

# Key facts about Rwanda

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KIGALI, April 7 (Reuter) – These are the key facts about Rwanda, the central African state whose President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed along with the president of neighbouring Burundi in a rocket attack on their plane :

POPULATION : An estimated eight million. The largest tribe is the Hutu, a Bantu people who account for an estimated 85 percent of the population. The Tutsi make up about 14 percent and there are small numbers of Twa.

RELIGION : About 40 percent are Roman Catholics, and there are smaller numbers who belong to other Christian churches. About half the population holds traditional beliefs. There are also small numbers of Baha'is and Moslems.

AREA : 26,338 square km (10,169 square miles). Rwanda is bordered by Burundi to the south, Zaire to the west across Lake Kivu, Uganda to the north and Tanzania to the east.

CAPITAL : Kigali, population about 120,000. The percentage of population living in towns or cities has grown in recent years but remained a comparatively low eight percent in 1991, according to the World Bank. Most Rwandans live in the countryside where they have small farms in one of the most densely populated countries on earth, with an estimated 304 people per square km.

ARMED FORCES : The army has 5,200 men in one commando battalion, one reconnaissance company, eight infantry companies and one engineering company. The 200-man air force has two combat aircraft and no armed helicopters. There is no navy. There is also a 1,200-man gendarmerie and a French force consisting of 400 men in two infantry companies. (Source : The International Institute for Strategic Studies).

ECONOMY : Rwanda is one of the world's poorest countries with per capita income estimated by the World Bank at \$ 270 a year in 1991. Most people are subsistence farmers. Average annual rainfall of 785mm (31 inches) is barely sufficient for agriculture but two wet seasons make two crops possible. The major cash crop is coffee, which accounts for about 80 percent of export earnings. Other key crops are bananas, sweet potatoes, cassava, beans, sorghum, rice, maize and peas. Total GDP in 1991 was \$ 1.5 billion, with agriculture accounting for \$ 812 million, or about 54 percent. Rwanda and the International Monetary Fund announced a structural adjustment programme in 1990, but implementation was hindered by a rebel invasion.

HISTORY : A rebel invasion from Uganda in 1990 by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) with a force of an estimated 10,000 guerrillas, predominantly of

the minority but formerly ruling Tutsi tribe, plunged Rwanda into turmoil. The invaders, who at one point reached Kigali before being repulsed by government troops, ended two decades of political stability. Rwanda had been famed among tourists for its rare mountain gorillas and called itself the Switzerland of Africa. But this image was shattered by the fierce, predominantly tribal fighting. The war killed thousands of people and uprooted close to a million.

The invasion did prompt movement towards political reform by President Habyarimana, who took power in a coup in 1973. A peace treaty was signed by Habyarimana and RPF leader Alex Kanyarengwe in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha in August of last year. But the Tutsi-dominated RPF rebels blamed Habyarimana for repeated delays in forming a new government and parliament to end the civil war.

The hostilities between the two tribes are nothing new. The majority Hutu ended Tutsi dominance of the country in a bloody rebellion in 1959, three years before independence from Belgium. That year and over the next 15 years, tens of thousands of Tutsis fled to neighbouring countries, mostly Uganda. At least 100,000 people were killed in the fighting.

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