

Rwandan leaders in row over talks with rebels

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KIGALI, Jan 25 (AFP) - Rwanda's military ruler has decided his defence minister should head talks with rebels, overruling his rival the prime minister, informed sources said Monday as violent opposition to a peace deal continued.

President Juvenal Habyarimana's office wrote on Saturday to Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye telling him that Defence Minister James Gasana would take over as chief negotiator from Foreign Minister Boniface Ngurinzira.

The premier wrote back to reject the decision, saying he had not been consulted, the sources said.

On Sunday, several dozen houses were set ablaze at Nyamutera in the northwestern Ruhengeri district in clashes apparently related to the talks

between supporters of General-Major Habyarimana's MRNDD party and the opposition.

About 100 people fled to shelter as fighting was also reported elsewhere in the region.

The formerly sole, ruling National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development (MRNDD) objects to a power-sharing accord already reached with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels at Arusha in Tanzania.

The agreement would bring the RPF into government alongside opposition parties already in a coalition that Habyarimana has bowed to as part of a transition to multi-party democracy in the small highland nation.

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