

UNHCR to assess conditions of repatriated refugees in Rwanda

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GENEVA, Sept 25 (AFP) - The UN refugee agency plans a mission to evaluate the fate of repatriated refugees in Rwanda, after Amnesty International reported that 6,000 civilians had been killed in the country this year, the agency said Thursday.

The mission, which will arrive in Kigali on Friday, is the personal initiative of UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata, the UNHCR said in a communique.

"We share Amnesty International's concerns about the level of violence which exists in certain parts of Rwanda to which refugees are returning," the statement said.

Ogata has had consultations with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Great Lakes region governments to discuss the "crisis of protection" in the region, the UNHCR said.

Amnesty said in a report issued Thursday that 6,000 mostly unarmed

civilians had been killed in Rwanda between January and August this year, adding that "many unreported deaths mean that the real figure may be considerably higher."

The human rights group said that refugees returning to Rwanda "are suffering in silence, their fate largely ignored by the outside world."

Amnesty expressed concern that neighboring governments continue to repatriate Hutu refugees to Rwanda who had been among more than a million Hutus who fled the country for fear of reprisals after the 1994 slaughter of up to 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Some of those who have been killed this year were forcibly repatriated, Amnesty said, adding that "no government should be forcibly repatriating refugees to Rwanda."

The UNHCR on September 10 suspended its operations for Rwandan refugees in the neighboring De-

mocratic Republic of Congo to protest the alleged forced repatriation of several hundred refugees.

The UNHCR evaluation team will "reassess the overall conditions for return and to re-evaluate with our UN and NGO partners the security situation in some parts of the country,"

the statement said.

Despite the dangers in Rwanda, "the risks to Rwandan refugees in some countries still outweigh any problems they might face upon their return," the UNHCR said.

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