

French embassy closed in Rwanda capital Kigali

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PARIS, April 12 (Reuter) - France said on Tuesday it had closed its embassy in the Rwandan capital of Kigali after evacuating all French nationals who wanted to leave the war-torn central African country.

"The ambassador and his staff left the capital this morning," Foreign Ministry spokesman Richard Duque told reporters, adding that ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud was on his way to Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic.

"French soldiers in Kigali were able to ensure the departure of about 1,600 people, including nearly the entire French community of Rwanda," he said.

Duque said the 1,600 included Europeans, Americans and Rwandans.

"We have also helped evacuate Rwandan families, who had sought refuge at the embassy, mainly to neighbouring countries," he said.

The ministry said on Monday that 620 French people had left Rwanda, most of them aboard French military planes.

"A military command has stayed on in order to facilitate the evacuation of foreign nationals in liaison with other military contingents," he said.

Duque did not say when the 500 French soldiers in Rwanda would leave the country. France has said its soldiers will not intervene in the fighting and will leave as soon as Westerners have been evacuated.

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