

Rwanda president's widow urged to help stop killings

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UNITED NATIONS, April 25 (Reuter) - Human Rights Watch, a prominent rights organisation, appealed Monday to the widow of Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana to use her influence with military commanders to halt the massacre of tens of thousands of her countrymen.

She fled to Paris with several relatives when the slaughter began, after her husband and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of neighbouring Burundi were killed April 6 when their plane was brought down as it was landing in Kigali.

Human Rights Watch, in a letter to Mrs Habyarimana, said that in view of her "enormous prestige" with such officers as army commander Augustin Bizimungu, the head of the presidential guard and other military leaders, a strong public appeal from her would have "great effect in ending the massacres."

The letter cited eyewitness accounts from hundreds of sources as establishing without any doubt that members of the presidential guard, the regular army and party militias were responsible for the slaughter.

It said these killings were completely separate from any combat with the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front and were taking place where there was absolutely no military conflict.

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