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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN RWANDA

ISSUE

The October 1990 attack by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) produced a climate of civil war that has resulted in numerous civil rights violations. The situation improved considerably in 1991, especially since the signature of the peace accords in Arusha last August, but it remains fragile. The deployment of a UN force should enable the expanded government to function during the transition period.

CONTEXT

The situation of latent war that followed the FPR attack in 1990 has not done much to improve respect for human rights. The ceasefire concluded in the summer of 1992 has enabled a measure of detente to take place, but the difficulties over the peace negotiations provoked a new FPR attack that increased the number of displaced persons from 350,000 to nearly a million. Adding to this the 400,000 new refugees in Burundi, one can easily understand the country's distress.

The thorny peace negotiations that lasted almost a year finally led to an accord signed, after a few delays, in Arusha, Tanzania on August 4, 1993.

The UN multinational force that has begun to arrive in Kigali will enable the French soldiers to leave and will make it easier to set up an expanded transitional government. The authorities are understandably nervous about the 37 confirmed recent murders, and fear a coup attempt in the wake of Burundi's disorders.

CANADIAN POSITION -

On various occasions, Canada has encouraged President Habyarimana to make realistic concessions to reach a peace accord, as it did with General Kanyarengwe, the FPR leader, on his visit to Canada. Canada also loaned Commander Dallaire to the United Nations force in Rwanda (UNAMIR) to assist in the application of a peace accord. Canada has provided \$2 million in humanitarian aid to Rwanda for two consecutive years. Since its soldiers are dispersed throughout the world, Canada finds itself unable to contribute any more to the UN peacekeeping force. Canada should be able to participate in observing the next elections, whenever they take place. The International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development provided two observers to the International Human Rights Commission which visited Rwanda about a year ago.

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