

UN condemns treatment in Rwanda prisons

AFP, March 4, 1995

GENEVA, March 4 (AFP) - Between 250 and 300 people perish each month in Rwandan prisons, where some 25,000 inmates are packed in together under appalling conditions awaiting trial, the chief UN human rights official in the country charged here Friday.

"The prisons are overcrowded and living conditions are unacceptable," Georg Mauter-Markhof said, revealing that prisoners had no room even to lie down.

He attributed the deaths to inadequate diets and sanitation.

While an action plan to improve conditions had been submitted to Rwandan authorities, Mauter-Markhof said the country would need outside help.

The United Nations human rights commission meanwhile announced Friday it would send 30 additional observers to Rwanda, 16 from the European Union and the rest from UN contributing nations, on March 15.

There are currently 72 human rights observers at work on Rwanda, which is trying to establish ethnic stability following horrific confrontations last year between Tutsi and Hutu residents.

The United Nations had wanted to send 147 human rights monitors to the east African country but has been unable to raise enough money to meet the target.

As a result the observers are currently stationed in only 10 districts.

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