

UN organizes return of Rwandan refugees

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GENEVA, Dec 20 (AFP) - More than 800 Rwandan refugees have been escorted back home in recent days by UN aid workers, a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said in Geneva Tuesday.

Sylvana Foa said that though the number of those returning was small and though the situation in Rwanda "was by no means perfect, we see a lot of positive developments".

Among these she cited the deployment of troops belonging to the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) and of human rights observers from the United Nations and organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross who were getting "full access" to areas where people were returning.

An estimated two million Rwandans, almost all Hutus, fled the country after the victory of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front in a civil war during which up to a million people were butchered, mainly minority Tutsis by Hutu extre-

mists.

"The Kigali government with a total lack of resources is doing what it can to improve security, is making a big effort to put a civilian administration in place, is warning against retaliations," Foa said.

In all, 808 refugees were escorted back to Rwanda between December 13 and 19.

The UNHCR maintains its policy of only encouraging voluntary repatriations and then to areas where the presence of international observers guarantees the safety of those returning, Foa said.

"We are feeling a bit better, the refugees are feeling a bit better," she said.

One reason for the return is that the refugees are worried that Tutsis who have spent decades in exile in Uganda or Burundi are returning to Rwanda and appropriating their houses and land. The United Nations estimates 350,000 such former refugees have returned home.

Foa also reported that the level of open intimidation in the refugee camps in Zaire against those wanting to return had fallen. But, she said, "in the camps conditions are appalling" and militias take over at nightfall.

In Nairobi, the French branch of the charity Medecins sans Frontieres-France (Doctors without Borders) said it was pulling its workers out of Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania because those responsible for the

massacres were abusing humanitarian aid.

The organization has already withdrawn from camps in Zaire for the same reason. It claims that the camps are being run along the lines of the deposed Hutu government by the people responsible for planning and carrying out the massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

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