

More than 10,000 Rwandan refugees return home

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KIGALI, Jan 19 (AFP) - More than 10,000 Rwandans who had been housed in refugee camps in southwestern Rwanda have returned to their homes as part of a month-long UN operation, UN officials here said Thursday.

Captain Stephane Grenier said in a communique that those who returned to their homes as part of "Operation Return" were ethnic Hutus. He said several hundred thousands additional refugees still in the camps now also have the opportunity to return to their homes.

The Hutu refugees fled to a so-called humanitarian zone in the

southwestern part of the country to escape from advancing Tutsi troops.

The UN operation to repatriate them began in late December after the Rwandan government threatened to forcibly move the refugees out of the camps, which also house extremist Hutu militiamen opposed to the repatriation.

The refugee camps in Rwanda and neighboring countries were set up in response to ethnic bloodletting between Hutus and Tutsi following the death of president Juvenal Habyarimana in a suspected rocket attack on his plane.

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