

# Bujumbura [At least 15 people died as Hutu and Tutsi militias fought]

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BUJUMBURA, Dec 21 (AFP) - At least 15 people died as Hutu and Tutsi militias fought in the streets of Bujumbura Tuesday, and the Burundi capital was paralyzed Wednesday as sporadic shooting continued.

Tension between the tribes is at flashpoint, raising fears that Burundi may plunge into a savage civil war like that which left between 500,000 and a million dead in its northern neighbour, Rwanda, where the ethnic mix is identical - 85 percent Hutu and 14 percent Tutsi.

That war broke out after the presidents of both countries were killed when their plane was shot down over Kigali on April 6.

Witnesses saw two bodies still lying in Bujumbura streets Wednesday, and said several houses had been pillaged in Bwiza, a mixed neighbourhood.

Communications Minister Germain Nkeshimana told AFP that

"around 15" people had been killed round the central market, and that an unknown number of others were killed in the Bwiza district of Bujumbura.

Public transport was halted Wednesday, shops remained closed, and most people stayed in their homes.

Witnesses said the violence started with a revenge attack by Tutsis who killed several Hutus suspected of the murder on Sunday of about 10 inhabitants of the capital's southern district of Musaga, a Tutsi neighbourhood.

The killers who went into Musaga decapitated one man and ripped his heart out.

They were suspected of being partisans of former interior minister Leonard Nyangoma, a Hutu fiercely opposed to sharing power with the Tutsis who is living in exile in Zaire, where he has created the National Council for the Defence of Democra-

cy, a political party with its own military wing.

The fighting came amid political instability created by an opposition demand for the resignation of the speaker of the national assembly, Jean Minani, a Hutu accused of inciting violence against the Tutsis.

Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko's Tutsi-dominated Union for National Progress Party has threatened to leave the government – set up last October after complex political negotiations – if Minani remains in office.

The prime minister's party has accused Minani of having urged Hutus to kill Tutsis following the assassination of Hutu President Melchior Ndaye in October 1993.

Some 50,000 Burundians were killed in the ethnic violence that followed that assassination.

The Organisation of African Uni-

ty, preoccupied by "insecurity, violence, murders and massacres," decided on December 14 to prolong the mandate of its 47-officer observer mission in Burundi. The role of the mission, set up at the start of the year, includes confidence-building among Burundi's population.

Analysts see that as an impossible task, with an average of one massacre a week in northern Burundi alone, with 20, 30 or 50 people hacked to death with machetes, shot, or blown apart by grenades, amid tensions exacerbated by the presence of more than 200,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees.

Pierre Buyoya, president of Burundi from 1987 until July 1993, warned on December 8 that the violence had reached a level where the country risked plunging into all-out civil war.

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