

# Rwanda Relief Workers Fear Cholera Epidemic

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Exhausted relief workers fear they are seeing the start of a severe cholera epidemic among the one million Rwandan refugees here, who are already dying in droves.

At a place called Munigi, a few miles north of this border town, where at least 200,000 refugees have camped, medical workers today were administering their sparse supplies of intravenous solution to scores of men, women and children lying on the ground who had been diagnosed as having cholera.

Dr. Jacques de Milliano, president of Doctors Without Borders, whose staff was treating the sick at Munigi, predicted an outbreak of 10,000 to 20,000 cases and said at least half of those who contracted the disease would die. The first cases of what he had diagnosed as cholera appeared on Tuesday, he said. Blood samples have been sent to Paris for testing.

“Ethically, you have to consider it cholera,” Dr. de Milliano said. “We cannot wait for laboratory tests when

people are dying like flies.”

A highly communicable disease, cholera is a serious form of bacterial dysentery that results in vomiting and diarrhea and potentially fatal dehydration. It spreads quickly in crowded, unsanitary conditions like those in the encampments here, where tens of thousands of people are crowded into small spaces, with no latrines and no clean water. To treat a serious outbreak, fresh water or rehydration solution is necessary immediately. Dr. de Milliano said that up to two million gallons of water would be needed daily. This is in addition to the more than one million gallons of water that relief workers here had already said were needed. Today, about 50,000 gallons of water arrived.

Dr. de Milliano said also that 60,000 liters of intravenous fluid (a liter is slightly larger than a quart) would be needed every day. To bring in that much would require three huge Hercules cargo planes working around the clock loaded with nothing

but intravenous fluid, he said. He also said there was an urgent need for medical teams, field hospitals and vehicles.

Dr. de Milliano said he feared that efforts to treat a widespread outbreak of cholera would fail, given the demands already being placed on the relief community here.

Dr. de Milliano said that on Tuesday a child was examined and suspected of having measles. "If it is measles, thousands of children will die," he said.

Hundreds of refugees have died already, from a variety of causes. There were 13 bodies lying on the half-mile-long road that runs from the center of Goma, past the Gran Lac Hotel to Lake Kivu. Beside a low evergreen hedge on the road to the airport, 31 bodies were waiting to be picked up. The effort to dispose of the dead has overwhelmed the Zairians, so French soldiers come by in trucks to pick up the bodies for burial.

The dead were everywhere on the volcanic rocks, lying where they dropped : a woman and son who had died together ; a lone young man ; two young men, one maybe 15, without any clothes, the other perhaps in his 30's ; a woman.

A baby lay a few feet away. She was alive, but it was hard to imagine she could survive for long. Elsewhere there was a nine-month-old curled up on the rocks, sucking her thumb. She

was alone. So were many other emaciated children.

Many of the living were on the verge of death, and some died while a reporter was in the camp.

## Agencies 'Were Ill Prepared'

At present, less than 10 percent of what is needed to provide food and shelter for the refugees is coming in, said Panos Moutziz, a spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "It is really appalling," he said. "All the humanitarian agencies were really ill-prepared to respond to a crisis of such magnitude." The relief effort has also been hampered by conflicts between the French military and the relief organizations over access to the airport, and by an inadequate response from the international community in terms of money and supplies. Today, 19 relief flights arrived, the most that have landed in a single day since the refugee crisis began.

Although the influx of refugees has stopped in this area, it continues 70 miles south of here, around the Zairian town of Bukavu. In the last 48 hours, 400,000 refugees have fled into the Bukavu area from southwestern Rwanda, where the French have established a safe haven. There are at

least one million more on the road toward Zaire, Mr. Moutzis said.

Mr. Moutzis said that the refugee crisis in the south was caused by broadcasts over a radio station operated by partisans of the former Government, which was dominated by members of the Hutu tribe. He said that as recently as Monday the station was telling Hutu to flee the French zone because the station claimed the French would no longer protect them from the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the Tutsi-dominated rebel army which has declared a new Government.

"We can just tinker around the edges," said Osei Kofi, a spokesman for Unicef here. "Where else in the world did you get one million refugees in five days?" Mr. Kofi said.

"We need an Ethiopia-type operation," he said, referring to the international response to the famine there in 1984. "We need the Royal Air Force, the Canadian Air Force, the Australian Air Force." He said these organizations could not only bring in needed supplies but that they could also distribute them and provide medical assistance, as they had done in Ethiopia.

Relief agencies continued to plead for a political response to the refugee crisis. Before, that meant stopping the war. Now, it means stopping broadcasts of the former government radio station, but even more, it re-

quires creating the conditions inside Rwanda so that the refugees, most of whom are Hutu, will feel it is safe to go home. "This is a humanitarian crisis without any humanitarian solution," Dr. de Milliano said. "There has to be a political solution." He added his voice to those who have been calling for a substantial United Nations force to be sent to Rwanda to ensure protection for the refugees.

Standing alongside the row of bodies on the airport road, 24-year-old Emmanuel Twagiramungu, said, "They have died from hunger, and we will too." He said he would like to go home. A crowd of refugees who had gathered agreed. But, he said, "We need U.N. soldiers to protect us." At Munigi, where the suspected cholera cases were being treated, Dancilla Mukandutiye stood near a blanket that covered the body of her 12-year-old daughter. The girl had become sick on Tuesday, and her father had brought her here today for treatment. When they arrived, the girl died, said Mr. Mukandutiye. A few feet away was the body of a dead woman. No one around knew who she was.

Mrs. Mukandutiye is seven months pregnant, but she doesn't know if the baby is still alive. She last felt it kick six days ago, the day she fled her village.

"If only I had the chance I would go back home, because the ones I

left behind, the ones who have been are here," she said.  
killed, have suffered no more than we