

UN launches radio stations in troubled countries

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KIGALI, Feb 16 (AFP) - A "message of peace" radio station set up by the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) will begin transmitting to the war-ravaged nation on Thursday, a UN source said, and a similar initiative is under way in Angola.

"Radio UNAMIR wants to be the voice of brotherhood and harmony. It will be continuously broadcasting a message of peace, which is by nature non-partisan, neutral and non-selective," a statement from the UN mission here said.

The radio will broadcast for four hours each day in Kinyarwanda, French and English.

In coming months, the UN mission in Angola (UNAVEM) will also set up a radio station, UNAVEM announced in the capital Luanda, without giving a date for the start of broadcasts.

The Angolan government gave

the green light to the project during a meeting between Communications Minister Hendrick Vaal Neto and the UN special envoy to Angola Alouine Blondin Beye.

Rwanda, long prone to strife between its majority Hutu population and the Tutsi minority, is emerging from an ethnic bloodbath last year in which the government says between 500,000 and a million Tutsis and opposition Hutus were slaughtered by former government troops and extremist militiamen.

The carnage was unleashed after Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a suspected rocket attack on his plane in April. The worst of the violence ended when the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) seized power in July and installed a coalition government.

But some two million Rwandans, mostly Hutus, are still refugees, reluctant to return home for fear of

reprisals for the slaughter. A Hutu extremist radio station has been blamed by the authorities and international agencies for incitement to genocide.

Angola is making slow progress towards peace and a political settlement, Beye said Thursday, on the strength of a pact signed last November between the government and rebel forces to end two decades

of civil war.

The radio station there is expected to broadcast news of the implementation of the peace pact, which provides for demobilisation of the rival armies, the creation of a new joint defence force, a political role for the opposition and the lifting of an estimated 17 million landmines.

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