

# DR Congo refugees return to Rwanda camp after massacre: UN

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AFP, September 9, 1997

GISENYI, Rwanda, Sept 9 (AFP) - Refugees who fled the Democratic Republic of Congo have returned in their thousands to a camp in north-western Rwanda, but tensions remain high after killings last month, UN officials said Tuesday.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had by Tuesday counted 7,350 DRC refugees sheltered at the Mudende camp, signalling the return of thousands of people who fled after Rwandan Hutu militia forces and local villagers massacred 148 people, according to an official toll.

"Only about 700 refugees are still spread out across the region," UNHCR spokesman Paul Stromberg told AFP. "They will return of their own accord or be pointed out to us by authorities."

Almost 4,000 refugees from the DRC fled the Mudende camp on August 22, following an overnight attack

by rebel Rwandan Hutu extremist Interahamwe militiamen and local people armed with guns, hand grenades and knives.

Meanwhile, the Rwandan government, first installed by Tutsi rebels who seized power in 1994 after a genocidal civil war in the small central African country, has sent military reinforcements to the border region.

However, the Gisenyi area remains a powderkeg of rivalry between Tutsis, Hutus and refugees from the former Zaire, which took in more than a million Rwandan Hutus from the 1994 conflict in which Hutus were largely blamed for the deaths of half a million people.

The Rwandan Hutu refugees then became caught up in conflict when an initially largely Tutsi Zairean rebel alliance mounted an insurrection there late last year and went on to seize the capital Kinshasa in May,

establishing the renamed Democratic Republic of Congo.

Most of the stray DRC refugees gathered last month near Gisenyi town, while some responded to the August attack by organising punitive raids against local villagers, razing their homes and crops.

About 100 people were still in hospital in Gisenyi on Tuesday, many suffering from severe head injuries or other wounds caused by gunfire and machete cuts.

The August massacre was initially blamed entirely on Rwandan Hutu militiamen, who were instrumental in the mass slaughter of the more than half a million minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus between April and July 1994, before fleeing into Zaire among Hutu refugees as the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front seized the capital Kigali.

But local people were later blamed for taking part in the slaughter, leading observers to question the wisdom of locating a refugee camp at Mudende close to the volatile bor-

der and vulnerable to incursions by armed gangs.

Last Friday, the deputy district administrator in Gisenyi, Gerard Ngoga, told AFP that the Mudende refugees would not be moved elsewhere and pledged that calm would soon be restored.

The following day, Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu led a government team to Mudende for talks with local people in a bid to promote cooperation and peace among the different ethnic communities.

The neighbouring east of the DRC has for months been a related troublespot of serious concern to UN refugee and human rights and officials, who are seeking to investigate claims that the Zairean rebels led by current President Laurent Kabila carried out a mass slaughter of Rwandan refugees during their uprising.

Armed Rwandan Hutus had been accused of fighting alongside opponents of Kabila's rebel alliance.

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