

Belgium tells citizens to stay indoors in Burundi

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BRUSSELS, April 25 (Reuter) - Belgium advised its nationals living in Burundi to stay at home after a failed military coup on Monday triggered fears of a new wave of tribal violence in the central African country.

“We are encouraging Belgians to be very cautious and stay indoors. There is no full-scale evacuation planned but we have advised non-essential people to leave Burundi over the past few weeks,” a foreign ministry spokesman told Reuters.

More than 350 Belgian soldiers are in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, awaiting repatriation after Belgium’s withdrawal from the failed United Nations operation in Rwanda.

“These troops could quickly be sent into Burundi to evacuate our nationals if the situation deteriorates,” a government source said.

Belgium is the former colonial ruler of both Burundi and Rwanda.

Burundi’s army chief-of-staff Colonel Jean Bikomagu said earlier that an attempted coup failed on Monday after soldiers refused to take part for fear of sparking a tribal bloodbath like the one raging in neighbouring Rwanda.

There have been sporadic outbreaks of violence in Burundi since President Cyprien Ntaryamira was killed with his Rwandan counterpart Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6 when a rocket downed their plane at the airport in the Rwandan capital Kigali.

The country’s first president from the Hutu tribe, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated in a failed coup last October. Since his death, tens of thousands of people have died in tribal massacres between the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi tribes.

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