

US denounces genocide in Rwanda, clan warfare in Somalia

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WASHINGTON, Feb 1 (AFP) - The massacre last year of half a million Rwandans, most of them ethnic Tutsi, was one of the worst genocides in modern history, the United States charged Wednesday in a report on human rights worldwide.

The death of president Juvenal Habyarimana on April 6 unleashed a torrent of political and ethnic killings that have left the country shattered by a massive refugee crisis and inflamed rivalries, the State Department report said.

"Over the next four months, approximately half a million people, most of them ethnic Tutsi, were murdered in one of the swiftest, large-scale genocides in modern history," the report said.

Some 12,000 prisoners accused of war crimes or genocide are being held in harsh conditions at the Kigali Central Prison and at other facilities, the report said.

Two-thirds of the population was uprooted in the violence: two million Rwandans fled to refugee camps in neighboring Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi and two million others escaped to other parts of the country.

"Many Hutu refugees and displaced persons still fear repatriation," the report said, adding that extremist Hutus have vowed to rearm and renew the civil war.

Ten Belgian soldiers from a UN peacekeeping mission were killed in the violence as were two French gendarmes and their wives.

The State Department also cited "worsening conditions" in Somalia where ongoing tribal warfare prompted the UN Security Council to order the withdrawal of its 10,000 troops by March 31.

The State Department noted "there were few reports of abuses by UNOSOM troops in 1994, in part because of the changes in UNOSOM's

mission and the withdrawal of a significant percentage of foreign troops.”

The report did not mention brutal beatings of Somalis by Canadian soldiers serving in the peacekeeping mission.

There were continuing reports of extrajudicial killings, harassment, detention, rape and kidnappings, the State Department said.

On Nigeria, the State Department said the restoration of democracy was postponed as military ruler General Sani Abacha continued to reject the

outcome of the June 1993 presidential election.

US officials also deplored the July 1994 military coup in Gambia that toppled President Dawda Jawara who is currently in exile.

But the report hailed the election of Nelson Mandela to South Africa’s presidency as a triumph for democracy and said the end of apartheid had greatly contributed to reducing violence in the country.

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