

Rwanda government condemns Burundi coup

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NAIROBI, Oct 21 (AFP) - Rwandan strongly condemned Thursday's coup bid in Burundi where troops backed by tanks arrested President Melchior Ndadaye, the first head of state from the Hutu majority, and several of his ministers.

In a statement broadcast by Rwandan national radio, monitored here, the Kigali government said it supported President Ndadaye, who is believed to be under detention in a military barracks in Bujumbura.

The radio also reported that several thousand people in Burundi's Gisega region neighbouring Rwanda staged demonstrations earlier on Thursday to protest against the reported coup in their country.

According to the radio, quoting its correspondent at the border, the demonstrators carried placards with inscriptions reading: "We are fed up with coups. We want democracy to prevail".

Earlier on Thursday the radio reported that Tutsi troops of the tradi-

tionally ruling Tutsi minority, backed by tanks, had arrested Ndadaye, who was elected in June.

The putschists are apparently said to be seeking to return former president Jean-Baptiste Bagaza to power.

Bagaza, who returned to the country from exile in July, ruled the country from 1976 to 1987 before he was overthrown in a military coup by Major Pierre Buyoya.

Buyoya was defeated on June 1 by Ndadaye in the first democratic elections in the central African nation since independence from Belgium in 1962.

Like neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi has been wracked by outbreaks of violence between majority Hutus and their traditional minority Tutsi overlords.

Some 200,000 Hutus were massacred in 1972, and another wave of violence claimed at least 5,000 lives in 1988, according to official figures.

Observers had hoped that the

Hutu-Tutsi enmity had come to an end with the election of the Hutu president and his subsequent designation of Tutsi Prime Minister Sylvie Kinigi to head the new democratically elected government.

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