

# U.N. in Rwanda haunted by nightmare in Somalia

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NAIROBI, April 15 (Reuter) - Haunted by bloodshed from its intervention in Somalia, 2,500 U.N. troops appear impotent before a massacre raging before their very eyes in Rwanda.

The force commander of the U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) says he is too busy trying to arrange a ceasefire and evacuate trapped foreigners to put guards at refuges likely to become massacre sites.

Speaking on Thursday in the capital of Kigali, Brigadier -General Rome Dallaire said such humanitarian assistance could not even be considered under the U.N. force's current mandate.

"We've been in our mandate committed to conducting peace -keeping operations," the Canadian general told reporters when asked why he could not post guards outside churches packed with refugees.

"As such we've been manoeuvring...to establish one, our base of operations and two, to fulfil our own mandate," he said.

Diplomats said UNAMIR was set up last year with a strength of 2,500 because that was thought sufficient and the Security Council wanted to avoid a larger force being dragged into any fighting as U.S. troops were in Somalia from June to October.

"The force has proved too small to act to stop the massacres but it was never designed for that. The council looks unlikely to change the mandate before the killings stop," said a French diplomat.

Belgium said on Friday the U.N. should suspend the whole operation because it had lost its point because of the "brutal rupture" in the process it was supposed to oversee to peace.

Ten Belgian soldiers serving with the U.N. were killed following the death of President Juvenal Habyarimana and his counterpart from neighbouring Burundi in a rocket attack on their plane.

Belgium is pulling out its 420-man contingent in the force because of a wave of anti-Belgium hatred among Rwanda's Hutu majority, which accuses Belgian forces of being involved in the downing.

Dallaire said in one incident this week U.N. observers were held back by Rwandan soldiers who ripped up and burned the identity cards of a number of Rwandans hiding in a church and then slipped aside allowing civilians armed with machetes in to massacre them.

“The people conducted terrible, gruesome acts on human bodies,” said the general, adding that the U.N. observers tried to treat survivors near death for two days before U.N. patrols arrived.

“You want to assist, you want to protect...by the presence of your blue beret.

”But when you are standing there and you are witnessing it and you know there is no respect for your blue beret, it is a terrible traumatic experience (for UNAMIR staff),“ he added.

He said some 10,000 terrified Rwandans were hiding in Kigali churches from the massacres by the mobs and gunmen and another 15,000 were sheltering at U.N. camps in the capital.

UNAMIR was set up to implement a peace accord made between the government and rebels last year in the Tanzanian town of Arusha and not to negotiate a pact in the first place, he said.

”This was a classic peacekeeping task. Although I am saddened by the delays and so on and you get affected by seeing so much chaos...I still have a glimmer of hope that we can still see peace,“ Dallaire said.

He said one reason why peace talks failed to go ahead on Thursday was because they were announced in advance in New York and another hitch was finding a safe site for negotiations.

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