

Hundreds of Hutu schoolchildren flee Burundi for Tanzania

Damien Ntiranyuhura

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BUJUMBURA, Feb 24 (AFP) - More than 500 Hutu schoolchildren from Rugari in violence-torn northeast Burundi have taken refuge in Tanzania, headmaster Bernard Ndikumana said Friday.

The children fled on Saturday, leaving the school in the Muyinga province town with just 180 pupils, he said.

Almst 20,000 people from the country's Hutu majority, most of them already refugees from neighbouring Rwanda, have crossed the border because of repressive operations by the army, dominated by the country's Tutsi minority, after an attack by armed Hutu extremists.

One soldier was killed and several others were wounded during the assault last week on an army post at Giteranyi by members of the Hutu People's Liberation Party (PALIPEHUTU).

A military source, meanwhile,

said that unidentified assailants opened fire overnight Thursday on a gendarmerie base in the Cibitoke district of northern Bujumbura, where Tutsis form the vast majority of residents.

The attack, apparently by Hutu extremists taking advantage of a power cut to infiltrate the district, caused no casualties, the source added.

Burundi has rocked from one ethnic and political crisis to another since the assassination in October 1993 of its first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, in a foiled army coup which the government survived. The coup sparked a wave of killings in which around 50,000 died.

After lengthy negotiations last year, the Tutsi opposition joined Hutus in a coalition government aimed at staving off the kind of ethnic carnage that swept Rwanda between April and June, when between

500,000 and a million people, mainly Tutsis, were massacred by Hutu extremists and soldiers.

In the latest political twist in this central African highland nation, a new prime minister, Antoine Nduwayo, was appointed this week in place of Anatole Kanyenkiko. Both men come from the mainly Tutsi opposition Union for National Progress (UPRONA), which had accused Kanyenkiko of becoming a pup-

pet of the Hutu majority party.

Nduwayo has yet to name his government team.

On Thursday, President Syvestre Ntibantunganya convened the premier, party leaders and senior professionals for talks on the political future and the re-establishment of state institutions, warning that the risk of genocide remained.

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