

## Belgian minister defends troops role in Rwanda

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BRUSSELS, April 12 (Reuter) Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes on Tuesday defended the presence of Belgian troops in war-torn Rwanda as part of a United Nations force but said a U.N. mandate for the country had probably been too limited.

Ten Belgian peacekeepers were murdered in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, last Thursday as they tried in vain to protect the prime minister who was killed in the aftermath of the assassination of Rwanda's president.

Claes told Belgian radio that his country had sent troops as part of a U.N. force on the request of the Rwandan authorities and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which groups Rwandan rebels, and the United Nations.

"But we refused to lead the operation which is why we sent about half the troops requested," he added.

Belgium is the former colonial power in Rwanda.

Claes said that, with hindsight, the U.N. mandate in Rwanda for peacekeeping after the recent signing of a peace agreement in Arusha, Tanzania, was too restricted. But he said he doubted whether the Security Council would expand the mandate.

"I hope the Arusha agreement is not dead but I can imagine there are such wounds that it will take time for meetings and negotiations to resume. This said I do not see another solution," he said.

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