

Hundreds of Burundian refugees said to mass at Tanzanian border

AFP, April 11, 1994

DAR ES SALAAM, April 11 (AFP) - Hundreds of Burundians fleeing possible trouble in their country after the death of their president are massing on the Burundi-Tanzanian border, seeking to enter Tanzania, reports reaching here said Monday.

Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira and Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana died in a plane crash near Kigali airport in neighbouring Rwanda on Wednesday night as they were returning from a one-day regional summit in Tanzania on the ethnic and political crisis in their neighbouring countries.

The Rwandan authorities said that the Rwandan leader's presidential jet had been shot down by a rocket attack, a claim that triggered orgies of massacres of minority Tutsis by the Hutu-dominated Rwandan army.

But Burundi had been reported quiet in the wake of the president's

death.

Monday's reports said that the Burundian refugees – mainly members of the majority Hutus – were fleeing feared imminent reprisal attacks by Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army for the ongoing mass killings by the army in Rwanda.

The Burundian army has itself been on the rampage against Hutu civilians in their country, killing hundreds of thousands and displacing more than 700,000 others staging an unsuccessful coup in October in which President Melchior Ndadaye was killed.

Ndadaye was the first elected president from the Hutu majority.

At least 500,000 Burundians fled into Tanzania after the failed military putsch in Bujumbura.

Tanzania, which has taken a leading role in mediating efforts to bring peace to Rwanda and Burundi, complains that the persistent influx of

refugees from two countries is overstretching its resources and creating social problems for the impoverished east African nation.

Foreign affairs principal secretary Ibrahim Msabaha told AFP that the Tanzanian government had appealed to the warring parties in Rwanda to stop fighting to save the lives of innocent Rwandans and foreign nationals.

Msabaha said that Dar es Salaam was ready to continue with the role of facilitator in the Rwanda crisis,

and urged the Rwandan government and mainly Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front to implement the Arusha peace accord they signed last August in Tanzania.

Tanzania was also making arrangements to evacuate its nationals, including embassy staff, from Rwanda, where heavy fighting continued between the army and RPF rebels, the foreign ministry said.

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