

## Senior UN official deploras prison conditions in Rwanda

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NAIROBI, March 4 (AFP) - The UN envoy to Rwanda Shahryar Khan said Saturday that conditions in prisons in the central African country were so bad that inmates were living under a virtual "death sentence".

He criticised the international community for not acting fast enough to help Rwanda establish a judicial system to try an estimated 23,000 people suspected of participating in attempted genocide there last year.

The jails were so congested that an average of 45 prisoners were dying daily of diseases in jails around the country, originally build to accommodate 4,000 prisoners, Khana told a press conference here.

"It is physically not possible to push more people into the prisons," Khan said and appealed to donors to help the cash-strapped Rwandan regime to build temporary detentions camps urgently.

He said the 600 million dollars

pledged by donors at a meeting in Geneva in December was too slow in coming and problems were accumulating for Rwanda's new government.

"The international community has not focused sufficient attention on the problems of Rwanda," Khan said.

He said that his assessment was that between 30 and 40 percent of people being held in prison would be set free for lack of sufficient evidence if trials started.

The number of Rwandan refugees returning to the country from camps in Zaire was increasing with between 400 and 700 returnees arriving daily, Khan said, adding that there was now less intimidation of the refugees by groups of Hutu militants who previously threatened with death people willing to go back to Rwanda.

Displaced people in camps inside Rwanda were also beginning to return to their homes and Rwandan government ministers would soon start go-

ing into the camps to encourage people to return to their villages.

Rwandan plunged into mainly ethnic bloodletting after President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a suspected rocket attack on his plane on April 6 last year.

Between 500,000 and a million people – most of them members of the minority Tutsi tribe – are estimated to have been killed in the vio-

lence, perpetrated mainly by militant gangs from Habyarimana's majority Hutu group.

The mainly Tutsi Rwanda Patriotic Front formed a government in Rwanda in July after defeating troops loyal to Habyarimana and the Hutu militias.

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