jessen-Petersen noted that the expelled groups, who were being interviewed by humanitarian workers before their expulsion, had made it clear that they did not wish to return to their home countries.

Human Rights Watch official Joanna Weschler said Monday that "it is very important, and very good, that the Security Council is monitoring the situation" concerning the UN team.

Weschler said the coming week would be a "test period" to see whether the investigation proceeds without hindrance.

However officials noted that the UN team led by a Togolese jurist was unlikely to travel to eastern Congo initially because of a renewed out-

break of fighting in the border region.

Several sources expressed concern Monday that Annan's decision to yield to Kabila by naming a new team leader had seriously endangered the UN mission's credibility.

But Eckhard said that "the government's terms are that it should not take place at all."

"As long as the mission can dig up some part of what went on, then that's a plus for the United Nations and international human rights."

He also noted that the team may find proof that evidence had been tampered with, and would report back on that.

Human rights groups fear that crucial evidence could have been destroyed in the months that the United Nations has attempted to break down Kabila's systematic blockage of a UN investigation.

The massacre reports first surfaced in April.

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