

June talks for Rwanda government, rebels

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BRUSSELS, May 26 (AFP) - The Rwanda government and the rebel Patriotic Front have agreed to hold direct peace talks in France next month, front spokesman Jean-Baptiste Ndahumba said here on Tuesday.

He was confirming a report in the newspaper La Libre Belgique, which said Rwandan Foreign Minister Boniface Ngulinzara and front counterpart Patrick Mazimhaka had agreed at a weekend parley in Kampala to restart talks in France.

Previous secret meetings in Paris produced no clear results. Ndahumba said France had shown a lack of impartiality then and sided with the government position.

He refrained from speaking of French "mediation," given that the Organisation of African Unity has already mounted a regional mediation bid, but confirmed that France had offered to host open negotiations.

When the front first launched guerrilla raids into northern Rwanda in October 1990, operating out of Uganda, France and Belgium sent in troops to protect their nationals in the former Belgian-ruled territory. A small French contingent is still there.

Ndahumba commented that the French military presence was keeping the Kigali government in place. It was clear the regime would otherwise have fallen by now, he said.

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