

Armed men attack school, military hospital

Damien Ntiranyuhura

AFP, January 23, 1995

BUJUMBURA, Jan 23 (AFP) - Armed men threw two grenades into a vocational school in the Burundian capital Bujumbura on Monday, killing a pupil, hours after a gang attacked the military hospital here, wounding a soldier.

The grenades were hurled on to the premises of the training college in the northern Kamenge district of the capital, inhabited mainly by people of the Hutu ethnic majority, witnesses told AFP.

Overnight Sunday, about 50 men dressed in black assaulted the hospital, wounding a soldier from the Tutsi-dominated army and setting fire to a vehicle before going on to attack houses, the national radio reported.

One of the assailants was killed during the raid, which observers blamed on Hutu extremists opposed to a power-sharing pact between the Hutu-led government and the minority Tutsis of the central African highland nation.

The attackers, who were thought to come from Hutu militia forces the army drove out of northern Bujumbura into the surrounding hills in May last year, subsequently damaged several houses and wrecked a score of cars in the mainly Tutsi South-Matanga district in the west of the city.

The raid on the hospital came during a curfew in force between 7:00 p.m. (1700 GMT) and 5:00 a.m. (0300 GMT), which was imposed on December 21 amid the bloodshed that followed the election of a Hutu, Jean Minani, as parliamentary speaker.

Minani, accused of being an extremist by his detractors, stood down, but he denied claims that he had called for the slaughter of Tutsis following a foiled military coup in October 1993, in which the country's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndaye, was killed.

On Sunday, Interior Minister Jean-Baptiste Manwangari extended

the curfew to the troubled northern province of Kirundo on the border with Rwanda, which was last year wracked by carnage between its own Hutus and Tutsi minority that claimed up to a million lives.

Both former Belgian colonies have a history of bloodshed between the two communities.

On January 15, unidentified assailants killed five people and injured 30 others in a grenade attack during Mass in a Roman Catholic church service in Kirundo province.

The coalition government in Bujumbura has accused former interior minister, Leonard Nyangoma, a hard-line Hutu who lives in exile in Zaire, and his armed supporters of waging a violent campaign to destabilise the country.

Scores of people have been killed in raids and arson attacks on villages and terror operations, including grenade attacks on the main market in the capital Bujumbura, in recent

weeks.

Nyangoma is a dissident from the Hutu majority Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) and opposes the power-sharing agreement signed in September last year.

The pact was aimed at preventing the central African country from plunging into an ethnic bloodbath of the kind that wracked Rwanda. The murder of Ndadaye sparked off the massacre of tens of thousands of people in Burundi, but the government survived.

Burundi's second Hutu president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, was killed in the same plane crash in Rwanda on April 6 last year as that country's president, Juvenal Habyarimana.

The suspected rocket attack on the aircraft unleashed three months of ethnic carnage before the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front seized power in Kigali in July.

dn-sa/nb AFP AFP