

DOCUMENTS DHA, INTEGRATE REGIONAL INFORMATION NETWORK
TABLES DES MATIERES / TABLE OF CONTENTS

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 33 on eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 34 on eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 35 on eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 32 on Eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 36 on Eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 37 on eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 56 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 57 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No.58 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No.59 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No.60 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No.61 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No.62 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 52 on eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 53 on eastern Zaire](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 54 on the Great Lakes](#)

[IRIN Emergency Update No. 55 on the Great Lakes](#)

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IRIN Emergency Update No. 33 on eastern Zaire

UNITED NATIONS

Department of Humanitarian Affairs

Integrated Regional Information Network

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Faced by the rapidly receding possibility of an international intervention force, aid organisations are trying to re-focus attention on hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees and internally displaced Zaireans still believed to be inaccessible in eastern Zaire.

At a meeting in Kisangani, north eastern Zaire, yesterday the International Committee of the Red Cross and NGOs reiterated that too much attention was being focussed on Rwandan returnees, and that hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people and refugees are at risk in eastern Zaire. Tens of thousands of local Zaireans have fled, including Hutu Zaireans who fear both the rebel ADFL and the Rwandan government as a "Tutsi alliance". There are also hundreds of thousands of Zaireans - particularly from minority groups - who were displaced by the Hutu militants and Zairean soldiers before the conflict broke out.

The exact whereabouts of large concentrations of refugees and internally displaced people inside eastern Zaire is still not known, although many new locations and numbers are being offered. Results of aerial and satellite surveys done by the US, Canadian and French governments are not being made

public, but appear to be producing contradictory information on the movements and locations of groups of people in eastern Zaire.

Rwandan Vice-President and Minister of Defence, Paul Kagame, said in a press conference in Kigali today that the "majority" of refugees had returned. He accused aid agencies of inflating numbers regarding refugees remaining in eastern Zaire. Kagame said there were a few scattered refugees remaining inside eastern Zaire, and he hoped they would return soon. He said the exact number of returnees to Rwanda was not yet known. Kagame said the ex-FAR and Interahamwe were scattered in small groups, and referred to locations between Walikale and Hombo, saying there were small groups of refugees among them. The Vice-President said that the Rwandan government had "signals" from Bukavu that there was an intention to make a return of refugees through Cyangugu possible. He said it was hoped that repatriation from Tanzania would be undertaken in a more orderly fashion once the current return from Zaire had been completed; and this would be discussed with the Tanzanian authorities. The Rwandan government has always disputed the total number of refugees given by aid agencies.

Rwandan state-run radio reported today that many of the ex-FAR soldiers had joined the exodus of refugees returning to Rwanda and called on these soldiers to make themselves known to the authorities. Vice-President and Defence Minister Paul Kagame said today that the main objective at the moment was to settle and "stabilise" returnees as quickly as possible, and that wider issues regarding property rights and screening would be settled later. Kagame said to date there had been no arrests relating to the newly returned refugees. UNHCR and the UN Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda report that the among returnees since 1994, 1.4 percent have been arrested.

The Vice-President said that property would be returned to the original owners eventually. One UN official told IRIN that property would be a major issue in resettlement because many houses had been occupied by people

returning to Rwanda in 1994 after years of exile in neighbouring countries. Land rights in rural communes will be equally contentious. Some aid agencies indicate that many more returnees than initially expected may try to go to Kigali; figures from a census taken in refugee camps in 1995 about the rural-urban distribution have long been disputed.

Other comments during the press conference regarded the need to "re-think" the multi-national force. The Rwandan Foreign Minister Anastase Gasana said at the same press conference that Rwanda wanted to "maintain good neighbour relations" with Zaire, and claimed Rwanda had never exercised its right of pursuit into Zairean territory.

The Interahamwe and ex-FAR are believed to be moving south of Sake, various sources concur. A rebel spokesman said that fighting continued around Minova, but confirmed that the rebels now had control of Sake and Masisi. He said Kalehe and Katana refugee camps (north of Bukavu) were still being used as bases by armed Hutu militia; this was confirmed to IRIN by military intelligence sources. There has been no confirmation on the whereabouts of the refugees from those camps, but there have been persistent reports of a large concentration of people north of Bukavu.

AFP carried reports of uniformed Hutu militants sighted in Kalungu, which is south of Minova - described as the "front line" in some press reports. There have been contradictory reports on who the fighting emanates from. many Zairean soldiers are known to have fled sometime ago to Kisangani, but Bangilima militia are reportedly split between the government side and the rebels. The Mai-Mai militia are also active in the Sake area. Reuters reported yesterday that the "entire area around Kiroche, Minova and Sake to the west of Lake Kivu was controlled by large numbers of heavily-armed Zairean rebel troops, some of them no more than 10 years old"

Continued fighting between the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the

Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) and Hutu militants along the road north from Bukavu towards Sake, may have blocked passage of refugees moving north of Bukavu. The re-grouping of the Hutu militants in this area and the use of the Kalehe and Katana camps as bases may mean the passage of refugees is also affected by political manipulation.

Reuters and BBC reports describe today some of the fears expressed by Tutsi villagers as the returnees arrive back in their home communes. One was reported as recognising a man who had killed family members, and expressing fear that he knew where she lived. She was quoted as saying "If we are told by the government we can accuse, we will accuse; if we are told to keep quiet, we will."

Amnesty International reports that three human rights activists in Zaire were released on 2 November 1996, who say they met dozens of other detainees, including civilian ethnic Tutsis arrested since the rebel up-rising in eastern Zaire. They reported to Amnesty that among those they met were about 10 ethnic Tutsis who the authorities claim are members of the rebel group. Amnesty says in its report that some ethnic Tutsis in eastern Zaire have been subjected to sexual assaults and humiliation.

A rebel source said that the issue of Banyamulenge rights, which had been a central issue for the rebel ADFL, still needs to be solved. The Banyamulenge, who are believed to be dominant in the ADFL, were stripped of their nationality rights in 1981 by the Zairean government. AFP reports the ADFL saying they will continue an offensive deeper into Zaire.

A letter in the Kenyan Daily Nation details an e-mail message received from a doctor in Nuankunde in north-eastern Zaire on November 14 says:
"Retreating Zairean forces from Goma, after looting Butembo and Beni, passed through Bunia and Nyankunde on their way to Kisangani. We have had a relatively quiet day, with the military passing at the top of the road. The

very sad news is the numbers of young girls that have been taken from Butembo and nearer here". One aid worker told IRIN that there had been many reports of Zairean soldiers committing rape along the road between Lubutu and Walikale.

General Eluki Monga Aundu, Zairean Armed Forces chief, has been suspended from his post, state-run television announced today. The TV report quoted the deputy Prime Minister with responsibility for defence when giving details of the dismissal. General Eluki earlier this month criticized the government for not "giving the army the means necessary to go to war".

Nairobi, 20 November 1996, 16:20 GMT

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Journalists and aid officials managed to cross into Bukavu, eastern Zaire, yesterday, after having access blocked for ten days. There is no real information as to why access has been difficult in Bukavu and Uvira, but it may relate to territorial and political consolidation by the rebel authorities.

A three-person team of aid officials crossed to Bukavu at 4.30 pm local time yesterday, and stayed overnight, reports the World Food Programme. The officials were representatives from WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR. The Bukavu and Uvira areas have had relatively little attention compared to Goma, with only one brief visit to Bukavu by a small group of aid officials ten days ago. There has been no access to Uvira for international aid representatives since the rebels took control of the town. Three foreign journalists and a representative from an international human rights organisation are known to have had access to the town soon after the take-over. The border between Bukavu, eastern Zaire, and Cyangugu, Rwanda was effectively closed until yesterday, when rebels announced the border open by radio and local people in Bukavu were allowed into Cyangugu to buy goods. Aid workers mainly attribute the hold-up to rebel bureaucracy, as

senior rebel representatives had been concentrated in Goma. Rebel coordinator, Laurent Kabila, personally gave the go-ahead from Bukavu for yesterday's mission.

Despite the recent increase of information from various aerial surveys and satellite images, there is no consensus on the exact location or movement of concentrations of people in eastern Zaire. Furthermore, from a humanitarian point of view, lack of access remains the most significant factor.

However, major population movements and concentrations are reported on five main axes:

1. North of Goma, from the Katale camp and Rutshuru area westwards to Walikale-Lubutu-Kisangani

This movement is believed to be mainly internally displaced Zaireans, fleeing westwards with the retreating Zairean forces. Reliable sources claim that some 20,000 IDPs are fleeing east into Uganda south of Lake Edward. Some 100,000 IDPs are reported to be north of Lake Edward, fleeing fighting between rebels and Zairean troops.

There is also a small group (less than a thousand) believed to be refugees, camped near Rutshuru, north of Katale, with some moving south towards Goma. A small group of Hutu militants from Katale camp (which was characterised by its middle class/intellectual component) are believed to be in the area just west of Rutshuru, possibly trying to link up with other refugees and militants near Masisi.

2. Northwest, from Sake to Masisi

There have been persistent reports from different sources indicating a group of people around the Masisi area, believed to be mainly Rwandan

refugees, with Hutu militants. A group of around 30,000 were reportedly camped some 20 kilometres west of Masisi town on November 19.

On November 17, there were reliable reports of some 45,000 people northwest of Sake, and a further 3,000 near Sake. Small groups of people as well as 15 tents have been reported near Minova, south of Sake. There are reports of small numbers of people (up to 3,000) entering Mugunga from Virunga forest.

3. South of Goma and north of Bukavu

Several good sources indicate the presence or movement of significant numbers of people in an area north of Bukavu. They are believed to be mainly refugees with some IDPs. Continued fighting on the road to Minova may block movement; the presence of Hutu militants may also be directly affecting the movement of the refugees.

On November 19, a site north of Bukavu was reported to contain approximately 100,000 people, and growing rather than dispersing. Kalehe and Katana camps are reported to be under the control of the former Rwandan forces and Interahamwe militia. Other unsubstantiated reports suggest significant refugee movement, possibly of refugees herded by uniformed men, towards Goma.

4. Westward from Bukavu to Katshungu-Shabunda-Kindu

There are several reports of movements of internally displaced people. An unsubstantiated report indicated 100,000 people 280 kilometers west of Bukavu at Katshungu.

A group of some 5,000 is reported southwest of Bukavu at Bulonge, believed to contain former Rwandan forces.

A large concentration of people has been reported in Mwenga, southwest of Bukavu.

5. Uvira and surroundings

Refugees from the Uvira camps are displaced south of Uvira, and a large concentration of people is reported at Fizi, thought to be combination of refugees and displaced Zaireans.

Note: Before the crisis broke, there was a registered refugee population on Idjwi island of at least 45,000 Rwandan refugees. There has been no information regarding their whereabouts.

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A spokesman for Refugees International said there was "great concern" that the US military apparently had no responsibility to survey areas other than North Kivu. "It appears the US military component of the multi-national force has only done flights over North Kivu because its responsibility stops at the South-North Kivu border", said Don Krumm. "That is of great concern to us because the 500,000 unaccounted-for refugees are in the south," he added.

Aerial surveys have reported difficulty in accurately assessing areas covered by dense forest. Satellite images were previously reportedly too unclear to give accurate indications of numbers.

IRIN was informed today of 4,000 "non-military refugees" in Lubutu, reported by contacts in the area. Numbers of refugees in Lubutu are said to be increasing, and are being tenuously assisted by local villagers. The source says there are also enough Zairean soldiers in Lubutu to be commanded by a colonel of the Presidential Guard, although normally the highest ranking officer present is a lieutenant or captain of gendarmes or Guard Civil. Lubutu is described as reasonably well ordered. IRIN also

received unconfirmed reports of a General of the 1st Division of the Zairean army in Kalemie, south of Fizi.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has buried several hundred bodies in Mugunga camp in the last few days, a spokesman in Geneva reported yesterday. Spokesman Robin Wavre said the bodies were buried after ICRC was given access to Mugunga four days ago; he was unable to confirm numbers or give cause of death.

General Eluki Monga Aunda, Zairean Armed Forces chief, has been suspended from his post for saying on Tuesday that a multi-national force was not necessary, and repeating complaints that the government was not doing enough for the army regarding the war effort. Reuters reports General Eluki as one of the four most powerful men in the army, and says his dismissal indicates a possible split in the armed forces. Military response to the rebel uprising in eastern Zaire has shown the Zairean forces to be demoralised and ill-disciplined; some of the fleeing soldiers congregating in Kisangani reportedly refuse to board military planes for fear of being sent back to the war front. Continued fighting in eastern Zaire has been attributed to Interahamwe, former Rwandan forces and various militia against rebel forces, rather than Zairean soldiers, who fled the area early on in the conflict. Earlier this week General Eluki was reported to be in eastern Zaire, planning to launch a new offensive against the rebels from Kindu.

Informed sources told IRIN that the dismissal of General Ekuki was significant, and that it was related to controversy over use of the proposed multi-national force. According to the source, the Zairean government sees the multi-national force as capable of "doing the job the Zairean army has failed to do" - namely effectively re-establishing control in eastern Zaire by an armed presence that recognises the government. General Eluki's dismissal, however, will be significant in that he is

likely to have support in his complaints among the army who see the government as weak and, in the case of Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo, treacherous. In the same way there is no visible civilian "heir apparent" on the political scene, there is no clear centre of power in an army that is demoralised and diffuse.

A US Navy P-3 surveillance plane came under apparent anti-aircraft fire south of Goma today. The US government decided not to send troops to the region, but has offered logistical support. AFP reports US military officials have begun moving teams and equipment into place to set up a humanitarian "air bridge" to funnel food and supplies to affected populations once a decision has been made.

The British Overseas Development Administration announced yesterday that Britain had pledged an extra 10 million (sterling) for humanitarian relief to the Great Lakes region. Baroness Lynda Chalker said the new funding demonstrated Britain's commitment to the safe, voluntary return of refugees and meeting immediate humanitarian needs.

Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, said at a press conference in Kigali yesterday that there were still 700,000 Rwandan refugees unaccounted for in eastern Zaire - countering claims by the Rwandan government that refugee figures were being "inflated" by aid organisations. Bertini said "We have been feeding in the camps for a long time and providing food for 1.2 million refugees". Since the outbreak of the eastern Zaire crisis, aid agencies have also faced renewed criticism that assistance to the camps nurtured Hutu militants and prolonged the problem. International human rights organisations and some aid agencies said in after 1994 that there was evidence that the militia and former Rwandan forces were being armed and preventing repatriation of "bona fide" refugees; arms contracts, weapons, warfare manuals and invasion plans were found by journalists when Mugunga camp at Goma was abandoned by fleeing

Hutu militants.

A conference on humanitarian relief efforts, to be held on Saturday in Geneva, will discuss the reintegration of hundreds of thousands of refugees returning to Rwanda, reports AFP. The meeting is a conference of government officials, and will be attended by the United States, Europe, Japan, Australia, Rwanda, the OECD, the World Bank, UN and humanitarian agencies.

Nairobi, 21 November 1996, 11:45 GMT

(Via the UN DHA Integrated Regional Information Network. The material contained in this communication may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its agencies. UN DHA IRIN Tel: +254 2 622123 Fax: +254 2 622129 e-mail: irin@dha.unon.org for more information. If you re-print, copy, archive or re-post this item, please retain this credit and disclaimer.)

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The International Committee of the Red Cross today announced a massive new tracing operation in the Kivu area to enable people still on the move to make contact with their families. The operation was also aimed at reuniting children who had been separated from their parents during the population movements. In Gisenyi, ICRC has reported a total of 2,634 unaccompanied minors had been identified and registered, most of whom were being transferred to Nkamira transit camp or Ruhengeri. Four hundred and forty-five families were reunited on the spot. An additional group of 480 unaccompanied children had been transferred to Kigali where they were being accommodated by the Belgian Red Cross. UNICEF put the figure of lone children much higher at 4,125, as of Wednesday. It said 70-80 percent were boys. UNICEF spokeswoman Marie Heuze added that the agency was also concerned by reports of armed child soldiers in the Kirotshe area, between the Mugunga and Katale camps of eastern Zaire.

According to ICRC, before the start of the exodus, there had been 20,000 unaccompanied children in eastern Zaire. It said nobody knew what had become of these children, whose numbers are assumed to have increased by

several thousand. An ICRC data bank in Nairobi will centralise all available information concerning the children.

ICRC said that since last Sunday it, along with the Zairean Red Cross, had treated 300 wounded Zairean soldiers in Kisangani. In a statement from Kinshasa, it said it had also dispatched four tonnes of medicines, blankets and food which left by truck from Kisangani for Lubutu on Wednesday. The aid is intended to help displaced Zaireans in the Lubutu and Walikale areas.

The exiled Hutu organisation, Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR), reacted bleakly to the mass return of refugees, warning of another "Kibeho" - the camp in southwest Rwanda where large numbers of Hutus were killed when it was closed down by the Rwandan Patriotic Army last year. "The ongoing forced repatriation of refugees from Zaire is proving yet another nightmare for returnees," RDR said in a statement yesterday. It charged that some refugees were either arrested immediately upon their return home or "forced to be squatters on their own properties". Part of the proposed multi-national force should be deployed inside Rwanda, the statement added. There have been no official reports of arrests within Rwanda as yet.

Some reports warn of short-term vulnerability to hunger in Rwanda caused by returning refugees, but paint a rosier picture of long-term prospects. Rwanda currently faces a critical situation regarding beans and other pulses, the country's most important crops. Poor rains meant the crops were withering and dying and the influx of hundreds of thousands of returnees is likely to increase the threat of hunger among the resident population. In the past, returning refugees have generally sold their resettlement rations for local products such as beans, sweet potatoes and bananas prompting price increases of such goods. In the long-term however, the returning refugees would increase the labour pool thus reducing labour costs and

putting more land to production.

Returnees to the Gatumba transit camp in Burundi, near Bujumbura, told AFP that Hutu men, fleeing camps on the Uvira plain, had trekked 100 kms to mountains further south where they were fighting Banyamulenge Tutsi rebels. Women returning to the camp said the men, both Burundian and Rwandan, were now concentrated in the Ubembe area, near Fizi, where they had joined up with the Babembe people to fight the Tutsis. A DHA report from Bujumbura said details of Burundian refugees in the south Kivu area were sketchy. According to the last census there were about 125,000 Burundian refugees in south Kivu, 11,000-13,000 of whom had been registered at Gatumba. Refugees were still crossing the Zairean border to Cibitoke on their own accord and UNHCR estimates the number at some 22,000. UNHCR said today 8,917 new Burundian refugees arrived in Tanzania yesterday and a total of 24,701 "boat people" have so far arrived in Kigoma across Lake Tanganyika.

ADFL military commander Andre Kissasse announced plans for taxing and administering the area under rebel control. "Up until now the international community has only thought of the Goma region in terms of providing food and aid for refugees, but now we have to think for ourselves," he told a crowd of some 10,000 supporters in Goma on Wednesday. He vowed to reduce unemployment and impose local taxes to bring about essential services. He also urged local people to form self-defence committees, adding that his troops would bring democracy to the whole of Zaire.

Zairean Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo today said Kinshasa was considering breaking diplomatic ties with the neighbouring countries of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi describing them as "aggressors of Zairean territory". He also told a news conference that the Zairean army would soon recapture Goma and Bukavu from the "Rwanda-backed" rebels, who were "trained by mercenaries of various nationalities" on Rwandan territory.

A new interim Zairean armed forces chief was named today to replace General Eluki Monga Aunda who was sacked. The new incumbent - General Kpama Baramoto Kata - is closely allied to President Mobutu and comes from the same ethnic group. Baramoto Kata, described as a hardliner, was commander of the feared civil guard. Meanwhile, AFP quoted Zairean opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, who met Mobutu at his villa in France today, as saying the two men agreed on the need for national reconciliation. "The unifying of the political class is required by the country," Tshisekedi said.

Burundi today strongly denied an Amnesty International report which said 400 returnees from Zaire were killed by members of the security forces in Cibitoke province last month. Speaking on BBC radio, a spokesman for Burundian leader Pierre Buyoya said more evidence was needed and that Amnesty had its own agenda regarding Burundi.

Another rebel attack in the Kasese area of Uganda, near the Zairean border, brought an abrupt halt to a tour of the region by Ugandan parliamentarians and security officials late Wednesday, AFP reported. A 30-minute barrage of heavy artillery fire from Zaire towards the Mpondwe border post sent the officials scurrying for cover. NGO reports from the area said Mpondwe was sealed off but fighting in the Kasese area had subsided although there was still tension. Between 20,000-25,000 displaced people (IDPs) were mostly staying with their families, others were housed in church halls and schools. WFP was providing food assistance but said the need so far was not great. There may be greater need for assistance once the IDPs return home, as there have been reports of some looting. President Museveni, who has blamed Sudan for the cross-border attacks, is due to visit the area. An NGO in the area told IRIN the biggest threat currently comes from Arua, further north, where Zairean army troops are said to be massing across the border and giving support to rebels of the pro-Idi Amin West Nile Bank Front (WNBF).

A Ugandan paper reported that the Zairean border town of Kasindi was "shelled to rubble" on Tuesday, but accounts of the attack differed. In conflicting reports, quoted by The Monitor, Ugandan military authorities said the town was shelled by mistake "because of the geographical location of the area", while other military sources claimed it was attacked because it served as a rear base for Ugandan rebels.

Nairobi, 21 November 1996, 16:20 GMT

(Via the UN DHA Integrated Regional Information Network. The material contained in this communication may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its agencies. UN DHA IRIN Tel: +254 2 622123 Fax: +254 2 622129 e-mail: irin@dha.unon.org for more information. If you re-print, copy, archive or re-post this item, please retain this credit and disclaimer.)

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Nairobi - Doubts were cast on the future of a multi-national force for eastern Zaire today, as Canada, which offered to lead the troops, poured cold water on the idea of military intervention. In Ottawa, Canadian premier Jean Chretien pointed out that Rwanda itself did not want the force.

"There is no longer any need for a military intervention," he said, adding that the priority now was to provide humanitarian aid to the refugees returning to Rwanda. US President Bill Clinton, speaking in Canberra today, said the US was still considering whether to send troops and a final decision was still awaited pending further discussions. Canadian Defence Minister Doug Young said countries participating in what is now being dubbed a humanitarian mission would meet in New York later today to discuss the future of the mission.

The countries were also due to hold a further meeting in Stuttgart, Germany, on Friday, instead of Thursday as had previously been announced. Chretien said the New York meeting would have a mainly "political"

character, while the Stuttgart talks would have a more "military" nature. He added that a further meeting would be held in Geneva to discuss the coordination of aid distribution in the Great Lakes region.

In Kigali, UN special envoy Raymond Chretien described his talks with the Canadian force commander Gen. Maurice Baril on Tuesday as good, but also admitted Rwanda did not want the troops. "Certainly this view has to be taken into account," he told reporters before leaving for Kinshasa. "But there are still a number of unanswered questions about what is happening on the other side of the border."

Zaire on Tuesday sharply criticised Washington's decision not to send combat troops to the region, accusing it of working with Rwanda to block an international force. "The whole world, with few exceptions, finds itself under the boot of the Yankees," Information Minister Boguo Makeli told AFP. "Zaire would prefer to disappear from the world map with dignity and honour than accept the dictates of this great power of shame and injustice." The USA had said earlier it would not send a combat force to the region, but was prepared to provide less than 1,000 troops in a supporting logistics role. Meanwhile, two US military cargo planes headed for Africa on Tuesday carrying equipment for an air bridge to ferry supplies for returning Rwandan refugees. Pentagon spokeswoman Nancy Burt said the planes would go to Kigali and Mombasa, and a third plane was due to fly to Entebbe.

The French minister for emergency humanitarian action Xavier Emmanuelli arrived in Kisangani on Tuesday, ahead of today's planned departure from the town of an aid convoy for areas further southeast. The convoy, organised by NGOs, was due to arrive in the towns of Lubutu and Walikale where tens of thousands of refugees are believed to be hiding out in the hilly and jungle terrain. AFP said the drivers would all be local, and the convoy would be escorted by the Zairean army. Red Cross volunteers meanwhile began removing bodies from the deserted camps of Mugunga and Sake

on Tuesday. At least 166 people have so far been buried in a mass grave in Mugunga. An NGO with a contact in Kalemie, south of Uvira, told IRIN the area was calm. Several thousand displaced people and refugees were in the town and a few were believed to be outside. All required food and shelter.

A rebel radio station "Radio du Peuple", broadcasting from Bukavu, announced yesterday that the border between Bukavu and Cyangugu in Rwanda would be open as of today. A statement signed by the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) said local people would be allowed to move around and obtain supplies from both sides of the border. Sources close to the Banyamulenge told IRIN today the Interahamwe militia and former Rwandan forces were moving from the Goma and Bukavu areas in two groups, mixed with refugees, and would in all likelihood meet up in an area south of Sake.

A UNHCR bulletin on Tuesday said about 50 percent of returnees had reached their home communes, mainly in the Gisenyi and Ruhengeri areas of Rwanda. Some had even reached as far as Kigali.

According to a breakdown of the home areas of Rwandan refugees, five prefectures - Kibungo, Byumba, Gisenyi, Kigali Rurale and Ruhengeri - accounted for 75 percent of all refugees in Goma. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator's Office in Rwanda said Byumba was the only prefecture with a mixture of refugees in both Zaire and Tanzania, and the mass return from Zaire might prompt a similar return from Tanzania in a bid to get home before property and land were taken.

UNHCR said the refugee population in the Kigoma region of western Tanzania had more than doubled in just the first half of November. By 17 November, the figure had reached over 116,000 up from 51,600 at the end of October. New Burundian arrivals in Tanzania directly from Burundi were put at 36,198 and refugees coming from Zaire (mainly Zairean) at 27,447.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights which has been monitoring the unfolding situation in Rwanda through the Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda (HRFOR), has called for increasing HRFOR personnel up to a maximum of 300 to give sustained human rights assistance to the Rwandan government and people. It said HRFOR had insufficient resources to deal with the mass influx of Rwandan refugees into the country. In Geneva, the UN announced 60 UN volunteers had been identified, mainly funded by the Dutch government. The Human Rights High Commissioner also appealed for increasing the number of observers in Burundi to at least 35, and preferably 100, given that the mass return of thousands of Burundian refugees in South Kivu could occur at any time.

Uganda claimed that heavy fighting in the Kasese area on the border with Zaire was coordinated from Sudan, and not from Zaire as had been previously reported. According to the New Vision today, President Museveni told a news conference the attacks, in which he said 230 people had died, were carried out "by about 1,500 tabliqs with the support of Arabs and Sudan." Museveni said he doubted whether the Zairean authorities were directly involved in the attack, and he had contacted Mobutu to ask him for advice. Uganda would now concentrate on "sharpening the army", Museveni added.

Nairobi, 20 November 1996, 16:20 GMT

(Via the UN DHA Integrated Regional Information Network. The material contained in this communication may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its agencies. UN DHA IRIN Tel: +254 2 622123 Fax: +254 2 622129 e-mail: irin@dha.unon.org for more information. If you re-print, copy, archive or re-post this item, please retain this credit and disclaimer.)

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IRIN Emergency Update No. 36 on Eastern Zaire

UNITED NATIONS

Department of Humanitarian Affairs

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The Canadian commander of a proposed international force in eastern Zaire said that troops were still needed, but it would take until tomorrow at least to develop military aid options. Lieutenant General Maurice Baril said officials from 35 countries and international organizations meeting in Stuttgart today had disagreed about the number of refugees in need and that he had established a "multi-national assessment group" to try to reach agreement.

Ethiopia has threatened to pull out of the force unless the mandate is expanded to allow the separation of Hutu militants from refugees. "The UN Security Council should revise its decision that confines the mission of the proposed multi-national intervention force to humanitarian work only," Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said yesterday. Kenya's President Moi said a force should only be deployed in the Great Lakes region with the consent of both Zaire and Rwanda.

An international meeting tomorrow in Geneva will focus on humanitarian aspects of the refugee situation, with priority going to the resettlement

of Rwandan refugees, AFP said. However, participants in the meeting, to be chaired by Canadian International Cooperation Minister Don Boudria, also want the spotlight to fall on hundreds of thousands of refugees still in Zaire. The talks are expected to bring together ministers and high ranking officials from Canada, the USA, Europe, Japan and Australia. Senior UN and other aid officials will also attend.

The Rwandan government issued a statement yesterday saying that numbers given by aid agencies of Rwandan refugees remaining in eastern Zaire "are totally incorrect and misleading". In a meeting yesterday called by the Rwandan Minister of Rehabilitation and Social Integration, the Rwandan government based its assessment on the fact that neither the UNHCR nor the Government of Rwanda had done a physical count of returnees following last week's exodus from eastern Zaire, and that all the camps in North Kivu were empty. The government also asserted that interviews with returnees indicated that they included refugees arriving from Bukavu, who had moved northward as the result of the civil war in South Kivu. Refugees who had moved west of Bukavu, according to the government "could be either Burundis, Zaireans or Rwandese." The government also claimed that there were "daily crossings of refugees from the Bukavu area through the Cyangugu border post and other crossings in the south". The statement appealed to the aid agencies to provide "the necessary assistance to the entire affected population in eastern Zaire". The meeting was attended by Ministers of Health, Foreign Affairs, political advisor to the Vice President and Minister of Defence, and representatives of UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP and ICRC.

US Ambassador to Rwanda Robert Gribben said in a BBC interview yesterday that most of the refugees still in Zaire were either displaced Zaireans or Burundians, and that numbers of Rwandan refugees were nothing like those put forward by the aid agencies. He said that groups of refugees remaining in eastern Zaire "appear to be tens to twenties of thousands rather than in

vast numbers". In response, Refugees International (RI) demanded the recall of the ambassador, saying he was downplaying the seriousness of the refugee crisis in eastern Zaire just before the Stuttgart military meeting today.

Lionel Rosenblatt, President of the Washington-based RI told the BBC from Bukavu that the situation was still critical and that international intervention was a necessary decision: "We have one of the worst refugee crises of modern times. One need not quibble over numbers, but we know there are hundreds of thousands of people formerly supported by all of us as wards of the international community who've gone missing and are without food or water now for three weeks".

CNN journalist Catherine Bond reported yesterday, from near Sake, that local people said refugees fleeing Mugunga were killed by rebel soldiers.

Newsweek (US) also reported accounts by eye-witnesses that refugees were killed by both the Hutu militants and the rebel forces, when Mugunga camp dispersed.

Renewed fighting was reported near Sake yesterday between rebels and Hutu gunmen. "We are receiving first-hand reports of fighting around Minova and in the Masisi hills above Sake," UNHCR's Filippo Grandi told reporters in Goma. Refugees arriving in Goma from Sake said there had been several clashes in the last few days between rebels and Hutu militias.

UNHCR reported that 241 people had crossed at Cyangugu yesterday, while on Wednesday 3,000 refugees from Kahindo and Katale camps arrived at Mugunga en route to the Rwandan border. The rebels allowed the use of one UNHCR bus to transport vulnerable cases. Numbers issued by UNHCR suggest the population of Gisenyi could increase by nearly 30 percent and Ruhengeri and Kibuye by almost 20 percent if all the refugees believed to be in Zairean camps return home. Initial reports also suggest a slight increase in Rwandan returnees from Tanzania, but numbers are not yet available, UNHCR said. An AFP report from Kigali said some of the refugees arrived in the

city today after trudging over 150 kms from Gisenyi.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has announced that thousands of Rwandan children lost in the mass refugee return over the past week should be back in their homes within 48 hours thanks to a "lightning action" launched by ICRC in collaboration with the Rwandan authorities. However, the Committee is still concerned about the fate of possibly thousands of unaccompanied children still languishing in Zaire.

Rebel "Radio of the People" in Bukavu, monitored by BBC, yesterday announced the end of the ceasefire announced unilaterally fifteen days ago. Rebel-run radio said that ADFL commander, Colonel Andre Kissasse Ngandu, had told a meeting attended by 10,000 people in Goma that the cease-fire was intended to allow refugees to return to Rwanda. Kissasse said now that a large number of refugees had crossed the border, the immediate aim of the Alliance was to continue occupying Zairean regions, and eventually overthrow Mobutu's regime. The radio claimed 1,500 young men from the Bukavu area had joined the Alliance. Rebel radio also said that opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi - who met President Mobutu yesterday for talks - was ready to work with Alliance leader Laurent Kabila. The rebel radio station appears to have replaced state-run Radio Bukavu. Recently, the Zairean government appears to have up-graded its transmitters in order to better serve provinces which for long have been without good radio reception.

Etienne Tshisekedi today claimed he had been named prime minister of a new government of national unity following talks with President Mobutu in France yesterday. He told Radio France Internationale the meeting had led to a reconciliation, but a spokesman for Mobutu denied the remarks. "The president yesterday received him for more than an hour, and there was never any question of political problems," spokesman Honore Nghanda told RFI, adding it would be unconstitutional for Mobutu to appoint a premier while

he was out of the country.

The Rwandan government has told international journalists that there have been some arrests of returning former Rwandan soldiers, but many other ex-FAR have been allowed home and will be screened later. According to a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, quoted by AFP today, 15 arrests have been reported so far, but the number is expected to rise dramatically. The spokeswoman, Marie Van Der Elst, said trials were expected "soon" and were likely to be followed by executions. One UN official told IRIN it was frustrating and "of great concern" that there was so little information about how re-settlement at commune level was going. Donors are reportedly keen to put money into Human Rights monitors, and 60 monitors are due to arrive in Rwanda shortly.

UNHCR today said 300 Burundian refugees who returned from eastern Zaire were massacred in a church in Cibitoke province last month. UNHCR spokeswoman Christiane Berthiaume said they returned voluntarily to Muramba on October 22 and spent the night in the church, where they were killed. Berthiaume added that the identity of the killers was not known. Burundi yesterday denied Amnesty International claims that at least 400 returnees were killed by the security forces in the church, and Prime Minister Pascal-Firmin Ndimira today in Stockholm again issued a flat denial. "There is no sense for this allegation and people who are returning are well supported by humanitarian organisations," he said. "Even people who inform the UN are not always right," he added.

President Museveni visited Mpondwe on the border with Zaire yesterday and warned that Ugandan troops would follow rebels into Zaire if they attacked Uganda again. "If the rebels dared to attack the country again, they will be crushed and followed up to their bases," he told journalists, according to the New Vision paper today. A BBC journalist in the area said there were signs of a big battle - houses were empty and there were no civilians on

the street. Displaced people were gradually returning to Mpondwe from Kasese. The Ugandan government, meanwhile, said it would soon send a delegation to Kinshasha, according to Ugandan press reports. The talks will discuss flushing out "the Zairean-backed rebel group" that raided the western district of Kasese last week capturing a series of towns. Foreign Affairs Minister, Eriya Kategaya told diplomats in Kasese on Wednesday that Uganda had already contacted Kinshasha over the issue. Some twenty diplomats were given a tour of the re-captured towns and told that Uganda wanted to solve the problem diplomatically. "There is no doubt that the rebels are in Zaire and could strike again," Kategaya said.

Nairobi, November 22 1996, 15:50 GMT

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A statement issued yesterday by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said United Nations Human Rights Field Operation in Burundi (UNHRFOB) observers visited Cibitoke province on Thursday where they learned for the first time that refugees returning from eastern Zaire had been massacred in a church. After speaking to civilians, local authorities and the military, they ascertained that a total of 258 people were killed outright at Muramba church in Buganda commune and a further 40 died from injuries they sustained. Seventy others were wounded. Those responsible for the attack used guns and hand grenades, the observers said.

The UNHCR is now coming under great pressure to stop sending the returnees to Cibitoke. On November 9, MSF in Burundi had criticized efforts by UNHCR and the Burundian authorities to resettle returnees in the province. HRFOB last week expressed similar concerns to the Burundi authorities that refugees were being channelled to the volatile Cibitoke and Bubanza provinces, areas of severe confrontation between Hutu rebels and the armed forces and where access for relief workers is very limited. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has already appealed for an increase in the

number of observers - currently five - to 35 and preferably 100. According to UNHCR, some 30,000 returning Burundian refugees have gone to Cibitoke province. UNHCR chief Sakako Ogata has decided to send the UNHCR Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, Dessalegn Chefeke, to Bujumbura for discussions on ensuring the security of the returnees.

AFP reported that fighting in Cibitoke province was delaying aid distribution to refugees returning to the embattled province. Relief workers yesterday brought a five-truck convoy to the village of Nyamitanga, on the border with Zaire. A member of the Tutsi-dominated army told AFP that Hutu guerrillas had attacked the local market, and the ensuing clash had lasted three hours. Some 10 rebels had reportedly been killed. Burundian leader Pierre Buyoya held talks in Uganda yesterday with President Museveni to discuss the crisis in Burundi, specifically the lifting of sanctions.

One thousand Burundian refugees arrived in Gisenyi from Goma asking to be repatriated, the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Kigali reported today. They had been taken to Butare in the south where there are camps for Burundian refugees. Regarding Rwandan returnees, the road from Gisenyi to Ruhengeri was now almost clear and the Rwandan government was encouraging people to move as fast as possible. To this end it had requested closure of all way stations from Gisenyi to Nkamira, and even the Nkamira transit camp was closed.

Thirty-five countries and international organisations continued meeting in the German city of Stuttgart today to weigh up military options aimed at helping refugees in eastern Zaire. Yesterday there was disagreement on how to proceed. Oxfam yesterday warned of an "African Bosnia" if the international community continued to neglect central Africa. The organisation's deputy director John Whitaker described the international response as "lacklustre". "Failure to take decisive action at the Stuttgart

summit today (22 November) will condemn many to death," he said. "This humanitarian tragedy is not over." He again stressed that the force must disarm the Interahamwe militia and former Rwandan forces. "If the force does not have this mandate, then it shouldn't consider intervening," he added. Another international meeting is due to be held in Geneva today to discuss humanitarian aspects of the refugee crisis.

The USA resumed reconnaissance flights over Zaire yesterday after one of its planes came under fire on Wednesday. However poor weather prevented it obtaining images of the situation on the ground. National Security Adviser Anthony Lake said US officials were watching developments in the region "day by day" but he could not predict whether Washington would join in a possible multi-national force.

A convoy of UNICEF-ICRC-MSF trucks which left Kisangani for Lubutu on Wednesday had some problems en route and is now blocked near Lubutu, UNICEF said. One of the trucks broke down on the road and another was looted before it could deliver its load. A UN interagency mission left Kinshasa this morning and was expected in Kisangani later today. It will attempt to make assessments in Walikale.

Nairobi, 23 November 1996, 11:50 GMT

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Some 300,000 refugees who left the Ngara camps to head further into Tanzania yesterday, did an about-turn today and began heading back. It was uncertain whether they were returning to their camps or continuing on to the Rwandan border, but it appeared they had been turned back by the Tanzanian military. Later reports said the Tanzanian security forces were preventing the refugees from re-occupying some camps, in a bid to encourage them to continue to the Rwandan border. A tense standoff could develop, according to news reports.

The exodus started yesterday afternoon with refugees telling aid workers they were heading for Kenya or Malawi. WFP said they had taken food rations with them and were "obviously preparing for a long trek." Aid agencies also pointed out that the Ngara refugees had received food rations, and this could have sparked off the mass movement. Refugees in the Karagwe camps further north were due to receive their rations today, raising fears of another exodus. WFP said its food depot at Lumasi camp in Ngara had been

looted and at Benaco camp, the largest in the area, WFP workers were refusing to distribute food until they were paid which had raised tension among refugees. Relief organisations say the mass departure was triggered by a campaign of intimidation in the camps by Interahamwe and ex-FAR members. The Ngara camps house some 490,000 refugees, while the Karagwe camps' population is put at 110,000.

The Tanzanian military today set up a roadblock 4 kms southeast of Lumasi to try and stop the remaining 40,000-50,000 refugees from leaving the Ngara camps. WFP reported that these refugees did not put up any resistance and were returning to their camps. The Tanzanian authorities have warned for some time that refugees venturing 4kms from the camps will be arrested and repatriated. Meanwhile, it has been confirmed that UNHCR has been unable to move trucks from Rwanda into Tanzania. The Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Kigali reported that 30 trucks were supposed to cross over but were prevented from doing so at the last minute. Discussions are underway and it is hoped the trucks will be allowed over.

Rwandan Vice-President Paul Kagame has warned that the threat to his country from Hutu militants is not over. Speaking in Kampala yesterday during a visit to Uganda, he acknowledged that the emptying of refugee camps in eastern Zaire had eased Rwanda's security problems but stressed that most Interahamwe and ex-FAR were still across the border. "We have to keep watching out for any other eventuality," he said. According to AFP, Kagame also said Sudan was offering refuge to Zairean troops and Rwandan militias. He added that his country was coping well with the return of refugees, although there were still some problems such as resettling them and finding food and medicine. Donor countries and organisations meeting in Kigali today and tomorrow under Canadian chairmanship will discuss the reintegration of returnees. UNHCR figures released yesterday showed that

approximately 473,333 Rwandan returnees had been registered by the local authorities in their communes of origin during the month of November.

A report by the UN Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda (HRFOR) released on Wednesday made it clear the total number of prisoners in Rwanda's jails by the end of October came to 86,200. This represented an increase of about 2,700 detainees since the previous month and an increase of over 23,200 since the beginning of the year.

NGOs with sources on the ground concur that there are some 25,000 displaced people and 50,000-60,000 refugees around Lobutu. In addition very large numbers of people are said to be on the road in groups between Walikale and Lobutu, which one aid agency said amounted to 50-100 people per kilometre. The situation in Walikale is said to be calm. Aid planes are continuing to fly into the area. However Amisi airstrip which would be used for the purpose is reportedly in need of repair before the airlift can take place. UNHCR also announced it was mobilising emergency relief for up to 100,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees sheltering in the Shabunda region and a seven-member mission was expected to leave Kinshasa for Shabunda over the weekend. Field reports indicate that the refugees are malnourished and suffering from a variety of diseases. WFP and relief agencies are already providing emergency assistance to affected people in the area. AFP reported that the French foreign ministry's emergency unit sent a plane carrying 37 tonnes of relief supplies to Kisangani on Wednesday which is expected to benefit displaced Zaireans and refugees walking towards the town.

Eastern Zaire rebel leader Laurent Kabila yesterday declared a unilateral ceasefire in the fighting with Zairean government troops and called for negotiations with Kinshasa. Announcing the ceasefire at his Goma headquarters, he made it clear the ceasefire was conditional. "This (war)

can continue if there is not a clear indication from the international community and the gang in power in Kinshasa to say they are willing to surrender or to start negotiations," he said. He added that the rebel ADFL alliance wanted to hold elections in the country.

A mission to check on eastern Zaire's mountain gorillas following fighting in the area has found that all the national park infrastructure has been destroyed and some park guards killed. A conservation group, International Gorilla Conservation Programme (IGCP) said however that the gorillas - who live in the Virunga National Park which straddles the borders with Rwanda and Uganda - were not affected too much. The Zairean side of the border contains about 200 of the world's 300 mountain gorillas, which are only to be found in the Virunga area. IGCP said pressure on the natural resources of the park had fallen with the mass departure of Rwandan refugees, but poaching and rebel presence remained a problem.

The United States said it was winding down its military presence in central Africa amid ebbing support for a multi-national force. Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon noted yesterday that the "momentum seems to be moving away from an international mission there." A Canadian-led steering group is due to meet at the UN in New York today to decide on the future of the MNF. Bacon said if the meeting decided against the MNF, the Pentagon would probably shrink the US operation to a dozen people or less. The European Parliament meanwhile urged EU heads of state and government to discuss the situation in eastern Zaire at their summit meeting in Dublin over the weekend "in view of the current impasse." A resolution passed by the parliament stressed the need to deploy the MNF to allow the supply of humanitarian aid. However the UN special envoy Raymond Chretien yesterday questioned the need for the MNF, saying that the situation was "encouraging." AFP said he told a news conference in New York after a

five-week mission to the Great Lakes region that if present trends continued, there would be a diminishing need for the MNF.

Burundi peace talks began in Arusha today, but it was unclear who was attending. An adviser to Burundi mediator, former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, said yesterday that the talks would be held from Thursday to Saturday and that the Burundi government had agreed to send a delegation. The spokesman Charles Sanga also said a summit of regional leaders would be held in Nairobi on Monday which would focus on eastern Zaire. Burundi's mainly Tutsi opposition party Uprona and another Tutsi-dominated party Raddes have said they will not attend the Arusha talks, although the Hutu-dominated Frodebu party is sending its chairman Jean Minani and the outlawed Hutu rebel group National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) has also sent representatives, although not its leader Leonard Nyangoma.

An official report has accused Tanzania's former president Ali Hassan Mwinyi and several past and present cabinet ministers of corruption and abuse of public office. A presidential commission report, released on Tuesday by President Mkapa, said Mwinyi's office was responsible for allocating housing plots to his children and relatives in areas reserved for public institutions before he retired last year. Other ministers were accused of involvement in activities beyond their authority.

Nairobi, 13 December 1996, 15:00 GMT

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Tanzanian troops are surrounding groups of the more than 300,000 Rwandan refugees who left their camps in the Ngara area on Thursday and seeking to prevent them from dispersing, according to media reports. Aid agencies and journalists are not being allowed access to these areas, fuelling speculation that the troops will make a concerted effort to encourage refugees to return to Rwanda. To date there have been no reports of the use of force by Tanzanian soldiers, but the authorities have reiterated that the 31 December deadline remains in place.

Today, WFP reports that a group of over 100,000 refugees in the Kitale-Keza area to the south of Ngara, are moving in an easterly direction into the interior of Tanzania. The group is reported to have formed a column 20 kms long. It is unclear whether there are troops present in the area and whether the movement of refugees to the east will be blocked.

Yesterday, Tanzanian troops allowed refugees, who had left Benaco, Lumasi

and Musuhura camps on Thursday afternoon, but who had begun to make their way back to the camps, to rest. Later, the troops issued orders that the refugees had to continue on to the Rwandan border. It appears, however, that the army's attempts to prevent refugees from returning to their camps were largely unsuccessful. Yesterday UNHCR was expecting tens of thousands of refugees to be at the Rwandan border by nightfall, but reporters at the border this afternoon say there are no signs of large numbers of refugees.

About 2,500 refugees joined UNHCR's repatriation convoys back to Rwanda yesterday, the largest in a single day so far. Since the beginning of December, 5,261 refugees have returned to Rwanda voluntarily; this compares to a total number of 3,279 voluntary returnees between 1 January and 30 November this year. At the same time, 7,000 of the 23,000 refugees who had fled their camps in the Karagwe area were reported to have gone back to their camps, while about 500 arrived in Uganda.

The nearest crossing point into Rwanda is about 20 kms north west of Ngara at Rusumo. The ICRC, IFRC and Oxfam have established health, meeting and water points every five kms along this main route to the border, while aid agencies are also scaling up their activities within Rwanda. They are reported to have established water points, health posts and biscuit distributions along a 100 km route from the Rusumo border crossing to Rwanteru, Kirehe, Remera, Kabarondo and Rwamagana in Rwanda.

- Zaire's Interior Minister, Kamanda wa Kamanda, said yesterday that Zaire does not recognize a ceasefire called by rebels of the Alliance of Democratic Forces in eastern Zaire. Speaking to Reuters, Mr Kamanda said, 'We do not recognise this ceasefire. In this war we believe that the other side is the Government of Rwanda and those who are supporting Rwanda so we shall do everything in our means to recover lost territory.'

On Monday, heads of state and government from Great Lakes countries will meet in Nairobi to discuss the situation in eastern Zaire. The Secretary General of the OAU, Salim Ahmed Salim, will attend, as will Julius Nyerere, founding president of Tanzania and currently mediator for the peace talks on Burundi.

Nairobi, 14 November 1996, 13:30 GMT

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Rwandan refugees began pouring back into Rwanda from Ngara camps in Tanzania over the weekend. DHA in Kigali reported that by yesterday, some 24,000 refugees had crossed the border into Rwanda and the flow was increasing towards the end of the day with some 5,000 refugees crossing every hour. Most of the returnees who arrived at the Birenga transit centre in Kibungo prefecture had already been trucked onto their home communes by yesterday. DHA reported a 10km long column of refugees inside Rwanda. However information is quite hard to come by, as access along the 60km stretch of road from Kibungo town to the Tanzanian border is restricted and most NGOs have not yet been allowed to operate. Assistance is currently being provided by the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Rwandan Red Cross. UNHCR has also been allowed to cross the border. The biggest of the Ngara camps - Benaco - is now empty as 200,000 refugees are said to be heading for the border.

As of this morning, a steady stream of refugees continued to cross into

Rwanda. Returning refugees report that the Tanzanian authorities have been using tear gas and firing into the air to prompt an exodus from the camps. UN staff in Ngara yesterday reported some NGOs as saying large numbers of people were still in the bush and two fairly large concentrations of 5,000 and 10,000 were said to be moving south and east. The team also reported that significant portions of the population in the Karagwe camps appeared to be "at large" outside the control of both UNHCR and the authorities. Two large groups of people are said to be heading for Kenya. UNHCR is hoping to truck the inhabitants of Karagwe down to Ngara from where they could walk across the border, UN staff said.

IOM, according to a DHA report from Kigali, has positioned 76 trucks at a BP station 22 kms from the border with a further 70 trucks in Kibungo. IOM also indicated that the Rwandan government has said it will closely monitor the repatriation process and will use the army to intervene if necessary. By 1830 last night, a significant army presence was in evidence along the road to the Nyakarambi transit camp, near Gatore. Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu was on hand to welcome the returnees at the Rusumo border point yesterday, but warned that members of the Interahamwe and ex-FAR would be "dealt with".

Regional leaders are meeting in Nairobi today to discuss the crisis in the Great Lakes, although Zaire and Burundi are not taking part. South African President Nelson Mandela and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe are attending for the first time according to the Kenya News Agency. Burundi mediator, former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere will be at the meeting along with OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim.

A 14-nation steering committee which met in New York on Friday decided to wind up the mission of the Canadian-led multi-national force by the end of

this month. After the announcement was made in New York, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien issued a statement in Ottawa saying the force had served as a "catalyst" for the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees to Rwanda. Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy also claimed the mission had led to the refugees' return. "The fact that the movement of peoples took place exactly at the time when the announcement of the international force was made is not a coincidence," he said.

Nairobi, 16 December 1996, 10:55 gmt

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As of 14:00 today, 60,000 Rwandan refugees had crossed into their homeland from Tanzania's Ngara camps, bringing the total number of returnees since Saturday to 90,000, according to UNHCR figures. The refugees were said to be crossing at the rate of up to 15,000 an hour. A BBC correspondent said the flow was intensifying every hour, although mid-afternoon, the rate slowed because of heavy rain. However a number of refugees were reluctant to return and the BBC said Hutu militias were seen jogging in formation away from the border.

Refugees from the Rubwera and Kagere camps in northwest Tanzania, who do not want to return to Rwanda, continued to arrive at Orukinga camp in Uganda's Mbarara area at the rate of about 500 a day, reports the IFRC. The initial response of the Ugandan border authorities has been to send some of the refugees back to Tanzania, but refugees have been crossing the Kagera river on the border under cover of night. A total of 2,000 refugees have arrived and according to some reports, 30,000 may be on their way.

Rwanda is to receive \$500 million in international aid to help with the repatriation of returnees, Canadian International Cooperation Minister Don Boudria said on Saturday. His announcement followed a meeting of donor countries and aid organisations in Kigali on Friday which was a follow-up to the Great Lakes humanitarian aid conference held in Geneva last month. During that meeting, Rwanda appealed for \$740 million to help resettle the returnees. Boudria said the priority was housing, but aid would also be channelled towards boosting Rwanda's judicial and social service systems, as well as agriculture.

Fuel prices and public transport fares have increased considerably in Kinshasa, raising fears of a backlash by residents unable to afford the price hikes. Zairean radio, monitored by BBC, on Friday announced that fuel prices had risen from 68,000 to 71,000 new zaires, and the price per litre of gasoline now stood at 78,000 new zaires. Bus fares had risen from 30,000 to 35,000 new zaires, and taxis from 35,000 to 40,000 new zaires. The Zairean government also submitted budget proposals to parliament on Friday which called for reserving 35 percent of overall public spending in the coming financial year for defence, Reuters reported. It said that in recent weeks, the government had imposed extra taxes on local and international businesses as contributions to the war effort.

Zairean President Mobutu is due back in the country tomorrow after an absence of over three months, Zairean television announced. He underwent cancer surgery in Switzerland in August, and has since been convalescing in the south of France. Mobutu is expected to stay at the Tshatshi military camp in Kinshasa and will make a broadcast to the nation. Observers point out that Zairean public opinion expects Mobutu to take personal charge of military counter-offensive aimed at re-establishing control in the

rebel-held east of the country.

IFRC has delivered a consignment of 10 MT of relief supplies for tens of thousands of refugees and displaced people in Kisangani. A Hercules C-130 flew into the town yesterday in what IFRC described as the first of a series of regular flights between Kisangani and Nairobi. Kisangani itself was reported to be calm, and food supplies had already been flown into the town by France and Belgium. Aid organisations were expected to airlift more supplies this week. NCA/ACT have begun airlifting food and medicines to Kisangani, for distribution there, and onward delivery to Lubutu by land and Katshungu by air. AFP quoted relief agencies as saying some 500,000 people were on the move in eastern Zaire heading westwards in the regions of Kindu, Lobutu, Walikale and Shabunda ahead of the rebel offensive.

Various reports said the original population of Lobutu have vacated the town and some 90,000 refugees and displaced people had moved in, probably including Interahamwe and ex-FAR. Aid organisations on the ground corroborated the information, saying these people were staying put in Lobutu and not moving on to Kisangani. According to IFRC, 300,000 displaced people were stuck between Walikale and Lobutu without food and assistance, and were in a poor state. UN sources said Zairean military authorities were blocking the refugee advance some 200km east of Kisangani near Lubutu, and some 200 km east of Kindu near Shabunda. It was probable that this would lead to the natural creation of camps as the refugee population in Shabunda and Lobutu continued to swell. An ex-FAR camp near Kingulube, some 180km east of Shabunda, has - according to Zairean security officials in Kinshasa - reportedly been dismantled but it is not known where the former Rwandan soldiers have moved to.

Burundi on Saturday expressed surprise over a UN human rights report which

said over 1,000 people had been killed in just one month in the country, mostly by government forces. Interior Minister Epitace Bayaganakandi said he did not know the sources used by UN observers, nor how they had worked out the number of people killed during fighting in Burundi. Bayaganakandi added that it had "become a habit among some agencies to ignore the crimes of terrorist organisations and to blame systematically the Burundi army for killings with inflated casualty figures for propaganda purposes." Also on Saturday, Burundi's Foreign Minister Luc Rukingama again appealed for the lifting of economic sanctions imposed on his country by regional countries following the July coup. Speaking in connection with Burundi peace talks in the Tanzanian town of Arusha, he said his government had drawn up several recommendations for peace in Burundi which would be presented to mediator Julius Nyerere. Tanzanian radio said five parties from Burundi, including the Hutu-dominated Frodebu party and the exiled extremist Hutu organisation CNDD, were represented in Arusha. Few details of the meeting have been released. Meanwhile, the UN in Tanzania announced that three barges loaded with fertilisers and medicines, exempt from the regional sanctions, left the port of Kigoma for Bujumbura on Thursday.

Uganda has said it will grant an amnesty to rebel leader Joseph Kony if leaders in the north - where he is waging his rebellion - and next of kin of people killed by his fighters, agree to pardon him. According to newspaper reports, special presidential adviser Salim Saleh told a seminar in the northern town of Gulu on Saturday that Kony - who leads the Lord's Resistance Army - could then return to Gulu and resume his career as a Roman Catholic catechist. AFP said that until now, President Museveni had refused to grant an amnesty to Kony, saying he must stand trial.

Nairobi, 16 December 1996, 15:30 gmt

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A regional summit in Nairobi to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes ended late last night and called on the warring sides in eastern Zaire to resolve the conflict through peace negotiations. The meeting also stressed that boundaries inherited at independence should be respected and a stop should be put to cross-border incursions. A communique - issued by the leaders of Kenya, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Zambia, Eritrea, South Africa, Rwanda, Tanzania and Ethiopia - said the summit had reviewed developments in the region and noted the "easing" of the refugee problem in eastern Zaire. However, the security situation had deteriorated since last month's Nairobi summit, the communique pointed out. Summit participants urged the international community to provide "substantial assistance" to Rwandan returnees and encourage bona fide refugees still in Zaire and Tanzania to return home. The presidents of Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Cameroon, which is the current OAU chairman, were entrusted with taking necessary initiatives on behalf of the other countries.

President Moi of Kenya described the absence of Zaire at the summit as "regrettable", but Zairean Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Kititwa, speaking on Radio France Internationale, said his country would "not eat the food which the others have put into President Moi's saucepan." The summit however welcomed assurances by President Mobutu that Zaire "recognises the inalienable right to citizenship and nationality of all people within its internationally recognised boundaries." According to the communique, this assurance was seen as a significant step in the search for a lasting solution to the crisis. Burundi was not invited to the meeting.

President Mobutu arrived home to a tumultuous welcome today as tens of thousands of people packed the airport to greet him. State radio had earlier urged the people to turn out in force for his return. A BBC reporter said he looked to be in good health. The president is due to address the nation on state radio and television tonight.

As of last night, 107,000 refugees crossed into Rwanda from camps in Ngara, northwest Tanzania, and a UNHCR spokesperson, speaking on BBC radio, said about 50,000 had crossed over today. The spokesperson said a steady stream was crossing the border, but the exodus had been slowed down by heavy rain. A shuttle truck is operating between various points in Rwanda - Nyakarambi, Birenga, Kibungo, Kayonze - enabling most refugees to be transported for at least part of the journey. It has also been possible to transport some refugees directly to the northeast prefectures of Byumba and Mutara. Some 70 percent of the refugees are from Kibungo prefecture which borders Tanzania with most of the others coming from Byumba, Mutara and Butare. UNHCR expects to have 284 trucks and 14 minibuses available today. As of yesterday, news reports out of Tanzania said refugees on that side of the border were backed up more than 10kms. Some reports said a group of 100,000 refugees was possibly heading for an ex-FAR/Interahamwe training camp,

thought to be in northern Malawi. Some of the returning refugees told reporters they had been forced to leave the camps against their will by aid agencies and Tanzanian troops. Some 68,000 Burundian refugees are still remaining in Kitali Hills camp where NGOs have been allowed to continue their work.

UN staff reported that refugees crossing the border were in a relatively good condition, considering they had already walked a distance of some 100km before reaching Rwanda. Many left their camps last week to go further into Tanzania, only to be returned to the camps and then begin the march back to Rwanda. WFP said most of the returnees also appeared to be in a good nutritional state as many of them had recently received two-week food rations. However many children were said to be in poor condition.

Information on the situation in the Karagwe camps, north of Ngara, has been sketchy. USAID yesterday reported that some 90-100,000 of the estimated 124,000 refugees were still in the camps while about 30,000 were roaming around the countryside. Some of these were said to have moved southeast to the Burigi game reserve, others [as reported by IRIN yesterday] had crossed into Uganda and still more had moved east towards Bukoba. According to USAID, efforts are underway to repatriate those remaining in the camps. Reports by a UN mission in Karagwe seemed to confirm this information, but said numbers of refugees outside the camps were put at anything between 20,000-60,000. Some of the refugees were attempting to cross the swamps in a bid to return to Rwanda that way. A group of refugees trying to reach Uganda was blocked by the Tanzanian authorities and trucked back to the camps.

The Karagwe refugees may be on the move tomorrow when UNHCR is planning to make trucks available in the Kagenyi and Rubwera camps for onward

transportation to the Rusumo crossing. However there are insufficient trucks for the entire population of the camps, and many refugees are expected to make the long journey to the border crossing on foot - an estimated journey of four days. Preparations are underway to set up water stations along the main road from Karagwe to Benaco. The last food distribution - consisting mainly of corn meal - is scheduled for tomorrow, after which only four NGOs will be allowed to operate in the camps.

Rwandan Vice-President Paul Kagame met Ugandan President Museveni in Kamapla yesterday to discuss the mass return of refugees to Rwanda. A report on Rwandan radio today said the two men also discussed the economic embargo against Burundi and the situation in eastern Zaire.

ICRC said 15,000 new arrivals had been registered in Shabunda, eastern Zaire, over the weekend, bringing the total number of refugees to 38,000. Ten percent of them are Burundian, and Rwandan Hutu extremists have also been sighted. The refugees are reportedly setting themselves up in Shabunda with a view to staying put. At Tinga-Tinga, near Lubutu, between 50,000 and 100,000 mostly Rwandan refugees have been sighted, UN sources in Kinshasa said. They are organising themselves into camps, comprising internal structures, as was the case in Goma. Access to refugees in the Walikale area is practically impossible. Fighting has been reported on the outskirts of Walikale between ex-FAR/Interahamwe and rebel forces.

UNHCR announced it was sending a team to look into reports that 100,000-150,000 people had converged on Shabunda and that over 100,000 refugees and displaced people were sheltering in Lubutu. It said it would seek ways of moving the refugees towards Rwanda.

The situation in Burundi's Karuzi province is reported to be very volatile

as the authorities continue a campaign to regroup people into camps. Many of these people are reported to come from locations considered to be sympathetic to the Hutu rebel cause, and if they refuse to enter the camps they will be considered as hostile elements. The Burundi government says the camps, which may be created in other provinces, are a way of protecting the civilian population from rebel activity. Basic services in Karuzi are described as sub-standard.

UNHCR said about 300 Ugandan refugees were set to leave Kenya tonight after over a decade of exile. A five-bus convoy, escorted by UNHCR staff, was due to arrive in the southeast Ugandan town of Mbale at dawn tomorrow from where the refugees would make their own onward travel arrangements. The refugees were being trucked from Nairobi and the Kakuma refugee camp.

Nairobi, 17 December 1996, 15:30 gmt

Via the UN DHA Integrated Regional Information Network. The material contained in this communication may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its agencies. UN DHA IRIN Tel: +254 2 622123 Fax: +254 2 622129 e-mail: irin@dha.unon.org for more information. If you re-print, copy, archive or re-post this item, please retain this credit and disclaimer.

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(Wednesday 18 December 1996)

Zaire's President Mobutu, who returned to the country yesterday, said he had come back against medical advice to take personal charge of the situation. In an address over state radio and television, he accused Zaire's "enemies" of choosing to "stab him in the back" when he was unwell and out of the country. He assured the people he had never "retreated" when the country was under threat, and he would not retreat this time. But he added that "our enemies' provocation should not make us fall into the trap of blind xenophobia against the foreigners who have lived for years in our country without violating the laws of the republic." A US State Department spokesman said yesterday Mobutu should move towards establishing "real democracy" in Zaire. According to AFP, spokesman Glyn Davies said that "after 56 years of promises, there really needs to be some action on the political front." He added it would be difficult to know what the country's future could be if Mobutu "decides not to open the political system." "The

bottom line for the United States is that Zaire remains a single nation," he said.

Sources in Goma said Mobutu's return had heightened fears among the local population of a counter-offensive by the Zairean army. On Monday, the ADFL rebels - seeking to weaken army morale ahead of Mobutu's arrival - appealed to Zairean soldiers to switch sides, Reuters reported. The appeal was contained in two documents signed by two Zairean officers who had apparently gone over to the rebels.

UNICEF warned yesterday that thousands of Rwandan refugees in Zaire could die before Christmas unless aid agencies launch a huge emergency relief operation to get food to more than 100,000 people who have arrived in Lubutu recently. Many of the refugees have arrived from the Mugunga camp near Goma, a distance of some 300kms.

An article in the Belgian daily 'De Morgen' over the weekend said aid workers were making an initial assessment of the situation in the Goma region, following a ceasefire announcement by rebel leader Laurent Kabila. They found 5,500 bodies, mostly in pit latrines of the former refugee camps. Some of them "had an expression of pain on their faces," the newspaper reported. It added that they were probably slaughtered by retreating Interahamwe militia, saying that dumping bodies in latrines was practised by the Interahamwe during the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Some 200,000 refugees have returned to Rwanda from Tanzania and more are said to be emerging from hiding to join the exodus. Most of the Ngara camps are now empty, but the Tanzanian authorities have allowed aid workers back into the camps to help any remaining refugees. UNHCR said some 2,300 Burundian refugees still in the Benaco, Musuhura and Lumasi camps were

being regrouped with 20,000 Burundians in Lukole camp. Aid workers, quoted by AFP, said a Rwandan soldier last night fired several shots at a convoy bringing home refugees.

WFP said it was planning to cut food rations by 70 percent after the first month of assistance to the Rwandan returnees. It was aiming to prevent dependency on external food assistance and encourage the returnees to become self-sufficient. WFP will assist with reintegration through work-for-food programmes.

WFP also reported that 2,400 Rwandan refugees from the Karagwe camps in northwest Tanzania had been registered at Orutshinga (Orukinga??) in Uganda, while 200 Zairean refugees had arrived at Nebbi in northwest Uganda. WFP said more could be expected in the event of a further advance northwards by rebels in eastern Zaire. Further south in Tanzania, at Kigoma, UNHCR reported that refugees from Burundi and Zaire were continuing to arrive and that by mid-December there was a total of 174,500 refugees in the area. Of these, 2,120 were Rwandans. UNHCR said there was a problem regarding Zairean refugees who refused to be transferred from the town to the newly opened Nyarususu camp.

Two Roman Catholic priests said they had been deported by the Tanzanian authorities for opposing the repatriation of Rwandan refugees. The priests, from Spain and Italy, told reporters in Nairobi yesterday that the refugees did not want to return to Rwanda but that their pleas fell on deaf ears.

Human Rights Watch yesterday called on the Tanzanian government and UNHCR to "stop forcing Rwandan refugees to repatriate." "The Tanzanian government's use of force to drive Rwandan refugees over the border is a blot on their traditionally good record in respect of refugee rights," HRW said. "Moreover, the UNHCR has shamefully abandoned its responsibility to

protect refugees." HRW went on to say that the international community had "barely disguised its satisfaction at seeing the refugee camps around Rwanda forcibly disbanded. But moving the refugees from one side of the border to the other will not offer any lasting solution without justice for genocide victims and improved respect for human rights by the Rwandan government."

Rwandan radio said last night that a new regional summit could soon be held to discuss the situation in Burundi. The Burundi conflict did not figure in a communique released by regional leaders after their summit in Nairobi this week. According to the radio, a report was given to the heads of state which "noted that negotiations have not yet effectively begun" between the Tutsi-dominated authorities in Bujumbura and Hutu rebels, and that leaders would meet soon to discuss the issue in depth. Burundi's foreign ministry issued a statement describing as "shameful" the fact that Burundi had not been invited to the Nairobi summit. The statement, broadcast by Burundi radio on Monday, said that if the summit did not call for lifting economic sanctions against the country, then Burundians should unite "with the knowledge that sanctions are another war which must be fought." "Warmongers and their supporters are spreading falsehoods so that the Nairobi meeting does not reach any meaningful resolution on Burundi," the statement added. "The ministry reminds the international community that peace is slowly returning to many places in the country and citizens are dropping their support for the armed groups." Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu, quoted by Rwandan radio, said the presence of a Burundian delegation at the Nairobi summit "might have made a positive contribution."

The UN Secretary-General's outgoing Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region has made several proposals for the future of the mission. In a report to the UN Security Council, Raymond Chretien suggested appointing an

envoy who either lives in Nairobi or somewhere close to the region, a roving envoy with no fixed home base for several months until a working relationship with regional leaders is established or an envoy who would visit the region as and when needed. In his opinion, the last option was the preferred one in order to build on the goodwill and momentum generated by his mission.

Nairobi, 18 December 1996, 13:30 gmt

Via the UN DHA Integrated Regional Information Network. The material contained in this communication may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its agencies. UN DHA IRIN Tel: +254 2 622123 Fax: +254 2 622129 e-mail: irin@dha.unon.org for more information. If you re-print, copy, archive or re-post this item, please retain this credit and disclaimer.

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Zaire named a new army chief yesterday as reports mounted of preparations for a counter-offensive against the rebels in eastern Zaire. Zairean television said General Mahele Bokoungo Lieko had been appointed army chief by presidential decree to restructure the armed forces "with a view to putting them on a war footing and improving their efficiency". Gen. Mahele, who held the post in 1991 and 1992 and who is said to be popular in Zaire, will also head the crack Special Presidential Division (DSP) troops as well as the civil guard and gendarmerie. The current civil guard chief, General Baramato Kpama, had been acting army chief and it is not known what role he will now play. Mobutu was due to meet political leaders today, according to state television.

Reuters reported that hundreds of residents were fleeing Goma, fearful of a counter-attack by the Zairean army. Residents told Reuters they believed French troops were based at Kisangani and would bombard Goma from the air, but there has been no confirmation of this. In a speech to the nation late

Tuesday, Mobutu vowed to take personal control of the rebellion in the east. A spokesman for opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi described Mobutu's message as "generally satisfactory". Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress plans to hold an emergency congress on Saturday.

Eastern Zaire rebels announced they were ready for any counter-offensive, saying Mobutu's return changed nothing. Rebel leader Laurent Kabila called on Mobutu to resign and hand over power to the ADFL. "We are well prepared, morale of our troops is high and the population supports their liberation from slavery," he told Reuters. "Either he [Mobutu] engages himself in negotiations with the alliance to solve the political crisis or he has to face the law of force," Kabila said. In further remarks, broadcast by rebel Star Radio today, he assured civilians that they were safe and urged them not to flee rebel-held areas.

A possible standoff between rebels and Zairean troops in Bunia was gaining momentum as Zairean reinforcements were flown into the town, while sources on the ground reported that rebels were in control of villages around the town, including Boga, Geti and Mambasa. Eight to ten planeloads of Zairean soldiers have reportedly been flown to Bunia from Kisangani, and troops are arriving from Kinshasa to beef up forces in Kisangani.

WFP began airlifting food aid into Kisangani yesterday for onward distribution to Lubutu where missionary sources confirmed the presence of up to 150,000 mostly Rwandan and Burundian refugees at Tingi-Tingi just outside the town. They were said to be faring better than some 50,000 displaced people further south in Katshungu who were in very poor shape. WFP however, said the children in Lubutu were particularly vulnerable, many of them showing signs of severe dehydration. There has been speculation -

so far unconfirmed - that the Lubutu refugees may comprise ex-FAR/Interahamwe elements.

ICRC said it was providing assistance for almost 50,000 Rwandan and Burundian refugees who had gathered near the town of Shabunda. There were several thousand new arrivals very day at the temporary site deep in the forest. ICRC said the aid operation was being conducted in extremely arduous conditions because of the nature of the terrain and heavy rainfall. Supplies were first airlifted by heavy transport plane from Nairobi to Kindu, then transferred to lighter aircraft which can land at Shabunda. There they were loaded onto dugout canoes, and bicycles were used for the last part of the journey.

Kenya lashed out at Zaire yesterday, saying it took great exception to comments by Zairean Information Minister Boguo Makele that the second Nairobi Great Lakes summit was a plot by anglophone countries to destabilise Zaire. "It is regrettable that Zaire does not appreciate efforts by the leaders of the subregion to find solutions to the crisis in Zaire," said a statement, signed the permanent secretary in the information ministry, Samuel Ambuka. Media reports point out that the Nairobi summit strengthened Kenyan President Moi's hand in the region by successfully including President Mandela to handle a crisis outside his immediate region.

Rwandan returnees from Tanzania's Ngara camps today were put at 20,000 as of 10:30 local time, while an estimated 225,000 had arrived by yesterday. A UN spokesman confirmed that a Rwandan soldier had fired on a vehicle in a UNHCR convoy yesterday. No injuries were reported, but night-time operations were suspended as a result. Way stations are being set up for about 120,000 refugees expected to start the long trek from the Karagwe

camps to the Rusumo border crossing in the next few days. Tanzanian Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete reiterated that all Rwandan refugees must return, despite criticisms of human rights violations. "We won't listen, we won't apologise to anyone. Let them talk until they get tired and keep quiet," he said. Allowing the refugees to remain in Tanzania would just provide a haven for ex-FAR/Interahamwe groups, he added. Kikwete also said his government would hand over an undisclosed number of Rwandan refugees indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. These included some of the refugees rounded up last week for intimidating fellow refugees, he told a news conference. "We will send them to the Arusha tribunal to face charges of genocide in Rwanda," he said.

Uganda yesterday refused to host some 2,000 Rwandan refugees who crossed into its territory from camps in Tanzania. In an interview with the state-owned 'New Vision' newspaper, Local Government Minister Bidandi Ssali said the refugees, who were sheltering at the Oruchinga camp in Mbarara district, would either have to go home, or back to Tanzania. "We are not prepared to accept them here, not because they are Hutus, but because they have contravened the UN convention on refugees," he said. Malawi also said it would not offer asylum to Rwandans escaping repatriation from Zaire and Tanzania, saying it had suffered badly from environmental problems when it had hosted Mozambican refugees.

A report in Kenya's 'East African Standard' today claimed at least 100 Hutu refugees had secretly crossed into Kenya from Tanzania over the last four days. The newspaper cited sources as saying the refugees from camps in the Ngara region, had entered Kenya through the Isebania border area in Kuria district using secret routes to avoid immigration procedures.

Rwanda reported that some 5,500 Zairean refugees in the Gisenyi area began

returning home yesterday. According to Rwandan radio, monitored by the BBC, the refugees had been living at the university compound in Mudende, Mutura commune. Local authorities concluded there was no reason for the refugees to continue living under sheeting when their home areas were peaceful, the radio said. Meanwhile, according to UN figures, 446 Burundians, fleeing fighting in Cibitoke province, entered Rwanda via Cyangugu between 13-16 December. They are being housed at a camp for Burundian refugees near Bugarama.

Burundi's main Hutu party FRODEBU yesterday accused the military of killing 4,000 Hutu refugees who had returned to Burundi from Zaire. The claim was made by party leader Jean Minani in an interview with Radio France Internationale from Arusha, Tanzania. A UN human rights report a week ago said 1,000 people had been massacred between end October-end November, mostly by soldiers.

The Vatican on Tuesday said it had convened a meeting of Roman Catholic bishops from the Great Lakes to discuss the crisis in the region, the first such meeting in four years. The four-day meeting begins today in Nairobi, and comprises bishops from Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire and church representatives from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The Vatican said the meeting was aimed at showing ecclesiastical solidarity in the region and identifying the Church's priorities and actions.

Uganda and Sudan are to meet in Kampala this week for peace talks brokered by Iran, although President Museveni said he did not expect huge progress to be made. "I have agreed that talks should take place here," he told a news conference late Tuesday. "But of course we have not broken any ground with [Sudanese Islamic leader] Mr al-Tourabi's people." Museveni said Uganda was still searching for a military solution to the rebellion in the

north, which it says is backed by Sudan. "We must get a solution to al-Tourabi's blackmail, a military solution," Museveni said. "I am not going to invade al-Tourabi. Al-Tourabi has enough enemies who will take care of him." Sudan accuses Uganda of supporting the rebel Sudanese People's Liberation Army in the south.

Nairobi, 19 December 1996, 15:00 gmt

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WFP and UNHCR report that some 15,000 refugees have left the Kagenyi and Rubwere camps in the Karagwe region. According to some reports, they are said to be heading north and east. The exodus took place between Friday and Sunday night, and more people were reported to be on the road today although heavy rains appear to have temporarily stalled the refugee movement. Some media accounts say aid workers have put forward the theory that Hutu hardliners may be organising mass departures in response to the repatriation preparations.

Some 300 Rwandan refugees returned home from Tanzania on Sunday and many more were expected to follow on Tuesday, according to UNHCR, quoted by AFP. Earlier, UNHCR announced the return of about 1,118 refugees on Friday. It said a mass return was expected tomorrow after the food rations were distributed to refugees today. A UNHCR update, issued on Friday, said preparations for the return included setting up two way stations on the 30km road from the camps to the border and four water points, which would

also be used as a collection point for children separated from their parents. WFP said it was distributing food to refugees in the greater Benaco and Ngara camps. The rations, consisting of cereals, pulses and vegetable oil, will be distributed to camps in the Karagwe region later in the week.

Rwandan radio said a planned operation to repatriate some 1,000 refugees from Tanzania on Saturday was scrapped. Rwandan military and civilian officials who went to the border to welcome the returnees were told the operation had been cancelled, but no reasons were given. The radio also reported that 163 Rwandan refugees arrived back in Kigali from Brazzaville, Congo, on Friday. It said 800 Rwandans had fled to the Congolese capital from Kinshasa last month after being "harassed and tortured" following events in eastern Zaire. More returnees were expected in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the refugee influx from Zaire and Burundi in Tanzania's Kigoma region has slowed down, UNHCR reported. In its Friday update, it said that over the last five days 5,200 refugees had arrived from Burundi and 550 had come by boat from Zaire. Some 100,000 refugees have arrived in Kigoma since last month.

Schools were due to reopen in the south Kivu area of eastern Zaire today after the regional authorities held a meeting last week to discuss the issue. Municipal and educational authorities would visit educational establishments in the course of the day to learn more about the situation, rebel Radio of the People announced.

Recent visitors to Zairean President Mobutu say his health is deteriorating and doubt whether he will ever return home, Associated Press reported yesterday. The news agency said it had been told privately by Mobutu's

chief aide, Bosco Kassouba, that the president "is very sick ... and he is very tired. He is incapable of having more than one visit a day." On Saturday, Kassouba announced that all photo opportunities of the president would cease. Mobutu, who has not been in Zaire since August, is convalescing from cancer surgery at his villa in the south of France.

A report in the Washington Post said State Department officials believed Mobutu was negotiating with the South African Executive Outcomes security firm to supply mercenaries to put down the eastern Zaire rebellion. Rumours have been circulating of mercenary involvement on the side of the Zairean army. According to South African radio, French newspapers reported last week that 300 mercenaries were fighting alongside the Zaireans. However Executive Outcomes has denied the allegations. The radio reported the firm's owner as saying he had been approached to help in the Great Lakes region, but had declined.

French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette reiterated the call for an international conference on the Great Lakes region. In an interview with Radio France Internationale on Friday, he stated that Zaire's territorial integrity was a prerequisite for regional peace. He said a "latent civil war" was taking root in Zaire, with increasing political problems, and a conference should be convened as soon as possible, under UN and OAU auspices.

Leaders of Red Cross groups from the five Great Lakes countries were due to meet in Nairobi today to discuss the humanitarian crisis in the region. The two-day meeting, comprising representatives of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from Burundi, Rwanda, Zaire, Tanzania and Uganda, will focus on strategic planning in the area, AFP said.

The Rwandan justice minister Faustin Nteziryayo met the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, on Saturday to discuss the human rights situation in the country following the mass return of Rwandan refugees. A report on Rwandan radio said the minister briefed Ayala Lasso on measures taken by Rwanda to improve human rights conditions, especially in the country's prisons. Steps taken included the temporary release of minor offenders and setting up committees to examine the cases of detainees. He also explained that "advanced preparations" were underway regarding the trials of genocide suspects. Official Rwandan sources, quoted by AFP today, said the names of 1,900 genocide suspects had been published, listed by commune and prefecture. They are suspected of "first degree" involvement in the 1994 genocide, which renders them liable to the death penalty under a new law introduced in September.

Nairobi, 9 December 1995, 14:50 GMT

Via the UN DHA Integrated Regional Information Network. The material contained in this communication may not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its agencies. UN DHA IRIN Tel: +254 2 622123 Fax: +254 2 622129 e-mail: irin@dha.unon.org for more information. If you re-print, copy, archive or re-post this item, please retain this credit and disclaimer.

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IRIN Emergency Update No. 53 on eastern Zaire

UNITED NATIONS

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ICRC said its team in eastern Zaire, which was forced to evacuate Kindu and Kisangani last week because of insecurity, managed to fly to Shabunda on Sunday from Lubumbashi. Between 8,000 and 10,000 Burundian and Rwandan refugees, from the Uvira camps, were located in the area, most of them in a very bad condition. They were suffering mainly from diarrhoea, malnutrition and malaria. ICRC said there were indications that large groups of women, children and elderly people were in the surrounding forests living in difficult conditions. Emergency food aid was being flown into the area as of today and ICRC said it would concentrate on the refugees it had located. ICRC added however that it did not want its activities to favour the establishment of new camps, and it was discussing the future of these people with the local authorities and UNHCR. A UN interagency mission just returned to Kinshasa from Shabunda reports a similar picture, having visited small camps of refugees at Nialubwe near Shabunda. Several Rwandan refugees interviewed by a UN official during the mission expressed a willingness to go home.

Zairean Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo has stated that his country's armed forces "have lost the battle but not the war". In an interview with Radio France Internationale, broadcast yesterday, he said Zaire would do everything in its power to regain "its occupied territories". "The Zairean armed forces have withdrawn at the moment... Soon you will see what these Zairean armed forces are capable of when motivated by the love of their country," he told the radio. He described rebel leader Laurent Kabila as a "puppet of the Rwandans", and ruled out any negotiations with the rebels. "The war has not been won," he added. "No-one can celebrate a victory at the moment."

Kabila meanwhile said the Zairean army was facing "total disaster". According to rebel Radio of the People yesterday, monitored by the BBC, he said 350 soldiers had gone over to the side of the rebels. The Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), he said, was ready to negotiate with "all those in favour of a democratic and republican system", but he would never work with Mobutu. However, Zairean Information Minister Makeli Boguo denied that soldiers had defected to the rebels, saying the claim was part of the rebels' "psychological battle". "I would have liked us to be told where and how many," he told Radio France Internationale. "All we are told is that 300 soldiers are reported to have gone over to the enemy forces. According to military sources, this report is untrue and is being spread about simply to sap the morale of our soldiers."

Boguo also strongly denied that the town of Bunia had fallen to the rebels, despite repeated claims by rebel security chief Jean Kabongo that the town was in ADFL hands. NGOs, with contacts on the ground, confirmed that Bunia had not been taken, and said more Zairean soldiers had turned up in the

town where they continued to loot property and possessions. Seven soldiers were reported killed by Bunia residents who are said to be increasingly fed up with the state of lawlessness in their town. A demonstration, by mostly young people, was held over the weekend in protest against the current state of affairs.

Some reports said Bunia was surrounded by rebels, backed by fighters from the Mai Mai militia of the Hunde tribe. According to a Reuters report, Mai Mai child warriors captured the village of Mambasa on Sunday, effectively cutting off Bunia and some 5,000 Zairean soldiers there from any escape route. The news agency quoted the local operations head of the Zaire Red Cross in Beni as saying the rebels were taking advantage of the Mai Mai who believe the power of water will protect them from harm, including bullets. Reuters said the ADFL had trucked thousands of Mai Mai to the frontline near Bunia, as a psychological weapon against Zairean forces.

One French and two Belgian employees at a mine in eastern Zaire were reportedly held hostage for three days by Burundian Hutu rebels in the Kamituga area. According to Reuters, Sylvain Bogaertss, the Belgian director of works at the Sominki gold mine in Kamituga said on Friday they were surrounded by about 20 Burundian rebels and taken away. "They were desperate men with nothing to lose. They said they were going to kill us," he said. They were freed separately after a large but undisclosed ransom was negotiated, Reuters said. It added that Burundian rebel groups have been driven from bases inside Zaire in areas bordering Burundi, by Zairean rebel advances in the east of the country. Their supply lines from Bukavu to the Rusizi plain, have been cut. Like their armed Hutu counterparts from Rwanda, many have now been driven into the interior of Zaire.

There are indications that some refugees who fled camps in Tanzania's

Karagwe region rather than be repatriated to Rwanda are returning to the original camps, signifying that intimidators - thought to be preventing the repatriation - may be losing their hold. UNHCR said several of the 15,000 refugees who left Kagenyi and Rubwere camps over the weekend had now returned. A report from the office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Kigali said 30 trucks were able to cross from Rwanda into Tanzania today in readiness for the repatriation exercise, and another 60 UNHCR/IOM trucks were on their way to the border. Today, 1,387 Rwandans returned from Tanzania, bringing the total of returnees since 1 December to over 3,000.

Radio France Internationale reported today that President Mobutu would return to Zaire early next week. It said it had obtained the information exclusively from Mobutu's chief aide, Honore Ngbanda. Mobutu has been in France convalescing from cancer surgery.

Amnesty International today accused the Zairean authorities and ADFL rebels of clamping down on human rights activities in the Bukavu area. It said that since September many human rights activists had been killed, attacked, imprisoned or had disappeared. In its statement, the organisation said it had received many "alarming reports" on the difficult conditions faced by activists to investigate and publicise cases of human rights abuses.

A 14-nation steering group overseeing the multi-national force (MNF) is due to meet in New York on Friday, a Canadian government source said. Quoted by AFP, he said no timetable had been set for the meeting which will be held at UN headquarters. There has been much speculation of late about the future of the mission with prospective participants questioning whether or not it should be scrapped.

Nairobi, 10 December 1996, 15:15 GMT

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Rwandan refugees in Tanzania appear to be on the verge of leaving the camps in large numbers. A report from the office of the Humanitarian Coordinator in Kigali said 13,000 Muslims throughout the camps had asked to be repatriated this weekend. They will probably walk to the Rusumo border crossing, with some transport assistance for vulnerable groups. UNHCR, in its daily report, said the atmosphere in the Ngara camps was relaxed and refugees seemed to be preparing to go back. Some were selling their belongings or harvesting their beans. Further north, in Karagwe, the situation was less clear with reports of some 23,000 refugees fleeing away from the border following a campaign of intimidation by Hutu extremists in the camps. According to WFP, many of these refugees had moved south towards Chabalisa, but around 5,000 were heading northwards to the Ugandan border. UNHCR said the local authorities in the Karagwe region were enforcing measures promulgated a year ago, to restrict the movement of refugees outside four kms of the camps and to stop all commercial activities. UNHCR added it was sending 270 trucks to Tanzania from Rwanda to be used in the

repatriation process.

Radio Tanzania today said arrangements to repatriate 130,000 refugees in Karagwe had been finalised. It quoted the district commissioner as saying the plans had been drawn up with UNHCR collaboration.

About 559 refugees from Karagwe arrived at a refugee camp in southwest Uganda yesterday and Monday, and it was expected that more would arrive today, WFP said. Oruchinga camp in Mbarara shelters 6,500 refugees, 5,000 of whom are Rwandan Hutu moderates who left the country in 1992-94. The refugees coming from Tanzania are crossing the Kagera river which straddles the border by private canoe, and then walking the remaining 2kms to the camp.

A WFP programme for supplying food to Rwandan prefectures expecting an influx of returnees from Tanzania is underway. WFP said 1,200 MT of mixed commodities were transported within Rwanda over the weekend. A detailed contingency plan has been elaborated by WFP, UN agencies and NGOs for Kibungo prefecture, which may have to cope with as many as 340,000 returnees.

Representatives of the Tanzanian and Rwandan governments and UNHCR are due to hold a meeting at the Tanzania-Rwanda border crossing tomorrow. The meeting is likely to be continued in the Ngara camps the next day and is expected to kick-start the repatriation process which is planned to begin at Ngara. All returnees will be required to register at commune level, DHA Kigali said. During the repatriation from eastern Zaire, there was some confusion as some refugees registered at commune level and others at sectoral level.

Aid workers, quoted by Reuters, said they believed Tanzanian troop reinforcements were heading for the northwestern camps to enforce the government's repatriation deadline of December 31 and that anyone escaping from the camps would face arrest.

Tanzanian Prime Minister Frederick Sumaye yesterday warned refugees against taking part in politics or military training and told them to respect the laws of the land. Addressing Burundian refugees at a camp in Kibondo district, he said they should continue living peacefully until they were ready to go home, Tanzanian radio reported. Any refugees who left the camps would be arrested, jailed and repatriated despite the fact that their countries were in turmoil. The minister said the warning came after the arrest of some refugees who had been involved in murder, theft and poaching.

The exiled Rwandan Hutu organisation, Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR), has alleged, in a statement issued on Monday, that the repatriation of Rwandan refugees from Tanzania may just be the start of a new cycle of instability and a "return to square one."

The UN inter-agency mission which flew over the Shabunda area on Sunday and Monday confirmed the presence of some 50,000 mostly Rwandan refugees in the region of Katshunga. The team - made up of UNHCR, DHA, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO plus MSF and advisers of the Zairean interior and defence ministries - found that the Zairean army had cut off the road between Shabunda and Kindu at Matukamo/Magenbe and were preventing refugees from walking towards Kindu. The plane managed to land at Shabunda and after some time on foot, the team located two refugee camps near Nialubwe, one consisting of 300-400 people, the other of about 2,000. These camps cannot be seen from the air. The mission also established that many refugees, some 20,000, were walking

towards Walikale and then onwards to Kisangani.

UNHCR said 1,400 refugees from the Virunga National Park in the Goma region returned to Rwanda via Cyangugu yesterday. It said about 35,000 refugees, who had emerged from the forests, had been repatriated since November 19.

Kisangani has been calm over the past few days and newly-arrived Special Presidential Division troops are reported to be in control of the situation, according to the UN in Kinshasa. Only sporadic gunfire has been heard. Local authorities and missionary sources indicate a general price increase and overall food shortages, especially in Kisangani, Lubutu and Kindu. The local authorities warn that if the food situation does not improve by next week, the overall health of the population and general security are quickly expected to deteriorate. The Belgian embassy in Kinshasa announced that it had provided about 110 MT of food aid to affected people and soldiers in Kisangani over a week ago.

Unconfirmed reports said pockets of ex-FAR and Interahamwe troops have engaged Zairean rebels in a series of clashes, west of Goma. According to an AFP report, local eyewitnesses claimed the fighting, some 50kms away from Goma, had been underway for several days. Zairean Justice Minister Joseph Nsinga Udjuu meanwhile has urged the international community not to abandon his country. He called on countries "to resume their place at the side of the Zairean people and help it [Zaire] to again find political, social and economic stability without which human rights are at risk." The UN High Commission for Human Rights announced the deployment of the first two observers to Kinshasa yesterday, following allegations of human rights abuses in Zaire.

The USA and its European allies yesterday stressed the need to deploy a

multi-national force (MNF) to the Great Lakes region to help with the humanitarian crisis, according to a spokesman for Belgian Foreign Minister Erik Derycke. He was speaking after a meeting in Brussels on the sidelines of a NATO ministerial gathering which included US, French, British and Dutch delegates. "No-one at the meeting questioned it (MNF)," the spokesman said. He added that an ambassadorial level meeting on Friday at UN headquarters in New York should confirm yesterday's talks.

Nairobi, December 11 1996, 15:15 GMT

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IRIN Emergency Update No. 55 on the Great Lakes

In view of the evolving situation in the Great Lakes, IRIN is to broaden the scope of its daily update to include significant events throughout the region.

Some 35,000 refugees in Tanzania's Ngara region have left Kitali camp, but instead of returning to Rwanda as expected, they went further into Tanzania, WFP said. At a crossroads, where they could have headed for Rwanda, they turned instead towards Isaka in north-central Tanzania. Further north in Karagwe, 7,000-8,000 refugees are reported to have left the camps to establish unofficial settlements. WFP said they had been told they would not receive aid as long as they were outside the system, but they replied that they did not care. The refugees have said they will not return to the camps, nor to Rwanda. Yesterday, UNHCR said some 23,000 refugees had fled the Karagwe camps away from the Rwandan border following a campaign of intimidation by Hutu extremists. Some are reported to have returned to the camps.

Requests for repatriation to Rwanda by refugees in Tanzania's camps have dropped off substantially, according to a report yesterday from the DHA Information Centre in Kigali. The only request of importance came from up to 13,000 Muslims in the Ngara camps who want to return on Saturday. In Lumasi camp, 445 refugees who had registered to return, reportedly changed their minds and rumours are said to be circulating throughout the camps

that the repatriation has been called off.

Relief agencies have launched aid airlifts to help stranded refugees in eastern Zaire, ICRC announced. AFP reported that an ICRC C-130 Hercules plane flew from Nairobi yesterday with aid for the Shabunda region, where groups of some 100,000 refugees have been spotted, and another flight left today, ICRC said. An ICRC spokesman, quoted by AFP, said shipments - comprising mostly high energy biscuits, medical supplies, plastic sheeting and blankets - were flown to Kindu, and will be transported on to Shabunda using smaller planes.

The Archbishop of Kisangani, Monsengwo Pasinya, has appealed to world leaders not to forget the plight of hundreds of thousands of displaced people and refugees wandering around in eastern Zaire, and warned that Kisangani was consequently facing "imminent danger". He pointed out that only a portion of the refugees had returned to Rwanda, and the "evasion and hesitation" shown by the world community had resulted in a flow of "panic-stricken" people towards Kisangani or deeper into the forests. "No-one speaks of these refugees and displaced people anymore," he said. "Beyond any doubt, these hesitations constitute an imminent danger for the several million inhabitants of Kisangani and neighbouring dioceses, whose numbers will soon be increased by the arrival of those displaced. Furthermore with the fall of Butembo-Beni, and the sacking of Bunia, both sources of food for Kisangani, and with the sharp reduction in river traffic towards Upper Zaire, this city is in danger of a famine of unimaginable magnitude." Acting as the "voice of the voiceless", he appealed for urgent aid to the city.

Bunia still appeared to be in government hands yesterday, after local Radio Candip which broadcasts from the town, transmitted new stories in line with

the authorities' stand. The radio, monitored by the BBC, broadcast news of Mobutu's imminent return and remarks by the justice minister on improving the human rights situation in the country.

Zaire said yesterday it was not aware of any negotiations to bring in mercenaries to fight alongside its army, but it did not rule out seeking military help from allies to regain rebel-captured territory. "If we are obliged to work with even the devil himself we will do so in order to win back Zaire's territorial integrity," Information Minister Boguo Makele told Reuters. He added however that the time for such military help had not yet arrived.

Heavy fighting again broke out on the Uganda-Zaire border yesterday, the Ugandan 'New Vision' newspaper reported today. It said some 1,000 Ugandan soldiers battled about 500 rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the Ruwenzori mountains which straddle the border. At least 16 rebels were reported killed in the operation which was aimed at dislodging them from their mountain hideout.

In Burundi, two main Tutsi parties have rejected mediation in the country's ethnic conflict by former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere and both refused to take part in peace talks, due to open in Arusha today. The main opposition party, Uprona, accused Nyerere of bias and slammed the continued regional economic embargo against Burundi. "Given the situation created by the measure, as illegal as it is unjust, of imposing a total blockade against Burundi...and the biased attitude [of Nyerere] regarding terrorist and genocidal organisations...it is no longer open to us to accept his invitations," said a letter from Uprona president Charles Mukasi. The leader of the Tutsi-dominated Rally for Democracy and Economic and Social Development (RADDES), Joseph Nzeyimana, also turned down the

invitation. To date, it was not known exactly who would attend the talks. A spokesman for Burundian leader Pierre Buyoya, speaking on BBC radio, said the government would participate in the talks but would not negotiate with "killers" or those espousing a "genocidal philosophy". These groups must first renounce killings, and then the government would talk to them, he said.

More than 1,000 people were massacred in Burundi in one month between late October and late November, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso said yesterday. According to Ayalo Lasso, most of the victims were killed by soldiers. "The human rights situation in November can be described as alarming with its wave of massacres, arbitrary arrests, looting and destruction of property," he said in a monthly report, quoted by AFP. The report said killings were mostly carried out by the army but Hutu rebels were also responsible. The return of tens of thousands of Hutu refugees from Zaire was partly to blame for the increase in tension, the report stated. Particularly volatile areas were said to be the provinces of Kayanza, Bururi, Cibitoke, Gitega, Ruyigi and Bujumbura-Rurale. A government spokesman said on the BBC that the authorities were investigating reports of massacres but had found nothing to substantiate the accusations.

The judicial system in Rwanda remains heavily overloaded, with only 20 defence lawyers for some seven million inhabitants and increasingly overcrowded prisons, a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said yesterday. UN observers recorded 82,200 prisoners in the country's 192 detention centres, with 23,200 new detainees in the period January-November. Among them are 3,000 women and over 2,000 adolescents.

Meanwhile, a senior Rwandan army officer appeared before a military court

in Kigali yesterday accused of allowing the massacre of displaced people at Kibeho camp in southwest Rwanda in April 1995. Rwandan radio said the trial of Lt.Col Fred Ibingira was adjourned until next Thursday after the defendant and his lawyer requested more time to prepare his defence. An AFP report said Ibingira is accused of not taking the necessary decisions to stop the killings and save the displaced people under his protection. The massacre occurred after RPA troops moved into the camp to close it down.

Nairobi, December 12 1996, 11:25 gmt

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