

# Kabila visit to Kigali

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KIGALI, Sept 8 (AFP) - Laurent Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, arrived in Kigali on Monday for talks with Rwandan leaders on the explosive problems of refugees and border security.

Kabila, who is paying his first official visit here since the Rwandan army helped his rebel movement sweep him to power in the former Zaire in May, was given a 21-gun salute.

The visit coincided with the expulsion by DRC of 780 Rwandan and Burundian refugees from a camp near Kisangani in the northeast, where UN investigators are about to probe allegations of atrocities committed against refugees.

The move prompted the UN refugee agency to condemn a "blatant breach" of international conventions and call for a review of the agency's operations in the DRC.

The refugees, who were expelled after soldiers surrounded their camp last Thursday, had fled murderous attacks in April on camps sheltering

some 80,000 refugees in the area.

According to an expert on the Great Lakes region, the expulsions could be linked to the UN investigation into alleged massacres of thousands of refugees in which Kabila's forces have been implicated.

The expert suggested the DRC wanted to avoid the refugees being questioned by investigators, whose work has been stalled the past two weeks because of renewed objections by the DRC government.

UN chief Kofi Annan said Monday he had received assurances from Kabila that the mission would be allowed to proceed.

Several tens of thousands of Rwandans and Burundians who initially fled ethnic bloodletting in their own countries have been missing in the former Zaire since Kabila's rebellion started a year ago, prompting the flight of refugees - either homeward, or further inside the DRC.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) spokeswoman Pame-

la O'Toole said in Geneva on Friday that the agency's head, Sadako Ogata, planned in an address this week to the UN Security Council to launch an urgent call to solve the growing refugee crisis.

"There is a great need for an intensive focus on what is an absolutely appalling situation for refugees across the Great Lakes region," O'Toole said.

In his talks with Rwandan Vice President and Defense Minister Paul Kagame, Kabila is expected to discuss problems of security along their common border, an issue that has festered since the start of Kabila's rule.

Northwestern Rwanda has been beset by violence with attacks blamed on armed Hutu militiamen known as Interahamwe and former Rwandan troops operating from the eastern DRC province of Masisi.

A massacre on August 21 at a camp for Tutsi refugees in Mudende, western Rwanda, in which 148 people were killed by Hutu rebels assisted by armed groups of local peasants, was the worst in continuing unrest in the area.

The militiamen and former Rwandan soldiers were among hundreds of thousands of Rwandans who fled following the genocide in Rwanda in

1994.

Most of the refugees – together with many of the gunmen – returned to their own country late last year when Kabila launched his initially Tutsi-majority rebellion in the east of former Zaire.

A state of permanent fear has been created in the region because of the systematic execution of civilians and local leaders by the rebels and reprisals against both the guerrillas and villagers by the Tutsi-dominant Rwandan army.

Kinshasa has long sought to contain at least four dissident movements in Masisi and North and South Kivu, three eastern DRC provinces, and has no more control today over the area than the late ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Boniface Rucaku, the governor of the northern Rwandan province of Ruhengeri said Sunday : "The border zone is a veritable hotbed of insurgents. While some attack in one area, others get ready to attack in another."

Kabila and Kagame were expected to discreetly discuss a diplomatic tiff in late July over Kagame's revelation that Rwanda had played a "major role" in Kabila's rebellion.

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