

African Nations Reluctant To Act On Rwanda

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THREE United Nations soldiers were wounded at Kigali airport in Rwanda yesterday in what the Red Cross said was "a violent exchange of fire" between rebels and government troops.

Planned peace talks failed to start in Tanzania because the rebels, who are mainly minority Tutsis, refused to talk to the Hutu-dominated interim government. At the same time it is becoming clear that, despite calls from aid agencies for intervention, America, Britain and France favour an "African solution" to the country's bloodbath. A high-level US delegation was heading last night for Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, for talks with African leaders about Rwanda. The delegation, led by John Shattuck, an Assistant Secretary of State, will also visit Tanzania.

Boutros Boutros Ghali, the UN Secretary-General, has already asked the Organisation of African Unity to send peacekeepers to end the genocide. But it is an appeal likely to fall

on deaf ears.

Nigeria, currently holding the presidency of the UN Security Council, and Ghana, for instance, continue to pay the price for intervening in Liberia in 1990. Nigerian Treasury funds have been almost halved by the operation and to little avail.

It was reported yesterday that 60,000 Liberians fleeing the fighting between rival factions in southeast Liberia are short of food. No aid has so far reached them.

Of Rwanda's immediate neighbours, only Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania have fully functioning governments. But they are the least likely to try to intervene in the conflict.

The rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front, in any event, has made clear that it thinks a foreign force would freeze the current situation, as would a ceasefire.

Tanzania intervened in Uganda at the end of Idi Amin's rule, but it is now struggling with radical economic reforms and its small army is

ill-equipped for a job that would require a large number of men. Kenya, on the other hand, has a firm policy of staying well away from military activities beyond its borders.

In the end, perhaps only Zimbabwe and Botswana might be per-

suaded to play a role in intervention, but only if a peacekeeping mission to Rwanda were to be led by a Western power.

By Sam Kiley, Africa Correspondent.