

# HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/AFRICA

Formerly Africa Watch

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Human Rights Watch/Africa has learned of two extremely serious developments in the growing catastrophe in Rwanda; some humanitarian groups report that as many as 100,000 people may have died to date.

Within the last forty-eight hours Rwandan authorities have cut telephone communication between Rwanda and the rest of the world. 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. Members of the Tutsi minority and of the political opposition threatened with massacre by the Rwandan authorities had kept the world apprised of conditions within the country by telephone. This link was especially important after the departure last week of expatriates and journalists. The Rwandan military can now slaughter civilians without fear of international scrutiny. Even the commander of UNAMIR forces inside Rwanda will remain ignorant of events in those regions where he has no observers stationed.

The international community, and particularly France, which has strongly supported the Rwandan military in the past, must insist that communication be restored immediately. Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh, the special representative of the U.N. Secretary General in Rwanda, has called such restoration of communication "realistic and realizable." It is also essential: the rest of the world must not be kept ignorant of events in Rwanda until it is too late to act.

In another grave development, Rwandan authorities removed the prefect or governor of Butare province, Jean-Baptiste Habyalimana, from his post. Habyalimana, a Tutsi and a member of the political opposition, is an engineer with a PhD from the University of Missouri. The province of Butare, which abuts the Burundi frontier, houses the greatest concentration of refugees from a similar Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Burundi.

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Human Rights Watch is a not-for-profit corporation monitoring and promoting human rights in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East, and among the signatories of the Helsinki accords.

A significant number of these refugees are armed and have been given military training in violation of the United Nations regulations which govern the camps. There have been growing tensions between the refugees and the surrounding populations as both groups struggle to survive in a famine-stricken region. Habyalimana, himself a native of the province, had succeeded in preventing violence, both among Hutu and Tutsi Rwandans and between Rwandans and the refugees. The Rwandan authorities have replaced him with Lt. Colonel Tarcisse Muvunyi, a hardline military officer from the northern province of Byumba. The installation of a military figure suggests that keeping the peace is not a goal of the authorities.

Human Rights Watch/Africa has also learned that the authorities have removed the prefect of the eastern province of Kibungo, another region where massacres of the Tutsi and members of the opposition have so far been relatively limited.

These recent developments must be seen in the context of continuing reports of massacres in such places as Cyangugu in the southwest. It has also been reported that authorities in Zaire have refused to allow Tutsi refugees to enter the country from Rwanda, both at Bukavu, at the southern end of Lake Kivu, and at Goma at the northern end of the lake.

Current reports indicate that the thousands of Rwandans seeking protection from UN peacekeepers in Amahoro stadium in Kigali are under attack and that as many as 500 peacekeepers are scheduled to be withdrawn from the country.