

Just before dawn on Wednesday 13 April, Hutu soldiers of the Presidential Guard kicked in the doors of a church east of Kigali. Inside were hundreds of Tutsi Christians huddled together in prayer.

The Hutu soldiers tossed handgrenades into the packed congregation and opened fire with machine guns. They then systematically slaughtered the survivors with machetes, spears, bats and bullets. Before the sun rose, about 1,200 Tutsi church goers had been massacred. Most of the dead were children.

On the weekend of April 22-24, Hutu soldiers attacked the hospital in Butare. Dr Ronny Zacharias of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported that about 300 Tutsi patients were wrenched out of their beds and systematically executed in a nearby field. *"A state of complete anarchy prevails. This is genocide,"*

he said. MSF has since withdrawn their staff from Southern Rwanda:

*"All the patients at the hospital were butchered and all our local staff."*

In Kigali, 11 nuns and 8 priests were hacked to death in their mission station. A Red Cross ambulance was stopped at a military checkpoint in Kigali and six wounded Tutsi patients were dragged out and bayoneted or shot to death. The International Red Cross announced that 30 of their Rwandan Red Cross workers had been murdered and they were now suspending operations in Rwanda.

Up to 500,000 people - mostly Tutsi tribesmen - have been massacred in the two months since the presidents of Burundi and Rwanda were blown up in a rocket attack on their aircraft on 6th April. It was the first incident in recent history when the presidents of two nations were assassinated together.

Diplomats reported that heavy firing was heard just before the presidential aircraft crashed and burned near Kigali airport. At least one rocket hit the aircraft. There were no survivors. Presidents Cyrien Ntaryamira of Burundi and Javénal Habyarimana of Rwanda were both members of the majority Hutu tribe. Yet, while the military blamed the minority Tutsi tribe for the assassinations, the Belgium military team in Kigali has concluded that it was the Hutu dominated Rwandan Army which rocketed the aircraft.

The Hutu Presidential Guard were angered at the plans to include Tutsis in the government. President Habyarimana had seized power in Rwanda through a military coup in 1973. In 1990 refugee members of the long suffering Tutsi minority launched an invasion of Rwanda from Uganda. The military gains of the (Tutsi) Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) forced President Habyarimana to incorporate Tutsis in the government and to promise elections for a new government and parliament to end the 4 year civil war.

President Ntaryamira had been installed as head of state of Burundi after the first Hutu president Melchior Ndadaye was assassinated by troops from the Tutsi dominated Army of Burundi. Between 50,000 and 100,000 Tutsi's were massacred in revenge after that failed coup attempt in Burundi. Burundi has now had 6 violent changes of government since independence in 1962.

For hundreds of years the tall, better educated Tutsi cattle farmers ruled Burundi and Rwanda. Although the Hutu peasants were far more numerous they lived in harmony with their Tutsi rulers until 1959. Waves of revolutionary teachings then whipped up the Hutu's into resentment and rebellion. Tens of thousands of Tutsi's were massacred in a frenzy of tribal hatred. The Tutsi constitutional monarchies in Burundi and Rwanda were replaced by a series of military dictatorships after Belgian colonial rule was withdrawn in 1962.

In Burundi the Tutsi made up 15% and the Hutu 80% of the total population of 6 million. The small number of Pygmies are despised and mistreated by both Hutus and Tutsis. 75% of the inhabitants of Burundi are Roman Catholic and 16% are Protestant. Muslims make up 1% in both Burundi and Rwanda. With lavish financial support from Libya the Muslim community is growing.

In Rwanda the Tutsi made up 10% and the Hutu 87% of the total population of 8 million. 50% of the inhabitants are Roman Catholic and 30% Protestant.

From the 1930's through the 1950's Rwanda and Burundi were swept by a remarkable spiritual revival. Tragically that spiritual fervour was lost by the subsequent generations of compromise. In Burundi, persecution by the Libyan backed regime during the 1980's led to a renewal of spiritual devotion in some churches. The recent carnage, however, confirms the catastrophic results of spiritual complacency and compromise with witchcraft and marxism.

The Akanyaru river which divides the countries of Rwanda and Burundi has traditionally marked the sanctuary line for refugees fleeing the opposite tribe's rule. This year the river is running red with blood and it is choked with thousands of human corpses.

One relief worker described the mind numbing sight: *"First came the corpses of the men and elder boys, killed trying to defend their sisters and mothers. Then came the women and girls, flushed out from their hiding places and slaughtered. Last came the babies."*

Within a month, more Tutsis had been slaughtered in Rwanda than the total combined death toll from ex-Yugoslavia, Croatia, Bosnia and Somalia over the last 4 years. Even before the conflict began Rwanda and Burundi were among the world's poorest countries. Now these Central African republics are spiralling into the pattern of Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. In a single 24 hour period a quarter of a million Rwandans had fled across the border into Tanzania. A total of 2 million have fled their homes since April 6.

Western missionaries and relief workers who have been evacuated from the chaos have testified of the stunning savagery. Marauding bands of Hutu men armed with whistles, machetes and machine guns prowl the streets hunting for Tutsis. When they spot some suspect, the whistles are blown and the murderous mobs converge on the victim. These death squads are known as the *"interahamwe"* (those who attack as one).

Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda, has become a ghetto for genocide. Thousands of severed heads and limbs litter the streets. No matter how many bodies the relief workers removed, many more decaying corpses filled the streets. Endless rows of mutilated bodies lay in pools of blood.

One American school teacher, Theresa Scimeni, recalled the tribal terror before she and her family were rescued. *"We heard each of the houses near us attacked in turn. There would be firing, screams then silence. Then a few minutes later the men would move to the next house, and it would start all over again - and again."*

Belgium, France, Italy and the USA flew in military rescue teams to evacuate the foreign nationals. In the process 10 Belgian soldiers were murdered. The Belgians were attempting to escort the Tutsi Prime Minister. When they were stopped by a Rwandan army patrol on April 6 they were requested to hand over their weapons. Unbelievably, the Belgians complied. They were then tortured and mutilated. The Hutu soldiers used machetes to chop up the Belgians starting with their feet and hands.

Belgian UN peacekeepers later said that they were disgusted with their mission in Rwanda. Many of them had witnessed massacres of civilians without being able to intervene because the UN rules of engagement allowed them to only fire in self defence.

Hutu soldiers and militiamen regularly arrived at the Kigali sports stadium where thousands of Tutsis were being kept under UN protection. Then they would haul away dozens of Tutsi professionals and intellectuals named on their lists. These Tutsis were then executed.

At another place 13 Red Cross workers and 21 Tutsi orphans were murdered. Several Hutu ministers have been buried alive for giving refuge to Tutsi refugees.

Remarkably, however, there has been no similar massacre of Hutus in Tutsi controlled areas. One UN peacekeeping official acknowledged that: *"The Tutsi have shown remarkable restraint - there's been no ethnic cleansing in the Tutsi areas. They are not doing the kind of killing that the government is doing."*

Understandably, however, the Tutsi forces of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a desperate offensive to seize Kigali and protect Tutsis who have managed to survive. RPF rebels maintained a fierce mortar bombardment to weaken the Hutu dominated Rwandan army resolve to resist.

Despite strenuous Western diplomatic attempts to bring about a cease-fire and negotiations, the RPF has consistently refused to dialogue with *"a clique of murderers"*. Some observers say that the best hope for Rwanda now seems to be the successful takeover of the country by the (Tutsi) rebels, who have vowed to stop the bloodshed. They have also pledged not to retaliate against the Hutus.

Meanwhile, nearly 2 million homeless Rwandans are living in overcrowded and unsanitary refugee camps. Malarial mosquitoes are swarming amongst those in the low lying areas. While those in the mountains have been drenched in the rainy season. The dry coughs of pneumonia and tuberculosis echo through those camps. Typhoid, dysentery and cholera threaten all the refugees.

Yet even in those camps, communities are showing surprising cohesion and a positive attitude. Church services are very well attended and an overwhelming sense of gratitude for being alive - for having escaped from the killing fields of Rwanda and survived - is evident.

Frontline Fellowship is wanting to send a mission team to serve the desperately needy Christians in Rwanda and Burundi. We already have several contacts and invitations to minister in Uganda and Sudan. Please pray with us. If you have relief aid or medicines which we could deliver to these people - please post them to us.

***"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."***  
Psalm 34:18

Dr. Peter Hammond