

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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April 19, 1994

His Excellency Colin Keating
President, the Security Council
United Nations

Your Excellency:

Human Rights Watch respectfully calls upon the Security Council to direct urgent attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in Rwanda.

The carnage that has been inflicted over the past two weeks is neither random nor inevitable, and the United Nations can play a significant role in helping end it. The campaign of killing was planned weeks before the death of President Habyarimana when army officers trained, armed and organized some 1,700 young men into a militia affiliated with the President's political party. These individuals were given guns and grenades. Further, in the weeks before the president's plane crashed, the Rwandan Defense Ministry issued broadcasts over the radio attacking the political opposition and inciting violence against civilians sympathetic to the RPF, leaving no doubt that it was referring to Tutsis. Such broadcasts inflamed the situation further and contributed to thousands of Tutsi murders by the army and militia. In the immediate aftermath of the death of the Rwandan president, the army and militia engaged in targeted killings of political opponents of the regime, including both Hutu and Tutsi human rights activists and moderates within the government, including the Prime Minister. Thereafter killings were increasingly directed against the large Tutsi community in Kigali. At this time, the atrocities have spread, and international humanitarian organizations have estimated that there may have been as many as 100,000 killed in the past two weeks.

Developments over the past several days will likely contribute to an even further increase in killings. Within the last forty-eight hours, all telephone communication to Rwanda was cut. To our knowledge, only one satellite link remains in service, that connecting the United Nations peacekeeping office in New York with the commanding officer of the peacekeeping force UNAMIR in Kigali. As a result, even the commander of UNAMIR forces will be ignorant of events in those regions where he has no observers, and the international community will no longer have the sources of information that have been available to date.

In addition, Rwandan authorities removed from his post the governor of Butare province, Jean-Baptiste Habyalimana. Habyalimana, a Tutsi member of the political opposition, had succeeded in preventing communal violence in Butare province, where there are a great many refugees from the conflict in Burundi. Habyalimana was replaced by a hard-line military figure, Lt. Colonel Tarcisse Muvunyi, which, we fear, will increase tensions in this volatile province of Rwanda.

We believe that the Security Council could make a contribution to ending the campaign of atrocities by condemning those responsible for it by name, and insisting that they immediately cease and desist, and making clear that there will be severe consequences if they and their allies continue killing. In particular, we have identified Colonel Bagosora, the military officer in charge during the first days of the massacre; Col. Augustin Bizimungu now Commander in Chief of the Rwandan Armed Forces, and Captain Pasqual Simbikangwa, a military figure implicated in many past killings and cases of torture, who reportedly is directing the anti-Tutsi killings by the governing political party's militia from the office of the presidency.

Finally, we urge your attention to the fact that the Rwandan military authorities are engaged in a systematic campaign to eliminate the Tutsi. The organized campaign of atrocities against the Tutsi as an ethnic group has become so concerted that we believe it constitutes genocide, as defined by Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The targeting of large numbers of victims on the exclusive basis of their ethnicity, the responsibility of key military officials for this campaign, and the vast numbers of Tutsi murdered in recent weeks demonstrate that the Rwandan army officials named above, and their associates, intend "to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such [by] killing members of the group [and] causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group..." (Article II, convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.)

Given the duty of all parties to the Genocide Convention -- which include the five permanent members of the Security Council -- to "prevent and punish" the crime of genocide, we call upon the Security Council to publicly inform responsible individuals within the Rwandan army and militia that the international community will take steps to suppress and punish this horrendous crime.

Finally, we respectfully urge that the UNAMIR forces be maintained in Rwanda to continue implementing their original mandate to "contribute to the security of Kigali" and "to assist in the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities in conjunction with relief operations ...," Even though the Arusha cease-fire has ended, maintenance of the force is essential to continue safeguarding the 20,000 to 25,000 Rwandans who are under U.N. protection at this time in the Meridien Hotel, the King Faisal

Hospital, the Amahoro Stadium and various other locations. These individuals sought the protection of the U.N. forces, which accepted that duty. In some cases, those fleeing the violence were brought to places of safety by U.N. forces themselves. Current reports indicate that Amahoro Stadium is under attack and that 500 peacekeepers are scheduled to be withdrawn from the country. The UNAMIR must not be withdrawn until the safety of, at a minimum, those under its immediate protection, has been assured.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Roth
Executive Director
Human Rights Watch