Octogenarian honeymoon couple flee Rwandan bloodbath

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NAIROBI, April 14 (AFP) - An octogenarian Australian couple on honeymoon in Rwanda told of "people being killed like flies" after they were evacuated to Nairobi by French and American troops.

"We still think it's a beautiful country but it's the people who live in it that spoil it," said Edna Hughes, 81, travelling with her husband of six months, Ralph, 88, of Cooranbong in the Australian state of New South Wales.

They were visiting an orphanage near the capital Kigali run by Seventh Day Adventists when the deaths of Rwanda's and neighbouring Burundi's presidents plunged the central African nation's into a nightmare of blood and terror that is still going on as rebels try to seize control.

"We were spending a month at the orphanage, but we had only been there for three nights when the trouble began. One night a mob of armed men came into the orphanage and dragged away two elderly men, workers at the orphanage, after a long argument. They killed one and badly beat the other," she said.

"People are being killed like flies and it looks like they'll fight until they can't fight any more," said her husband before the couple flew home via Pakistan, where one of his sons works.

The couple have 16 children and 55 grandchildren between them from previous marriages.

"We couldn't get out of the orphanage," said Hughes, a retired health food salesman. "It was 65 miles from Kigali and we needed an armed escort, which was eventually provided by Rwandan soldiers.

"As we drove to Kigali in a convoy of about 20 cars, we had to stop at roadblocks every few miles where there were men armed with machetes, guns, bows and arrows and clubs.

We only got through because of our armed guards.

"We saw mud-brick huts burned down, and people collecting corpses in trucks. They were just picking up the bodies and adding one more to the pile."

Choking back tears, his wife explained how people had come to the orphanage seeking protection from tribal fighters who were massacring civilians.

"The orphanage had to refuse because otherwise the attackers would have come in," she said.

"They had to get armed men to keep them out," her husband added.

The couple recalled how a 12-year-old girl had come to the orphanage with her brother, aged five, and her 18-month sister.

"The girl said their parents had just been killed, and the baby was bruised and cut on the head from the scuffle," Mrs. Hughes said. "The country's being ruined by people who are just killing their own kind."

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