

Rwandan refugees see killers in their midst

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BENACO CAMP, Tanzania, May 9 (Reuter) - "I've seen him. He is here," the Rwandan youth said. He had spotted a man at a relief camp on Monday who last month led executions of hundreds in his home village.

Most of the 193,000 Rwandans who spilled across the frontier into western Tanzania late last month appear to be Hutu civilians running from Tutsi guerillas advancing against government forces, camp inmates and aid workers say.

But among them, refugees say, are former members of Hutu militias which butchered countless thousands from the minority Tutsi tribe.

They also slaughtered Hutu opposition party supporters in an orgy of killing that began after president Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a mysterious rocket attack on his plane on April 6.

"There are people amongst them who are killers. It's a fact. When they cross they don't have arms with them and they are civilians," said one United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official.

Some refugees say they have recognised militia members and their leaders moving freely about the camp in gangs or with their families and accuse them of stealing food aid being distributed to refugees.

They allegedly include Jean-Baptiste Gatete, district chief of Murambi in eastern Rwanda, who has been mentioned in past human rights reports as being behind the massacre of Tutsis.

"Gatete was killing anybody who wasn't MRND (Habyarimana's party)...He killed many people," said one half-Hutu, half-Tutsi refugee from Murambi who said three of his cousins had been killed by Interahamwe last month.

The refugee said Gatete moved about the camp with Interahamwe members, including their leader Nkundabazungu who allegedly distributed grenades to militias who attacked local churches where hundreds of people had taken refuge.

"Interahamwe" - "Those who Attack Together" - was the militia of the MRND party. Members of "Impuzamugambi" - "Those who Come Together" - of the hardline Hutu Coalition for the Defence of the Republic (CDR) are also in the camp, refugees say.

Outside one hut pointed out as the makeshift home of a militia chief, a man denied he was a member but said Interahamwe was simply a youth movement and had not killed anybody.

When asked why Tutsis had been killed in Murambi he said : "This was to defend the Hutu."

Only about 5,000 of the refugees are Tutsis. Dozens of them trickle back daily across Rusomo bridge to territory held by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF). The rest are Hutus, says the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

Piles of machetes, clubs with nails driven into them, army helmets and boots were abandoned on both sides of the border at Rusomo Falls.

Identity cards also litter the border post, suggesting some refugees did not want to be known by their real names.

Inside Rwanda, the documents are a matter of life or death. Ethnic groups are marked on the cards and militias routinely check them at roadblocks, Rwandans say.

Jealousy and greed appear to have motivated the militia leaders' brutality as much as tribal hatreds.

Charlotte Sautux, a Swiss citizen, told Reuters in the eastern town Gahini that Habyarimana's militias had mounted roadblocks before the recent violence started and once threatened to beat her for not paying them off.

"They always wanted money," she said.

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