

UN Urged to Link Rwandan Aid to Inquiry on Abuses.

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The Times, July 27, 1994

By Sam Kiley in Goma and Our Foreign Staff.

AID officials yesterday urged the United Nations to tie international aid efforts for Rwandan refugees to investigations of human rights abuses by the former Rwandan regime.

Yesterday Mike McDonough of Concern Worldwide joined a growing chorus of senior aid officials, led by Care's emergency programmes director, James Fennel, in demanding that the leaders who organised the genocide of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis and Hutu moderates, and who are now living off food aid, should be brought to book.

"This is a terrible human disaster (in Goma). But one cannot forget that many of the young men you see in these camps are killers and have been responsible for far more deaths than cholera could ever claim. They must be made to pay for their crimes or we send a message to the outside world, and to African countries especially, which says it's fine to wipe out your minorities," said Mr McDonough.

Officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees also privately agree with this position. But yesterday the UNHCR spokesman,

Ray Wilkinson, insisted that this was a political decision outside the agency's mandate. Mr Fennel likened feeding members of the former administration to sending food aid to the Auschwitz concentration camp guards. "By just treating the humanitarian symptoms of the crisis and failing to address the root causes, by addressing this as a human rights issue, we risk becoming an accomplice in what happened."

As thousands of Hutu refugees continued to die yesterday and the roads round Goma became clogged with bodies, aid officials also called for a co-ordinated programme to encourage them to return to Rwanda, where their safety has been guaranteed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the new coalition government in Kigali, the capital. "We have to get these people to understand that they can go home safely."

The UN and the US State Department have been vague about the issue of prosecuting the people who organised the genocide, mainly, one American diplomat said, because they do not want Hutu refugees to fear a witch hunt when they return home. But for 6,000 Tutsis living in a camp behind barbed wire for their own protection, a human rights investigation of what

happened to their families cannot come too soon.

At night, when Goma's air is thick with wood smoke, members of the defeated Rwandan army and militia shout insults across the wire. "Still alive again, I'm sorry to see. We'll come back to kill you soon," they yell. Others lounge outside the camp gates, hoping to catch and beat a Tutsi when he or she goes out in search of firewood.

Yesterday the American military stepped up its Operation Support Hope for one million Rwandan refugees while a cholera epidemic raged unabated and about 10,000 of the migrants started walking back home. Brigadier-General Jack Nix of the US Army arrived in eastern Zaire to command the operation ordered by President Clinton. "To stop the dying and relieve the suffering that is my immediate mission," he said in Goma.

In an attempt to stem the spread of cholera, a C5A Galaxy transport plane flew non-stop from California to Goma yesterday, using three in-flight refuellings. It brought a civilian water-purification company which can process 24,000 gallons an hour, as well as two California fire engines to help to pump water from Lake Kivu.

General Nix said the US operation might switch its focus to providing clean water instead of food. Clean water is essential to combat the cholera epidemic, which a UN official said had still not peaked.

Aid workers have suspended plans to burn corpses because no one is willing to do the job, a UN spokesman said. Cremation goes against African traditions. The US Army will fly in heavy earth-moving equipment to break the hard volcanic rock around Goma and dig mass graves.