

Blocked UN rights team in DR Congo awaits instructions

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KINSHASA, Sept 17 (AFP) - A UN team seeking to investigate the alleged massacre of Rwandan refugees in the former Zaire waited on Wednesday for instructions from the UN chief after the regime again blocked their mission.

A spokesman for the human rights team, Jose Diaz, told AFP that "we are waiting for instructions from Mr. Annan", adding that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan had begun consultations with UN agencies on what to do.

On Tuesday, the government of President Laurent Kabila, who became president of the newly named Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in May, forbade the team from leaving to start work in the northwest of the country as it intended on Monday.

On Tuesday, the United Nations warned Kinshasa that the "serious" consequences of the eventual wi-

thdrawal of the investigation team could include the suspension of aid to the Democratic Republic of Congo by the international community.

The UN investigators, headed by Togolese lawyer Atsu Koffi Amega, on Monday announced that they planned to go on Wednesday to Mbandaka, one of the sites where Kabila's Alliance troops allegedly slaughtered Rwandan Hutu refugees fleeing ahead of the former rebels' advance on the capital.

Diaz said the team planned to send Annan "recommendations concerning the difficulties we have encountered here in Kinshasa", where the team has begun waiting for a fourth week for permission to head into the interior in spite of assurances from the Kabila regime, which ousted dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who died in exile this month.

The Kinshasa authorities have twice prevented the team from de-

ploying in the country, on a series of grounds ranging from accusing it of engaging in political activities rather than its job to exceeding its mandate of going only to eastern regions where UN investigators first reported serious evidence of massacres.

Kabila's regime also wants the mission's mandate limited to a period covering Mobutu's last years from 1993 to May 17 this year, as well as finance for the interministerial committee in Kinshasa liaising with the UN investigators.

Diaz said the UN mandate provides for the mission to deploy throughout the country and to investigate

events since the then-rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation (AGDL) of Congo-Zaire seized power.

A serious row has blown up between the United Nations and the Kinshasa authorities who accuse UN agencies, notably the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) of mishandling their jobs, including the repatriation of Hutus who fled Rwanda during and after its genocidal civil war in 1994.

Kabila's regime has in turn been accused of seeking to cover up alleged atrocities by its troops.

jg/nb/bm