

Arusha [Diplomats attending the Arusha talks as observers expressed more optimism about the new deal]

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Tourists who once paid more than 50 dollars a day to glimpse a gorilla in the mist shrouding the bamboo forests on the flanks of the Virunga volcanoes – home to the last surviving silverback gorillas – have been scared away by the rebels.

The war harks back to some of Africa's bloodiest tribal massacres. The RPF is drawn mainly from the minority Tutsi tribe which ruled Rwanda until an uprising by the majority Hutus in the 1950s and 1960s culminated in the massacre of at least 100,000 Tutsis.

Thousands more fled to Uganda, Tanzania and Zaire. At independence in 1962, the Hutus were firmly in power.

The RPF fighters, many of whom were born in squalid refugee camps in neighbouring countries, initially vowed to topple the government of Pre-

sident Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu.

But now they are seeking representation in a coalition recently formed as part of a transition to democracy.

A ceasefire agreed in March at talks in Zaire brokered by African leaders collapsed within days. But diplomats attending the Arusha talks as observers expressed more optimism about the new agreement because the government is thought to be weary of waging a protracted war against the rebels, who stepped up their attacks before the talks.

Uganda, believed to have supported the rebels despite official denials, has come under Western pressure to bring the rebels to the negotiating table.

The rebels are demanding the return of thousands of Tutsi exiles with guarantees of safety. But observers

noted that Rwanda, with one of Africa's highest population densities, suffers a severe shortage of housing and farmland.

Bizimungu told journalists : "We guarantee that our guns will stop firing." The rebel delegate has deman-

ded that the government absorb the RPF fighters into the army.

Ngulinzira said : "I am optimistic that the truce will hold and lasting peace will ultimately return to our country."

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