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DATE: May 17, 1994 TO: Refugees International
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SITREP #10
Rwandan Refugees in Tanzania
NEW ARRIVALS REPORT

I. SUMMARY:

There are three major sites of crossing points and concentrations of new arrivals: North of Rusumo Falls: 2,000-3,000 persons; Ngara/Ntobeye: 14,000 persons; Mugoma/Kasange (near Burundi/Rwanda): 18,500 persons. Total new & known refugee population in Ngara district which has not been moved to Benako camp: 35,000 (several thousand more may be here and not identified yet). Expect continuing arrival rates exceeding 3,000 per day for Ngara district.

UNHCR/NGOs are responding quickly but are handicapped by lack of available cars and trucks (and communications equipment) which are all essential to a border operation with limited access.

The presence of RPF at the border and across the border -- and the Tanzanians casualties in Rwanda -- raises critical security concerns for the international organizations operating here.

II. PROTECTION REPORT: The following are excerpts from a UNHCR-Ngara protection report on border crossing points from an assessment made on 14 and 15 May:

3. INCIDENTS:

At RUSUMO commune, sector KIGARAMA, the RPF came and called for a "peace meeting." Those who did not participate voluntarily, were forced to the meeting. At the school people were tied together, three by three - men/women/children - and stabbed. The bodies were put on trucks and thrown into the KAGERA River, north of Rusumo Bridge. The refugees, who escaped this incident, crossed the river at KASENYI. The price of crossing is from 500 to 1,000 RWF/pers. At the Tanzanian side they were met by Tanzanian military, who took money and belongings from them. At KASENYI 2 canoes are doing the traffic. The refugees told that on the 12.05 the RPF shot at canoes crossing the river.

At RUSUMO commune, sectors NYAMUGARI, GISENYI, NYARUBUJE, the RPF comes at 05h00 waiting for villagers to open their doors. The villagers are caught and taken away to the river by trucks. No one has returned. Refugees of the area have seen people being tied together and thrown into the river. It seems as if guns are only used if somebody tries to escape. At the crossing point (KINJONGO - tanz. name) refugees have to pay 100 RWF per bag of commodity, 150 RWF per goat, 2-300 RWF for children, 1,500 RWF for women and 1,000-2,000 RWF per man in order to cross the river.

At RUSUMO commune, sector RUSHUNGA, the RPF had called for a "peace meeting" near the school. The participants were all forced into the school,

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At RUSUMO commune, sector MUZAZA, village GASARABWAYI (4 kms from the river), the RPF launched several attacks on the village and its population. On the 13.05 40 RPF soldiers came at 07h00. They surrounded the village. Villagers were gathered in houses, which were burned down. An eye witness saw 20 people being killed this way. 8 villagers were thrown into a latrine, and the latrine was filled with soil. Asked by UNHCR field officer refugees said that RPF did not care whether victims were Hutu or Tutsi villagers.

At KAREBEZA (tanz. name) north of KASHASHA refugees told that tanz. bandits are taking their belongings, immediately after they have crossed the river.

At NTOBEYE village in Tanzania 13,020 refugees are registered by village leader (14.05). Refugees at NTOBEYE are from all communes in KIBUNGO prefecture, some from BYUMBA and KIOALI prefectures. On the 14.05 the influx to the village was claimed to be 1,803 refugees. On the very same day 4 RPF soldiers were arrested by local village guards in NTOBEYE. 2 hand grenades were confiscated (seen by UNHCR field & protection officers). The four soldiers were taken to the police in NGARA, Tanz. On the 13.05 one person (RPF) was taken by the village guards with a SMG (machine gun) with 39 rounds. The police in NGARA are now investigating.

On 15.05 at 11h00 following incident at GICHUMA village was observed by refugees waiting on the tanz. side at MKATOKATOKE: An eye witness, Senhamba Kayinga (man 95 years) from commune RUSUMO, sector MUZAZA tells: Scattered shooting was heard and a lot of people were seen running towards the swamp area - men, women and children. On top of the hill side 5 persons (of which 2 were in yellow uniforms) were shooting downhill. 20 persons were killed and thrown into the river. The soldiers fired across the river into Tanzania and wounded a boy, who was later on brought to the dispensary by a UNICEF car in the area. The same story was told by several refugees to UNHCR field officers.

In NTOBEYE we were told by refugees (which was later confirmed) that the village leaders were charging 100 T.SCH. per refugee to get refugees. We discovered also that the DDO (District Development Officer) had given the village leaders the order to send all 13,020 refugees on the road early morning 16.05. This order had been given without consultation nor notifying UNHCR. UNHCR field/protection officer urged the village leaders NOT to do so, because of logistic reasons. We will as soon as possible find means of transportation from there to Benaco camp.

On 15.05 at 15h15 a group of Rwandese people were observed running away from 20-25 soldiers, who arrived on two trucks at the rwand. village opposite KASANGE crossing point. The Rwandese started dispers. 3, some jumped into the river. One person drowned. The soldiers rounded up a group of civilians and marched them off.

III. ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT:

An assessment of the crossing sites by UNHCR field and protection officers near the Tanzania/Rwanda/Burundi border on 18 May found the following: 7 previously unidentified crossing points -- 4 into Burundi, from where the refugees are then moving into Tanzania and

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Mugoma. Other refugees are collecting in Kasange. There are an estimated 10,000 refugees in Kasange and 3,500 in Mugoma. The observed arrival rate for those coming towards Kasange (closer to the Rwandan border and crossing points) is approximately 1,000 per day (half of which were headed to Mgwibo hill -- the other half to Kasange village). Mugoma is having a daily influx of 300 per day. The Red Cross has one Rwandan male nurse in Mugoma who is seeing approximately 200 patients per day. Most are suffering from malaria, dysentery and acute respiratory infections.

The refugees report that on 15 May, as many as 100 people (maybe more) were killed by the RPF on the hill opposite the closest crossing point. Bodies on the hilltop should be visible with binoculars (UNHCR is checking today, 17 May). The dead included Tanzanian citizens who had crossed the Kagera river to buy food (cattle). Two seriously wounded persons (one man who had been machete wounds in the leg; a woman with machete wounds to her neck and head) were evacuated by the Red Cross and IRC to Murgwanza Hospital.

UNHCR will be inspecting the Tanzanian-Burundi border today (17 May) to see if other Rwandans are arriving in Tanzania further south after crossing into Burundi.

IV. UNHCR RESPONSE:

Serious protection, assistance and security issues should be apparent from the above assessments. The UNHCR response, in coordination with NGOs present, has been:

- * Health outposts are being established initially at three concentration arrival points of new refugees: RUSUMO PRISON (on the road between Rusumo Falls and Benako camp) with outreach to north where 2,000-3,000 refugees are present -- MSF-France and M...Holland; NTODDYD VILLAGE (between Ngara and the Kagera river) with outreach to the crossing points near there -- IFRC/TRC; KASANGE VILLAGE (near the Tanzanian-Rwandan-Burundi border) with outreach to the borders -- CARE, IRC, MSF-Spain. Expansion of semi-permanent sites/outposts closer to the border is being explored by these teams. These health posts will be able to give the first medical assistance as well as provide the refugees with water/hisnits, before they march further on.
- * Continued and ongoing monitoring and inspection of the border by UNHCR field officer and protection officer. UNHCR-Ngara has requested three additional field officers and an additional protection officer to monitor and coordinate border operations. They should be sent here immediately (so I can go home).
- * Trucks for transport of refugees to Benako and six landrovers (with radios, handset chargers and all heavy-duty driving equipment) have been requested for the operation. Border monitoring requires a helicopter because of the inaccessibility of the crossing points in the swamp areas. THESE ARE NEEDED YESTERDAY!
- * A new arrivals reception center will be set up at Benako camp to ensure health screening of new arrivals, distribution of food and non-food items and referral to the part of Benako where the people of their area are already living.

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V. CONCLUSION/COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

An IRC staff person wrote to their office: "things are getting very bad at the border here... Someone really needs to do something about all of the killing and torture on the other side. Each day there are more and more bodies in the river and most of them without their heads; the count is between 20 to 30 each 30 minutes."

Maureen Connelly's comment on this emergency on a memo describing the above reports and information was/is as follows:

It should be noted that we see the need for immediate emergency action. Obviously, no one has any idea how long this influx will continue, nor how big it will be. It is both vehicle and staff intensive for agencies and UNHCR. However if the situation continues the investment is worthwhile. If the situation changes then the equipment and supplies in Ngara can be redeployed to Rwanda/Burundi for use in programmes there. It is believed that there are 2,000,000 (two million) people displaced in Rwanda. If the situation elsewhere is the same as on the Tanzanian border, and if there is no possibility for them to cross other borders, the possibilities for a continuing influx into Tanzania are horrendous. As humanitarian aid workers we can only ask what does have to happen in Rwanda before there is international action IN Rwanda.

I wholeheartedly agree with her and recommend immediate emergency mobilization of resources to care for a continued large influx from Rwanda or for future emergency operations inside Rwanda or Burundi. To revise an earlier statement of mine: this emergency is even more difficult to respond to than the initial influx of 200,000 refugees on 29 April. We still have limited access to the border and insufficient resources (cats, trucks, personnel, radio/communications equipment) to respond quickly and safely.

We hear that the fighting in Kigali is intense and 50,000 are being the city with everything they can carry. We believe that Tanzania only border open to refugees -- Zaire has been closed to them; Rwanda and Burundi are undesirable because of RPF presence and instability & potential violence respectively. RPF atrocities on the other side of the river will force people to flee.

The people of Rwanda have no where else to go and we cannot expect them to stay and be slaughtered in their homes. This remote, inaccessible part of Tanzania cannot continue to receive thousands of refugees per day. We will soon be overwhelmed here unless someone takes action to end the bloodshed, the atrocities, the massacres, in Rwanda.

Mark T. Prutsalis
5/17/94