

# HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH/ARMS PROJECT

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### **RWANDA -- FOREIGN FORCES, FOREIGN WEAPONS, AND ABUSES**

Earlier this year, the Arms Project of Human Rights Watch released a report detailing the role that foreign forces and foreign weapons played in the killing and abuse of thousands of civilians during Rwanda's civil war from 1990 to 1993. The tragic events of the past week make the findings and conclusions of this report all the more important and urgent.

The report documents how the proliferation of weapons in Rwanda over the past three years has contributed to massive human rights abuses. While the government and Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels are primarily responsible for the abuses, France, Egypt, South Africa, Uganda and other nations that provided arms and military support to the combatants while knowing their disrespect for human rights also bear responsibility for abusive civilian deaths.

France, which is identified as the major military backer of the government of Rwanda, is singled out for criticism for arming, training, and providing combat assistance to a Rwandan army guilty of massive human rights abuses, and for failing to pressure the Rwandan government to curb human rights violations. The report states that, despite France's denials, the activities of its troops in Rwanda during the war were "tantamount to direct participation in the war."

Given this past involvement, it is essential that the French troops recently deployed to Rwanda, especially those controlling the airport, be replaced with neutral forces from other countries. A return to all-out civil war, with even higher levels of bloodshed and human rights atrocities, appears imminent. If there is to be any hope of avoiding this, the international community must try to broker a truce between the Rwandan army and the RPF.



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During the past three years, Rwanda has been flooded with weapons, ensuring an appalling toll in the event of renewed civil war. The Human Rights Watch report uncovers a secret \$6 million arms deal between Egypt and the government of Rwanda, involving artillery, mortars, landmines and Kalashnikov rifles. It also provides details on a \$5.9 million arms deal with South Africa, made in contravention of the United Nations Security Council resolution opposing arms imports from South Africa.

Uganda is identified as the main provider of military assistance to the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which is also guilty of widespread human rights abuses. Uganda has officially denied providing any military assistance to the RPF.

The report recommends:

- \* A one-year moratorium on all lethal arms shipments to Rwanda.

- \* All countries which choose to sell arms or provide military assistance to any party in Rwanda should legally and explicitly condition it upon the human rights performance of the recipient. Weapons of increased lethality and technological sophistication should not be introduced into Rwanda. All governments, including Egypt, France, South Africa, and Uganda, should fully disclose the nature of their military assistance and arms transfers to the RPF and Rwandan government.

- \* French, Ugandan, and Zairian troops should not be redeployed to Rwanda and should not participate in any United Nations peacekeeping efforts, because of their past role in the conflict.

- \* The mission of United Nations peacekeeping forces ought explicitly to include monitoring human rights violations and arms acquisitions by any party. The Rwandan government and the RPF should destroy weapons rendered unnecessary by the war's end under the supervision of international monitors.

The report, titled "Arming Rwanda: The Arms Trade and Human Rights Abuses in the Rwandan War," is based on investigations by Frank Smyth, a journalist and consultant to the Arms Project who visited Rwanda and Uganda in 1993.

Copies of "Arming Rwanda" are available for \$3 from:  
Publications Department, Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017.