

Anti-junta protest in Bujumbura as parties call general strike

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BUJUMBURA, Oct 24 (AFP) - Nearly 1,000 youths marched through Burundi's capital Sunday in a demonstration against the coup in which president Melchior Ndadaye was reported killed, as four political parties called for a general strike.

Before Sunday's acts of defiance, two presumed coup leaders publicly denied any part in Thursday's putsch against the first head of the central African state from its ethnic Hutu majority by the Tutsi-dominated army.

The plotters offered to return power to the elected government, provided that an amnesty was given them, a proposal rejected by government officials holed up in foreign missions here.

Two ministers of the ousted government told foreign radio services that Ndadaye, who was elected in the nation's first multi-party elections on June 1, was definitely dead.

The protestors who marched through the capital made the clenched fist salute of Ndadaye's Burundi Democratic Front and carried green branches - as a symbol of both peace and the BDF.

They demanded that the coup-makers step down and hand over Ndadaye's body.

Security forces monitored the demonstration but did not intervene.

At least 12,000 Burundis fearing violence have fled to Tanzania, Tanzanian Prime Minister John Malecela said Sunday. Previously U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees' officials said 80,000 Burundis have taken refuge in neighbouring Rwanda.

Earlier Public Service Minister Leonard Nyangoma told Radio Rwanda, in a broadcast widely heard here, there was "no doubt" that Ndadaye had been killed.

Communications Minister Jean-Marie Nguedayo [Ngendahayo] told

Radio France Internationale: "The president of the republic was killed by a commando in a Bujumbura military camp during the morning of October 21 around 10 o'clock.

"He was taken in an armoured

car with his wife and children from the presidential palace to the camp. There he was taken aside and shot in cold-blood."

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