

# Flow of refugees out of Burundi still growing: U.N.

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GENEVA, Nov 2 (AFP) - The number of refugees fleeing ethnic strife in Burundi is still growing, a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokeswoman said here Tuesday.

The last "conservative" estimates were of 632,000 fleeing the highland nation in central Africa, 80 percent of them women, children and elderly people, Sylvana Foa said.

"The outflow since the (coup attempt of October 21) is slowing down a little bit, but the numbers continue to go up and we think these numbers are overly conservative" she said.

By UNHCR estimates, 342,000 refugees are in Rwanda, 261,000 in Tanzania and 29,000 in Zaire.

"It looks like families are sending their vulnerable first" Foa added. "Vast majority are Hutu although there are Tutsi arriving in certain areas."

The refugees began fleeing when massacres broke out among the Hutu majority and the Tutsis, who form the bulk of the army that slew Burundi's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, in the coup bid.

Heavy rains are worsening the refugees' condition and the UNHCR needs 17 million dollars in order to cover costs for an estimated three months. Shelters, blankets and food are needed by the teams on the ground, Foa said.

The emergency fund of the High Commissioner for Refugees, normally at 25 million dollars, was down to just 1.2 million dollars, she added.

"We are really scared to take out more money out of the emergency fund because we have good two months left in this year and if anything else should happen we are really up the creek," she acknowledged.

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