

Rwanda Rivals Edge Towards Ceasefire Deal

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By Sam Kiley in Nyarubuye, Eastern Rwanda.

RWANDA'S rebels and government troops agreed to the principle of a ceasefire during talks yesterday, but the rebels wanted to discuss issues relating to mass killings at another meeting this week, participants at the talks said.

The Rwandan Patriotic Front delegation wanted a reply on their demand for the closure of the extremist Hutu radio RTL, which has incited the mass killings and which again yesterday urged people to take up arms against the minority Tutsi tribe.

Delegates from both sides met in Kigali for the first time since fighting started two months ago and discussed the ceasefire proposal tabled by the United Nations. They agreed to allow the continued evacuation of civilians trapped in the capital. So far the UN has been able to evacuate about 1,500 Tutsis trapped by the Hutu-dominated government's murderous militia behind government lines, and

sent a few Hutu who wanted to cross from rebel areas to the government-held territory.

Civilians continued to flood out of Kigali towards Gitarama, where the government has its temporary base. Members of what the rebels call the "clique of murderers" have also been spotted in Butare, to the south, and Kibuye, on the border with Zaire in the west.

Paul Kagame, the leader of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's military wing, said before the talks opened that he had little hope for their success. But clearly the government's forces, in agreeing to meet the rebels, who refuse to talk to the government's civilian leadership, were interested in a ceasefire.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed in the government-orchestrated genocide of Tutsis and opposition supporters, many of them Hutus. Among the victims were 5,000 people who sought sanctuary in the seminary at Nyarubuye, eastern

Rwanda. Here corpses from the massacre on April 12 at the hands of the army and the interahamwe (“those who kill together”) the youth wing of the ruling Revolutionary Movement for National Development are stacked three or four high in five classrooms and a barn. Others, mainly children, lie dead where they were decapitated running from the carnage. Their skulls lie several feet away from their bodies. A pile of bones lies inside the church next to the baptismal register.

Hardened members of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which has been fighting to overthrow the country’s one-party state since 1990, blanched and rushed from the scene. Every step had to be taken over the remains of a dead civilian.

Sister Ernest Nyiramugani, 53, was one of two survivors of the mas-

sacre. She hid under a pile of clothes in the church vestry. The other was a priest who remains too ill with shock to speak or walk.

Sister Ernest said : “Because of the massacres that had started in the rest of the country people, Hutu and Tutsi, rushed to the church for safety. When the militia arrived the priests tried to protect the people from them. The militias came from out of town but were organised by the mayor (Sylvestre Gacumbitsi, who has since fled to Tanzania).

“The priests saw that they could not stop the militias and so told the people to defend themselves. This they did and fought off the militias. So then the militia went and got the army. After they came with their machineguns and grenades, only myself and the other priest were left alive.”