

# Closure of borders halts Rwanda refugee flood

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KINSHASA, April 16 (Reuter) - Rwandan border guards have closed the frontier with Zaire, halting the flood of refugees fleeing ethnic reprisals, a U.N. spokesman said on Saturday.

Hubert Edongo, regional representative for central Africa for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said around 10,000 refugees had fled into the Goma region of eastern Zaire, but there was no saying how many were now blocked at the border.

"We expect to see many more than 10,000 coming across if the border is reopened," he said.

Many of the refugees are members of Rwanda's minority Tutsi tribe, but they have also included Zaireans who had settled in Rwanda and a sprinkling of Belgian, German, French, Canadian, Dutch and British expatriates.

With most expatriates now evacuated via Burundi, the remaining refugees are being lodged in convents, hostels, schools and makeshift camps as international aid agencies rush tents and blankets to the area.

Edongo confirmed reports Zaire had granted political asylum to 160 Rwandan government officials and their families who fled to the Burundi capital of Bujumbura after the two countries presidents were killed when rockets hit their plane.

The officials, who asked to leave Bujumbura because of local hostility, have been flown to the eastern Zairean town of Bukavu.

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