

Toll of tribal fighting in Rwanda "could be 300": rights group

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BRUSSELS, March 8 (AFP) - The bodies of 30 people killed in tribal fighting in southeastern Rwanda have been identified and as many as 300 people may have died overall, a human rights group said here Sunday.

An earlier toll from informed sources in Kigali, later confirmed by the Rwandan Embassy here, said that 15 people had died in the fighting overnight Friday in the Bugesera region.

More than 6,000 Tutsi, the minority tribe in Rwanda, fled their homes to take refuge at a Catholic mission at Nyamata since clashes broke out overnight Wednesday, officials in the east African country estimated.

The Committee for the Respect of Human Rights and Democracy in Rwanda (CRDDR) said that the bodies of 18 people had been taken to a dispensary at Nyamata, in southeastern Rwanda, and immediately buried on orders of the authorities.

Most of the victims were Tutsi, the committee said in a statement.

Other people were killed or burned alive in hilly districts in the region, and estimates of the number of victims range "from several dozen to more than 300", the CRDDR said.

Arson and looting were continuing and Rwandan troops have arrested 70 people, it said.

Diplomatic sources in Rwanda said Sunday that paramilitary police were patrolling the whole region. They had arrested 48 people and imposed a 12-hour dusk to dawn curfew.

Tension between the Tutsi and the majority Hutu, who hold power in Rwanda, had been mounting in Bugesera and Kanzenze, south of the capital, since March 1 when the opposition Liberal Party staged a rally.

The CRDDR said the refugees from the fighting needed blankets and medicaments. The strife-torn region did not have a single doctor, it added.

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