

## Rwanda to demobilise 13,000 soldiers in deal with rebels

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NAIROBI, May 10 (AFP) - Rwanda's government has agreed to demobilise 13,000 soldiers and 6,000 policemen over the next nine months as a goodwill gesture aimed at ending the civil war, state radio said Monday.

The rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front had demanded the demobilisation at peace talks with the government in Tanzania, according to the radio, monitored in Nairobi.

The government and rebels have agreed to form a joint army, but are locked in a dispute over the number of soldiers each side will contribute.

The government has refused to allow rebel guerrillas to join the gendarmerie, a national police force under military command.

Rwanda increased its army from 5,000 soldiers to nearly 40,000 after the rebels invaded from neighbouring Uganda in October 1990.

The rebels claim 15,000 fighters,

but diplomats estimate their strength at 10,000 to 12,000.

The already fragile economy of Rwanda, Africa's most densely populated country, has been brought to its knees by the two-and-a-half-year war.

Nearly a million of the tiny central African country's estimated seven million people have fled their homes, disrupting agriculture in the fertile north, though some have since returned. Daily relief flights carry food to Rwanda.

Thousands of civilians are believed to have been slaughtered in tribal massacres blamed on both sides.

The rebels are mainly exiles of the minority Tutsi tribe fighting the Hutu-dominated army loyal to President Juvenal Habyarimana.

Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis, Rwanda's traditional rulers, fled to neighbouring countries to escape

massacres in the late 1950s as the runup to independence from Belgium.  
Hutus seized power from them in the str/dc/nb AFP AFP SEQN-0050