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Rwanda: Humanitarian Disaster Unfolding

The Red Cross estimates that 100,000 to 500,000 people, mostly Tutsis, have been killed in Rwanda's ethnic bloodletting. Thousands of unburied bodies have contaminated water supplies and that tens of thousands of displaced persons and 40,000 residents of Kigali are threatened with disease.

-An accurate death toll may never be available; eyewitness accounts from areas where nearly all Tutsi residents were killed support the high estimate.

Large segments of Rwanda's 8 million people are trying to flee but are being stopped at the border by government forces or the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Some 300,000 displaced people are trapped in the southeast near the Tanzanian border, another 150,000 are south of Kigali, and hundreds of thousands are on the Zairian border.

-The military and militia forces have killed asylum seekers who ventured too close to crossing points and have prevented relief agencies from entering Rwanda with food and water, according to the Red Cross and the UN. Without access to the relative safety of refugee camps in neighboring countries, thousands more are likely to die.

Fighting is continuing despite the separate cease-fires that were declared this weekend after government representatives failed to attend peace talks in Tanzania. The government has virtually no control over the military or the Hutu militias.