

Hundred thousand flee fighting as rebels 30 km from capital

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KIGALI, Feb 10 (AFP) - Rebel Rwandan forces have advanced to within 30 kilometres (20 miles) of the capital Kigali and some 100,000 people have fled the fighting in the north of the country, government officials said Wednesday.

The ministry of defence said the army was fighting Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) guerrillas to reopen the highway to the northeast town of Gisenyi, at a point 30 kilometres (20 miles) from Kigali.

The military situation was "improving" in the northeast, the ministry claimed. But other officials said the government forces were tired and

hungry.

The RPF had thrown 1,500 guerrillas into the battle for the northwest town of Ruhengeri, where on Monday it revived its campaign to oust President Juvenal Habyarimana.

In a statement broadcast on the radio here Wednesday, Habyarimana condemned the RPF's new offensive, which comes as the two sides' representatives are engaged in negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania.

France sent a second company of 150 troops to Kigali Tuesday to protect the roughly 400 French nationals in Rwanda.

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