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Burundi: Amnesty International appeals to all parties for calm.

Amnesty International appealed for calm in Burundi following today's reported coup d'état.

A group calling itself the Young Burundian Patriots announced the suspension of President Pierre Buyoya, his government and the National Assembly on state radio, saying the president who is allowing so many to be killed is suspended.

The group stated that they do not reject the Arusha peace negotiations but those who were representing them in the negotiations. Demonstrations of support have been called for tomorrow. Amnesty International is concerned that demonstrations could lead to violence against civilians.

Amnesty International is appealing for the civilian population, many of whom have been armed by the government, to remain calm, and for the Burundian armed forces and armed opposition groups to remain disciplined and respect international humanitarian law.

Background

After three years of negotiations, a peace agreement was signed last August in Arusha, Tanzania, by 19 parties in the Burundi's seven-year civil war. The accord was rejected by the two most active armed opposition groups. President Buyoya was in Libreville, Gabon, where he was holding talks with Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, leader of one of the main armed groups at the time of the attempted coup.

Approximately 200,000 people, mostly civilians, are believed to have been killed in Burundi since 1993 after soldiers from the Tutsi minority killed the country's first democratically elected president, a Hutu.

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