

Burundi unity government survives ultimatum

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BUJUMBURA, Dec 7 (AFP) - Burundi's fledgling unity government of majority Hutus and minority Tutsis survived Wednesday despite a threat by the Tutsis to pull out unless an alleged Hutu warmonger was sacked as parliamentary speaker.

The Tutsi-led Unity for National Progress (UPRONA) party had issued an ultimatum to the government, saying it would call on its ministers to resign if parliamentary speaker Jean Minani was not sacked by Tuesday.

"We did not want to precipitate decisions," UPRONA leader Charles Mukasi said. "We are holding talks, but we shall not go on talking indefinitely," he said Wednesday.

Mukasi had earlier called on Prime Minister Anatole Kanyenkiko, a UPRONA member, to stand down unless Minani was sacked.

But Kanyenkiko called on people to show "patience". He has distanced himself from party hardliners and refused to take part in a anti-Minani de-

monstration called by UPRONA on Monday.

He told national radio Sunday : "I am here in the national interest." He said he stood by the power-sharing convention the government signed in September to enshrine Tutsi opposition participation in government.

Meanwhile, Burundi President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya Wednesday called on the international community to help organise an international conference on security in the region.

"There is a danger that if nothing is done, the region will burn," he told reporters.

Such a conference should involve Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Tanzania and Uganda, Ntibantunganya said.

The mainly Hutu Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) won last year's presidential and general elections, but fear of ethnic war, like that which erupted in neighbouring Rwanda, led to a coalition government being set up in October.

Last Friday, UPRONA deputies stormed out of parliament, where they have 16 seats against 65 for FRODEBU, following Minani's election as assembly speaker.

In October last year, Minani publicly called on Burundians to armed resistance after officers in the Tutsi-led army killed the first Hutu President Melchior Ndadaye in a failed coup.

UPRONA officials said Minani's appointment was the last straw and have demanded that he stand down.

The country's first elected Hu-

tu regime survived, but about 50,000 people were believed to have been slaughtered in a wave of ethnic killing that followed the coup bid.

Burundi itself might have gone the same way as Rwanda when Ndadaye's successor, Cyprien Ntaryamira, was killed along with Rwanda's Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana in a suspected rocket attack on their plane at Kigali airport on April 6.

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