

# Fear stalks refugee huts of displaced Hutus in Cyanika

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CYANIKA, Rwanda, June 28 (AFP) - Scores of huts fashioned from freshly-cut foliage cover the dusty hills around Cyankika, in southwestern Rwanda, are now home to 40,000 displaced Hutus.

They have lived in constant fear of attack from Tutsi rebels in the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) since arriving in the area several weeks ago.

Near the village church, which marks the entrance to this refugee camp, hundreds of adults stand around listlessly along with children clad in rags, their faces marked by the terror they have witnessed.

Anxious to glean any information they can, people ask French soldiers if they have any news. A reconnaissance patrol parachutists on Monday reached Gikongoro prefecture, just six kilometres (four miles) from here.

The refugees do not fear the French force in the Operation Turquoise humanitarian mission, which is designed to protect civilians caught up in ethnic bloodletting that was sparked by the death in a suspicious plane crash of President Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6.

What they are afraid of is what will happen over the coming days.

Chased from regions now under rebel control, they say each of them has to survive on about a kilo of the beans, distributed by the Caritas aid organisation, for up to a week.

"We need food quickly and something to warm people," explained village elder Desire Ngezahayo. Nights are cool and fresh in hilly parts of Rwanda and precious few trees remain around the camp. Most have already been felled.

Camp officials say sanitary conditions for people living there are now giving cause for concern. Malaria is spreading, dysentery also poses a threat

and there are no latrines.

The nearest available drinking water is a kilometre away in the valley, but there is no means of pumping it.

"One of my five children is suffering from malaria and there is nothing to eat. Life is just too bad," says Joachim Mtibayazi, who fled the capital Kigali in late April.

After stopping several times along the way, he arrived in Cyanika a fortnight ago.

Fear of the rebels pushed him and his fellow refugees to abandon their homes.

"The RPF want to harm us and they are not far away," Mtibayazi explains, pointing to the mountains in the distance where the rebels are believed grouped.

People at the camp say they are terrified the RPF will soon arrive in the region, where Tutsis have been slaughtered in organised massacres carried out by Hutu militia.

Village elder Ngezahayo carried out a camp census a week ago showing 40,047 displaced persons there and a further 4,111 based in the village itself living with relatives.

But about 1,000 new arrivals turn up every day, leading to severe overcrowding.

The fears expressed by the new arrivals only fuel those of the rest. Yet nobody appears to have a tale to tell of their own relatives having been butchered by the rebels. They all fled before the RPF forces caught up with them.

Mtibayazi speaks for his fellow refugees in Cyanika when he says that "we hope the French will enable us to return home ... and that soon there will again be peace in Rwanda."

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