

Rwanda, Burundi, UNHCR reach refugees repatriation pact: radio

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NAIROBI, Dec 14 (AFP) - Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi have reached an agreement with UN aid officials on repatriating Rwandan refugees, radio reports said Wednesday.

The agreement with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stressed the right of all refugees to return home from Burundi and the voluntary nature of the repatriation programme, Rwandan radio added.

Rwandan Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga said the Burundi government had agreed to allow Rwandan and UNHCR officials to enter Burundi and go to the refugee camps.

Rwanda, for its part, pledged to ensure the safety of returning refugees. The UNHCR agreed to provide training, as well as organizational and logistical support for the repatriation programme, the radio,

monitored here by the BBC said.

There have been reports in the past few months of reprisal killings directed against refugees returning to Rwanda.

The radio quoted Sendashonga as saying an implementation committee would be set up to oversee the programme.

Hundreds of thousands of Rwandans fled to Burundi in the face of a bloody three-month civil war sparked by the death of president Juvenal Habyarimana in April.

Between 500,000 and a million people, mostly member of the Tutsi community, are believed to have been killed in the conflict, mainly by Hutu militias loyal to Habyarimana's government.

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