

Dawn brings more death to blood-soaked Rwanda

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KIGALI, April 11 (Reuter) - Dawn broke over the Rwandan capital Kigali on Monday and brought bursts of heavy machinegun clattering around streets soaked in the blood of rotting corpses and patrolled by roving bands of drunken soldiers.

U.N. sources said a shell hit a Kigali hospital late on Sunday, killing 27 people and injuring more than 100, in renewed fighting between Rwandan Patriotic Front rebels and government forces.

Top Rwandan rebel leaders said their forces comprised of two battalions were closing in on Kigali from three sides to take over and restore order in the chaotic city.

“Those two battalions on the outskirts are just a vanguard of a much larger force,” a Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) commander, Wilson Rutayisire, told Reuters. He added that the RPF had taken over significant amounts of territory since fighting broke out last week.

Reports said tribal bloodletting sparked by last Wednesday’s killing of the president had also spread to the countryside, where RPF rebels have relaunched a three-year civil war.

Spanish missionary nuns in the western Rwandan town of Kibuye said the town’s hospital had been attacked and gangs were “killing all over the place”.

“They have already killed some of our patients,” she said. “We have just received general absolution, the parish priest came,” one nun told Spanish radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation in Nairobi.

She said the gangs, thought to be members of the majority Hutu tribe, had moved on to the parish church to kill terrified members of the minority Tutsi tribe who had taken sanctuary there.

“They are also killing refugees in the town hall,” she said.

Residents in Kigali, where thousands have been killed in five days of tribal slaughter, reported the city relatively calm overnight on Sunday. But they awoke to the sound of fighting near the international airport on the city’s outskirts.

“Talk of a ceasefire is absolute rubbish, it’s complete mayhem here,” said one resident.

One of the RPF’s top commanders said the rebels were now determined to end the “government of killers” and appealed to army units not involved in the ethnic slaughter to desert.

The interim government was announced a few days after the slaying of President Juvenal Habyarimana, but was immediately rejected by the rebels.

Habyarimana's death in a rocket attack on a plane returning from a regional peace conference re-ignited age-old strife between the Hutus and the minority Tutsi tribe.

Those killed included the prime minister and several cabinet ministers, all Tutsis, as well as African nuns, priests and aid workers and 10 Belgian U.N. soldiers.

Many victims were buried alive because there were not enough doctors to check whether they were actually dead. Some were unconscious, others, their throats cut, were unable to speak.

The army said rampaging troops, from the Hutu tribe, had been called back to barracks and said it supported the interim government's efforts to regain control of the situation.

Red Cross workers believe tens of thousands of civilians may have died in the violence.

Western nations have stepped up efforts to evacuate their citizens. About 390 French men, women and children left by plane late on Sunday. An estimated 600 remain in Kigali.

More than 100 French paratroops took up positions at the city's French school to supervise evacuation operations for terrified expatriates, most of whom remained in hiding.

About 150 Belgians and other foreign nationals, sheltering in a villa protected by Belgian U.N. troops, said they were desperate to get out.

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