

Massive and systematic rights violations in Rwanda: report

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PARIS, March 8 (AFP) - Massive and systematic human rights violations in Rwanda, in particular by government authorities, have claimed more than 2,000 victims in the last two years of civil war, a report released Monday said.

The 100-page report, presented to a conference hosted by the International Human Rights Federation (FIDH), provoked Belgium to announce it was withdrawing its ambassador from the country for consultations.

The report said the violations were the result of "a deliberate policy by the regime which targets opposition politicians in general."

It also charged that the "responsibility of President Juvenal Habyarimana and his staff is seriously implicated" in the violations, since the civil war broke out in the country in October 1990.

FIDH President Daniel Jacoby

said the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) had also committed "very serious excesses with regard to the civilian populations."

The report, based on an enquiry in the country in January by an FIDH team including 10 lawyers and specialists from eight countries, said that witnesses had told investigators of witnessing executions of family members by FPR forces, as well as suffering lootings by soldiers and kidnappings.

The most serious rights violations detailed in the report involved the Rwandan civilian and military authorities. Commission members had uncovered two cemeteries during their investigations.

One case detailed by the commission involved the massacre by government troops of between 500 and 1,000 people suspected of being members of the FPR in the first few months of the civil war.

Following publication of the report, Belgium announced it was withdrawing its ambassador for consultations and warned it could reassess its civilian and military cooperation policy with its former African colony.
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