

Belgium sends aid to Burundi refugees in Rwanda

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BRUSSELS, Oct 23 (AFP) - Belgium said here Saturday that it was sending two plane-loads of emergency aid to Rwanda in order to help refugees streaming there from neighbouring Burundi following the coup d'etat there on Thursday.

The Belgian foreign ministry said the first plane-load was leaving late Saturday and the second on Sunday, headed via Kigali for the border between the two countries.

A statement from the Belgian authorities said the aid, worth 30 million Belgian francs (800,000 dollars) would include medicines, water purification systems and tents.

The operation is being conducted jointly with the charity Medecins sans Frontieres (MSF) and the Red Cross.

The MSF said in a statement that there had been a massive flood of

refugees crossing the length of the Burundi border into Rwanda.

It said up to 30,000 refugees had crowded into the Butari region and that more were streaming into Cyanugu along the western border area and into Kibungo to the east.

The MSF statement said that aid workers were trying to enter Burundi to assess the refugee situation there, but were having difficulty getting past armed barricades just across the border.

"Since yesterday, armed soldiers have been deployed on the main road to Bujumbura, preventing all transport. Each time our team had to turn back at the first barricade just a few kilometres inside Burundi," it said.

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