

Interim premier says he is ready to respect peace accords

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KIGALI, April 12 (AFP) - Rwanda's interim prime minister said his government was ready to comply with eight-month-old peace accords to end the ethnic warfare in the country provided there was no "cheating."

"We see no reason to start negotiations from scratch," despite the fighting between government forces and rebels from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), Prime Minister Jean Kambanda told AFP late Monday.

"We want a truce, that would allow us to open overall negotiations on a ceasefire, then political negotiations," he said.

The RPF has refused to recognize the interim government which it says has only members opposed to the rebels. Rebel reinforcements Monday were reported to have advanced to the outskirts of the city amid fresh fighting in the capital as UN commanders tried to secure a truce between the

two sides.

Kambanda said he saw no problem with provisions in the peace accord signed last August in Arusha, Tanzania, that gave the RPF five ministers and 11 deputies, saying he felt divisions among political parties and "individual initiatives" of certain leaders had prevented implementation of the accord.

The UN-brokered agreement to end three years of civil war was signed by the RPF, composed largely of the Tutsi ethnic minority, and the government of Rwanda's long-standing president Juvenal Habyarimana from the Hutu majority that has dominated Rwandan politics.

It was to bring rebels into a broad-based transition government and parliament prior to elections next year, but efforts never progressed before Habyarimana's death in a plane crash Wednesday that touched off new massacres and left thousands dead as

France and Belgium, the former colonial power, sent in troops to evacuate foreigners.

Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene warned Monday Brussels might pull out its 450 UN troops in Rwanda since last year to oversee the peace accords. He said Foreign Minister Willy Claes would meet with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to discuss the issue.

Kambanda, a member of the main opposition group the Democratic Republican Movement, said certain political leaders, including ministers, had "tried to keep out members of their own parties in favor of the RPF" in talks on the transition government.

"People's frustrations built up, and exploded in the rage triggered by the death of the head of state," he said.

Kambanda said one of the obstacles to a truce to end the latest blood-letting was the RPF's demand to negotiate directly with the army and not with the interim government.

The interim government, most of whose members are staying in a hotel in the capital Kigali, also has "questions" about how the 600 RPF troops who arrived in Kigali obtained heavy weapons, he said. Kambanda said

they were only to be armed under treaty provisions with light weapons for their mission to ensure protection of RPF leaders in the capital.

One member of the government said the RPF Monday destroyed an army tank "with a rocket they were not supposed to have."

Some Hutu politicians have viewed Belgium as pro-Tutsi, but Kambanda has refused to join in their accusations that the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda – which includes Ghanaians and Bangladeshi troops along with the Belgians – did not correctly monitor RPF troops or that Belgium supplied the rebels with arms.

Ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed Thursday by the Rwandan presidential guard, and at least three Belgian civilians have also been reported killed in the fighting.

Kambada would not confirm reports that Habyarimana's plane was shot down, but he said he had "just learned" that Rwandan army troops prevented UN soldiers from examining the plane and he would "negotiate with the army to resolve this problem."

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