

New tension in Burundi trigger another refugee influx into Tanzania

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DAR ES SALAAM, Feb 22 (AFP) - At least 20,000 Burundian refugees have fled into into Tanzania's north-western border district of Ngara in the past week due to increased tension in Burundi, reports reaching here said on Wednesday.

According to humanitarian sources in the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, reprisal operations by Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army in northeast Burundi last week forced many Burundian Hutus and also refugees from Rwanda to flee into Tanzania.

The army launched their operations after extremists from the Hutu majority attacked an army camp in Giteranyi in the Muyinga region, bordering Tanzania and Rwanda, during which a soldier was killed and a number of others were injured.

The reports of a new influx has heightened anxiety among Tanzanian leaders in the border area, who point

out the heavy burden it was causing the country and its threat to social stability in the region.

On Tuesday, Ngara MP Jared Ghachocha moved a motion in parliament demanding the formation of a parliamentary committee to look into the problems of refugees from Burundi and Rwanda currently residing in the northeast Kagera region camps of Ngara and Biharamnulo.

He said they were now estimated to number over 700,000.

Ghachocha told the assembly, sitting at Dodoma in central Tanzania, that the people of his area wanted the refugees to be repatriated to their countries immediately.

"Otherwise, they would use force if the government opposed their request", he warned, adding: "The presence of the refugees in the country has led to environmental destruction and the disruption of social, cultural and economic services in Kagera

region”.

Another MP from the area, Phares Kabuye, declared in the house that although Tanzania had a history of playing host to refugees from Bu-

rundi and Rwanda since 1958, ”we have now reached a point whereby we must say, we are fed up”.

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