

Aid workers report bloodbath at Rwanda hospital

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NAIROBI, April 25 (Reuter) - Troops and gunmen killed up to 150 patients, as well as nurses and drivers, from a hospital in southern Rwanda because they were members of Rwanda's minority Tutsi tribe, witnesses said on Monday.

Dr Rony Zacharias of the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) told Reuters the killings took place over three days at the central hospital in the southern city of Butare, 25 miles (40 km) from the border with Burundi.

"For patients, anything between 100 and 150 disappeared. We saw the bodies of some. Others disappeared. I am certain they were killed," he said from the Burundian capital Bujumbura by telephone.

"We saw the bodies of two Rwandese MSF drivers who were killed and a nurse who was beaten to death...Everything is out of control in Rwanda. It is a complete state of anarchy," he added.

"The killings at the hospital took place over the past three days...They were carried out by people in military uniform and armed civilians who took part in the massacres."

His was the latest account of massacres in Rwanda since the killing of President Juvenal Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart when the plane in which they were travelling was shot down on April 6.

Zacharias, who evacuated all MSF international staff to Burundi from Butare on Sunday, said the troops and militiamen killed Tutsis lying wounded in the hospital and others when they left after receiving treatment for their injuries.

"The killings were in the hospital and also in the refugee camps nearby. Tutsi members of staff were separated and killed and others disappeared. Anyone who is a Tutsi and is found on the street is absolutely certain to be killed," he said.

"I had people who entered the hospital and pulled out my patients and killed them. We even had one patient who we were stitching up and he was pulled out by military people and murdered.

"A lot of our local staff ran for their lives when we left."

He said the killings took place in spite of appeals to Rwandan authorities to respect MSF personnel and their work.

Other members of his team corroborated his account of what he described as a systematic "ethnic cleansing" of Tutsi civilians apparently by members of Rwanda's Hutu majority.

Zacharias said on the road to the border with Burundi after leaving Butare on Sunday "the whole landscape was littered with bodies" and in the space of

five minutes he counted 30 corpses of men, women and children floating down the river on the border.

He urged the international community, especially the United Nations, to provide a minimum level of security so international aid agencies could operate in the chaotic central African country.

The U.N. Security Council on Thursday ordered the 2,500-strong U.N. Assistance Mission in Rwanda to cut its forces to a bare minimum of 270 peacekeepers.

Aid agencies said that as a result they feared tens of thousands of civilians would be left unprotected.

"There is a great need for humanitarian aid in Rwanda. It was facing famine even before this problem broke out. But we need a minimum level of security and protection for civilians to work," Zacharias said.

"What hits me most is the thought of my Rwandese personnel I left behind. Those we left behind have no hope. All I can think about are the bodies I left behind under our MSF flags stained with blood."

On Sunday, journalists in rebel-controlled territory just south of the Rwandan capital Kigali came across a pile of 100 rotting corpses in Nyanza district and more bodies spilling out of mud huts.

Survivors said most of the dead were Tutsis, killed by militiamen who threw grenades into a crowd rounded up by troops as they tried to reach the U.N.-protected national stadium in Kigali.

Aid agencies estimate 100,000 people have been slaughtered in Arica's worst tribal bloodletting since an estimated 100,000 people, mainly Hutus, were killed in Burundi in 1972.

In Kinshasa, a Rwandan government delegation said on Sunday it had signed a ceasefire brokered by Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko but the country's rebel movement failed to show up for the ceremony.

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