

RWANDAN REFUGEE CAMPS
IN ZAIRE AND TANZANIA
1994-1995



MSF SPEAKS OUT

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FOREWORD

This publication is part of the “Médecins Sans Frontières Speaking Out” case studies series prepared in response to the MSF International Council’s wish to provide the movement with literature on MSF *témoignage* (advocacy).

The idea was to create a reference document that would be straightforward and accessible to all and help volunteers understand and adopt the organization’s culture of speaking out.

It was not to be an ideological manual or a set of guidelines. *Témoignage* cannot be reduced to a mechanical application of rules and procedures as it involves an understanding of the dilemmas inherent in every instance of humanitarian action.

The International Council assigned the project to a director of studies, who in turn works with an editorial committee composed of MSF representatives chosen by the International Board for their experience and expertise. They serve in their capacity as individuals and do not represent their national sections.

Faced with the difficulty of defining the term *témoignage*, the editorial committee decided to focus the series on case studies in which speaking out posed a dilemma for MSF and thus meant taking a risk.

Key information sources -MSF volunteers’ written and oral recollections — are reconstructed by highlighting documents from the period concerned and interviewing the main actors.

The individuals interviewed are chosen from lists prepared by the operational sections involved in each case. Speaking in the language they choose, these individuals offer both their account of events and their assessment of MSF’s response. The interviews are recorded and transcribed.

Document searches are conducted in the operational sections’ archives and, as far as possible, press archives.

The research is constrained by practical and financial issues, including locating interviewees and securing their agreement and determining the existence, quality and quantity of archived materials.

The methodology aims at establishing the facts and setting out a chronological presentation of the positions adopted at the time. It enables the reconstruction of debates and dilemmas without pre-judging the quality of the decisions made.

The main text describes events in chronological order. It includes excerpts from documents and interviews, linked by brief introductions and transitional passages. We rely on document extracts to establish the facts as MSF described and perceived them at the time. When documentation is missing, interviews sometimes fill the gaps. These accounts also provide a human perspective on the events and insight into the key players’ analyses.

Preceding the main texts collected, the reader will find a map, a list of abbreviations and an introduction that lays out the context of MSF’s public statements and the key dilemmas they sought to address.

In addition, a detailed chronology reconstructs MSF’s actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period.

Each case study was written in French and translated into English and is available in both languages.¹

These case studies were essentially designed as an educational tool for associative members of the organisation. With the hope of broadening their educational scope the studies are now being made available to the public for free, on the website www.speakingout.msf.org, the various English and French-language websites of individual sections of Médecins Sans Frontières, and on Google Book.

We hope you find them useful.

The Editorial Committee.

September 2013

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)
AEDES	Agence Européenne pour le Développement et la Santé (European Agency for Development and Health)
AFP	Agence France Presse
AP	Associated Press
CHK	Centre hospitalier de Kigali (Kigali Hospital Center)
CTC	Cholera Therapeutic Center
FAR	Forces Armées Rwandaises (Rwandan Armed Forces)
HAD	Humanitarian Affairs Department – (MS Holland)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IOM	International Office of Migrations
MDM	Médecins du Monde
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme
ZHS	Zone Humanitaire Sure (Safe humanitarian zone) (Zone Turquoise)
MSF B	MSF Belgium
MSF CH	MSF Switzerland
MSF F	MSF France
MSF H	MSF Holland
MSF S	MSF Spain
MSF UK	MSF United Kingdom
MSF USA	MSF United States of America
IO	International office (MSF)
Sitrep:	Situation report, sent from the field team or from the programme manager.



Extract from MSF archives or press clippings.



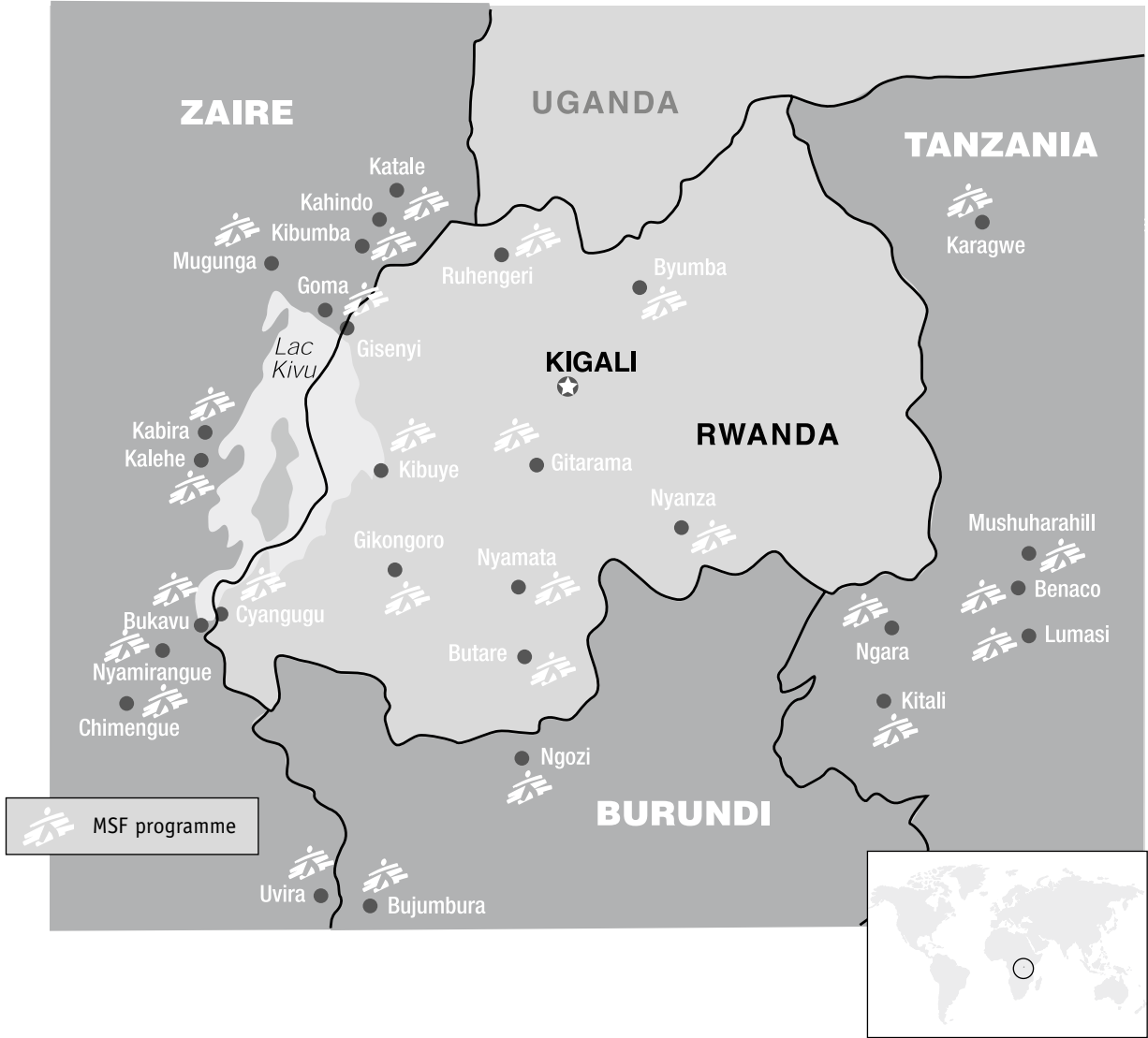
Click to access the reference material list. Then click on the referring number to access the full document.



Extract from interviews conducted in 2000, 2001, 2002, and in 2003 with people who participated in and/or witnessed the events.



Click to access the reference material list. Then click on the referring number to access the video.



INTRODUCTION

On 6 April 1994, the plane carrying the Rwandan President was shot down as it approached Kigali. The slaughter of the Tutsi minority commenced in the days that followed. Simultaneously, leaders of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), an opposition movement organised by Tutsi exiles in Uganda, launched a military offensive in Rwanda and seized power in Kigali in early July.

From April to July 1994, between 500,000 and one million Rwandan Tutsi were systematically exterminated by militiamen under Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR in French) control. The genocide was the culmination of long-standing strategies practised by politico-military extremists who roused ethnic resentments against the Tutsi. The extremists also killed many Rwandan Hutu who opposed the massacres.

Ten weeks after the start of the genocide, the UN authorized the French army to intervene with Opération Turquoise (23 June to 21 August). The intervention saved lives but also facilitated the escape of the FAR into Zaire. The administrative and political authorities, many of whom were responsible for the genocide, pushed hundreds of thousands of Rwandans with them, some under threat, many obeying official propaganda, and others due to fear of RPF reprisals. They fled to Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi, where refugee camps were rapidly installed.

In July 1994, Médecins Sans Frontières and other aid organisations mobilised to fight the cholera epidemic spreading among the refugees in Zaire. Once the epidemic was contained, the volunteers found themselves confronted with camps that were under the tight control of 'refugee leaders' responsible for the genocide. The camps were transformed into rear bases from which the reconquest of Rwanda was sought, via a massive diversion of aid, violence, propaganda, and threats against refugees wishing to repatriate.

Although MSF volunteers from the different sections were all revolted by the situation, they were divided over how to react. Some thought that MSF ought to cease its activities in the camps; others believed that it was possible to improve the situation, and many argued that MSF should remain for as long as the refugees needed assistance, no matter what the context.

In November 1994, the NGOs present in the camps in Zaire called on the UN Security Council to deploy an international police force to separate the refugees from those responsible for the genocide. The appeal fell on deaf ears. In the absence of any signs of change in the context, MSF as a movement was forced to choose between continuing to work in the camps, thereby further strengthening the power of the génocidaires over the refugees, or withdrawing from the camps and leaving a population in distress. Several questions were posed:

- Is it acceptable for MSF to assist people who had committed genocide?
- Should MSF accept that its aid is instrumentalised by leaders who use violence against the refugees and proclaim their intention to continue the war in order to complete the genocide they had started?

- For all that, could MSF renounce assisting a population in distress and on what basis should its arguments be founded?

Each MSF section thought differently about how to respond to this dilemma:

The French section, considering that a humanitarian organisation has no mandate other than that which it imposed upon itself, refused to contribute to legitimizing the perpetrators of the genocide and to strengthen their power through material assistance in the camps. The medical emergency over, the French section withdrew from the camps in Zaire and Tanzania in November and December 1994 respectively, and publicly explained its position.

The Belgian, Dutch and Spanish sections chose to remain, considering that the refugees still required assistance and that not everything had been done to bring an end to the control exercised by the génocidaires. The Belgian section began a 'humanitarian resistance' strategy aimed at loosening the génocidaires hold over the aid pouring into the camps. The Dutch section endeavoured to document the situation with a view to lobbying the international community to do more to resolve the problem.

Given the lack of improvement in the situation, in July 1995 MSF Belgium and MSF Holland decided to end their programs in the camps. These decisions were put into effect at the end of 1995.

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED AND THEIR POSITION AT THE TIME OF THE EVENTS

Dr. José Antonio Bastos	MSF Spain Coordinator in Tanzania, July 1994 to July 1995
Dr. Philippe Biberson	President of MSF France
Samantha Bolton	MSF International Press Officer for East Africa, 1994-1995
Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier	MSF Senior Legal Adviser
Dr. Jean-Hervé Bradol	MSF France Programme Manager
Dr. [...]	MSF Belgium Programme manager then Director of Operations
Michiel Hofman	MSF Holland Coordinator in Goma
Wouter Kok	MSF Holland Coordinator in Tanzania, July 1994 to March 1995
[...]	MSF France Emergency cell
Dr. Didier Laureillard	MSF France coordinator in Goma, July to September 1994
Dr. Jacques de Milliano	MSF Holland General Director
Hanna Nolan	Humanitarian Affairs Department, MSF Holland
Alex Parisel	MSF Belgium Coordinator in Goma, October 1994 to March 1995
Dr. Bernard Pécoul	MSF France General Director
Jules Pieters	MSF Holland Emergency programme manager
Joëlle Tanguy	MSF USA Executive Director
Fiona Terry	MSF France coordinator in Tanzania, Sept to Dec 1994
Nicolas de Torrente	MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995
Ed Schenkenberg	Information Officer in Goma
Wilna Van Aartsen	MSF Holland Emergency cell, then deputy programme manager
Wouter Van Empelen	MSF Holland Emergency cell then programme manager

RWANDAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN ZAIRE AND TANZANIA

From early April to mid-July 1994, between 500,000 and one million Rwandan Tutsi and Hutu opponents of the governing regime were massacred. The genocide was planned and organised by extremists both inside and close to the government, and was carried out by militias recruited from among everyday Rwandan citizens and trained by members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR).

Soon after the genocide commenced, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a predominantly Tutsi rebel army, invaded from Uganda and made rapid territorial gains. Fearing the RPF's advance and encouraged to flee by their leaders, hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu took to the roads leading towards Rwanda's borders.

In late April, around 250,000¹ of them reached the Tanzanian border in eastern Rwanda where they remained blocked for several days by the FAR. On 29 April, the FAR withdrew, in response to the RPF's imminent arrival. That day, 170,000 people crossed into Tanzania and settled at a site 10 km away, soon to become Benaco refugee camp.

MSF's French, Spanish and Dutch sections, which had been working in Tanzania with Burundian refugees since November 1993, intervened in the first few days of May. The teams supplied the camps with water and food, set up medical clinics, and launched a measles vaccination campaign.



Jean Hélène, 'Fleeing Massacres, 250,000 Rwandans Take Refuge in Tanzania,' *Le Monde* (France), 4 May 1994 (in French). **D1**

Extract:

Ten or so NGOs have already set to work in the Benaco camp. The refugees, among whom UNHCR has found 'no more than four or five wounded', are not in bad shape. Hearing the combat approaching, they had time to prepare their flight and had packed food for the journey. Some arrived by car, others driving their cattle along.

Many journalists stopped off in Tanzania to visit the Benaco camp while travelling to South Africa to cover the elections.



Samantha Bolton, 'Press and Tanzania/Rwanda Crisis', *Sitrep* from the International Press Officer for East Africa, 5 May 1994 (in English). **D2**

Extract:

The MSF teams on the ground in Tanzania have now called out in distress. There are approximately 70 journalists swarming around the camps, looking for information, news and trips. I am leaving for Tanzania tomorrow. The ICRC press officer was there for the day yesterday, and called it a 'media circus.' The ICRC/Red Cross Federation is sending out a press officer from Geneva this week. UNHCR has two press officers/spokespersons working flat out [...] The Belgian Red Cross is sending out a plane of journalists to Tanzania tomorrow. I have had calls from some of the journos on board who know me from the Burundi crisis. I have also had calls today from various Nairobi based correspondents who have just got back from South Africa and are going into Tanzania.

Marked by the negative experience with Burundian refugees of the previous years, MSF volunteers concentrated their efforts on the technical quality of their aid, overlooking the political reality of this exodus. Few volunteers knew that the former Rwandan administration - the same group that planned the genocide - had encouraged the refugees' flight. Aid agencies organised the camps along the same administrative lines found in Rwanda, effectively leaving the former leaders in charge of the refugees. **V1**



The whole approach to the aid program in these camps was based on the bad experience that we had with the Burundian refugees the previous year both


1. UNHCR estimate. MSF estimated that there were 150,000 refugees.

in Tanzania and Rwanda. The aid system did not function well - there were breaks in the food pipeline, which caused terrible malnutrition. Our entire operational approach from the outset aimed to maximise assistance to the Burundian and Rwandan refugees, a systematic distribution to all children less than 5 years old to prevent malnutrition. In Benaco we were reacting to the previous crisis ...

I was already working for MSF in Tanzania when the refugees arrived in Benaco at the end of April 94. We got on a plane and went up there on the second day. We saw them arrive and we witnessed the entire set-up of the initial mission... It was the first time that I had ever seen such a large influx of refugees. I had never seen so many people, or such a big emergency. We just dived headfirst into it all. For sure, there were problems in Rwanda. I had understood the exodus, I could see that the refugees were organised, but I didn't realise that they were killers.

I shook hands with the mayor of Rusomo, a notorious killer, and with other people. Of course I could tell they were organised. It was obvious. They grouped themselves in communes. In a camp of 150,000 people, the Tanzanian Red Cross and the Rwandan Red Cross food distribution took place without so much as a fight. A week and a half after their arrival, we put together a measles vaccination campaign with a coverage rate of 90%. The level of organisation and the amount of people mobilised was incredible. We had noticed the organisational structure of the camp, but I wasn't quite able to add up the facts. I was in daily radio contact with an officer from UNHCR, who was at the border and who kept saying, "They're there; they're going to bust through." We didn't quite understand what it was all about. We knew that the RPF was behind the refugees, so we thought the refugees were fleeing the army's advance and that they had been blocked at the border by the Tanzanians who wouldn't let them in. We didn't understand that it was their own army, the FAR, that was blocking the way, and who then finally let them through. In reality, it was an organised exodus...we knew about the genocide; we had read about it, been told about it, but it wasn't really clear. You almost have to witness those kinds of things to understand them. We were running a camp; there were 35 or 40 people in our team; it was crazy. We worked like maniacs; we were completely immersed in what we were doing.

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995 (in French).


 Running Benaco was a huge responsibility. The people there were definitely at risk of becoming very ill. The refugees were fine in the beginning, but things went downhill around August. The dysentery and cholera epidemics didn't happen right away. The volunteers were very concerned, because they were familiar with the

poor state of the Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Rwanda and Zaire. We were afraid of a health disaster in the camps. When the camps were first set up, all of the team's energy was focused on that issue. A few weeks later, when we told them to look around and realise that it wasn't going to be a simple rescue operation and that the power structure in the camps was going to cause us a lot of problems, the volunteers were still focused on trying to save people, trying to protect them, and so forth. They couldn't really handle that kind of discussion.

Dr. Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Programme Manager (in French).

The leaders, some of whom were suspected of participating in the genocide, served as 'intermediaries' between the refugees and the aid organisations. They were officially assigned to draw up lists of beneficiaries and to organise distributions of food aid provided by the World Food Programme (WFP), much of which they misappropriated. When comparing lists of beneficiaries drawn up by the leaders with those drawn up by MSF for vaccination campaigns, it was obvious that the former greatly exaggerated the number of aid recipients.



Corine Lesnes, 'Rwandan Killers and Refugees: Among the Hundreds of Thousands of Hutu who fled to Tanzania are those who murdered Tutsi', *Le Monde* (France), 11 June 1994 (in French). [D3](#) 

Extract:

Struggling to cope with the emergency, UNHCR relied on local bourgmestres, some of who have been implicated by Tutsi escapees as having played an important role in the massacre machinery. Since 1 June, these officials have been working for UNHCR as assistants, earning \$24 per month. "These leaders are innocent until proven otherwise," the UNHCR spokesperson said. "If the UN Human Rights Commission wants to dispatch a mission, it would be welcome. Everyone supports an inquiry. That would clarify things."




MSF France Tanzania **Situation Report**, 13 June 1994 (in French). [D4](#) 

Extract:

1. Population


According to the bourgmestres' lists, the population of Benaco has reached 340,000. These figures are the official statistics used by UNHCR, the food distribution agencies, the press, and the Tanzanian authorities. A more objective estimate can be calculated from data extrapolated from

the 7 June nutritional survey and the results of the mass measles vaccination campaign. On 11 June, the date the campaign officially ended, the total number of children vaccinated was 75,009. A vaccination coverage study conducted as part of the nutritional survey showed 90.2 percent coverage. The children vaccinated were between 6 months and 15 years of age. In theory, the population under 15 represents 45 percent of total population. Knowing that 10 percent of the children in the camp carry Rwandan vaccination cards, the camp's total population can be re-estimated to be between 200,000 and 220,000 people. Everyone agrees this is more realistic.


 *No census had been conducted. Huge quantities of food were distributed which the leaders resold. The same trucks that brought food in went back out again full. I saw them in the market of Mwanza, the neighbouring town. This wasn't resale on a small scale, but huge quantities of food by the sack-full.*

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995 (in French).

Violence and insecurity reigned in the Benaco camp. The first victims were Tutsi refugees and anyone suspected of having links to the RPF.


 Jean Hélène, 'Fleeing Continuing Massacres, 250,000 Rwandans Take Refuge in Tanzania', *Le Monde* (France), 4 May 1994 (in French). [D1](#)

Extract:
 "They're killing civilians, it's terrible," said Grégoire Karymira, a businessman from Murambi, although he admitted that he'd never directly witnessed one of these 'killings'. The few Tutsi residing in Benaco camp will be separated from the rest of the refugees in the coming days to avoid unnecessary risks [to their safety].

 MSF France Tanzania **Situation Report**, 13 June 1994 (in French). [D4](#)


Extract:
2. Security:
 security problems in the camp are worsening. Official estimates place the number of killings in one week at five (four lynchings and one person cut into bits). Are these

revenge killings? Probably. An MSF Holland team witnessed the slaughter of the last victim... It is now urgent that the teams observe safety precautions more closely and avoid delaying their return home from the camp in the evenings.


 *We knew that there were problems, that the militias tried to enter the nutrition centres. We had problems with our staff who were obliged to flee during the night. Some Tutsi came to our house in Ngara and we helped them to return to Rwanda... During the first few months, refugees were killed and horrible exactions occurred. We found bodies in the latrines... At the end of two months, there were no longer any Tutsi left in the camp. The survivors had fled; they returned to Rwanda or they were massacred.*

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Coordinator in Tanzania, July 1994 to March 1995 (in English).

To compensate for the weakness of the Tanzanian police, UNHCR hired a group of 300 Rwandans to oversee security during registration and food distributions and to patrol in the camps. But the camp leaders selected these 'security guards,' thereby strengthening the leaders' control over the refugees.

 MSF France Tanzania **Situation Report**, 13 June 1994 (in French). [D4](#)

Extract:
2. Security:
 UNHCR does not want Tanzanian police inside the camp, which we understand, given their typical passivity... A group of 300 people was recruited to try to counter the rapidly worsening security. They have only flashlights and badges and are authorised only to arrest people and turn them over to UNHCR, which delivers them to the Tanzanians. We wouldn't dare say the word 'militia' aloud, but we've got to admit it looks a lot like that.

 *There were 400,000 people on two or three hill tops, all of them, of course, with machetes, and there were military forces there. Benaco was the biggest city in Tanzania after Dar Es Salam. And what was the policing capacity of the Tanzanians? Nothing! Maybe 15 policemen or something like that.*

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Coordinator in Tanzania, July 1994 to March 1995 (in English).

In June, several experienced MSF staff visited Benaco. They were surprised by the refugees' level of organisation and discipline. The team became aware of the real nature of the camps.



It wasn't until Bernard Pécoul [MSF France General Director] came in early June and started explaining to us, point by point, what had happened in Rwanda, that the link between the exodus and the genocide became clear. That's when we started to understand the genocide, who had committed it, the strategy they had used and so on. We put together what had happened in the camps and what had happened in Rwanda.

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995 (in French).



Emergency Coordinator Mai Saran went into the field himself and clearly told us on the phone, "These people were victims of violence before coming here? I find that hard to believe! They all have the same tale; it's a completely stereotypical story. They look pretty healthy, they have all of their belongings with them, and when you ask them about the massacres they witnessed, it's always 'a friend of a friend of a friend' who saw it." Mai was very sceptical and his opinion carried a lot of weight. Thierry Fournier and several other headquarters staff were also over there during the initial phase. They were more removed from it than the field workers. A debate started among us, which seems normal to me.

Dr. Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Programme Manager (in French).

The MSF volunteers shared their views with a reporter from *Le Monde*, discussing the killers' presence among the refugees and their hold over them.



Corine Lesnes, 'Rwandan Killers and Refugees: Among the Hundreds of Thousands of Hutu who fled to Tanzania are those who Murdered Tutsi,' ***Le Monde*** (France), 11 June 1994 (in French). **D3**

Extract:

The staff of humanitarian aid organisations have some qualms about this population, which does not fall into

standard categories and includes "a real bunch of killers," in the words of Médecins Sans Frontières coordinator, Anne Vincent. A British doctor from the Tanzanian Red Cross recognised some of the attackers who had burst into the Rwandan hospital where he was working. Along the Kigali road, Dr. Hervé Isambert saw the killers' "wild expression" and is leaving, without regrets, for Burma although he believes that "everything that humanitarianism stands for would tell you to stay right here." Christine Pliche, a nurse evacuated from Rwanda, is uneasy. "But I work in medicine and I have my professional code of ethics," she says. "I close my eyes and I treat people." Everyone manages in his or her own way. UNHCR emphasised its mandate. "Qualms are a personal issue," says spokesman Philippe Lamair. Many point out that more than 70,000 children were vaccinated in the camp. "You can't tell me that they are guilty," said one CARE manager. Water specialist Joël Boulanger operates on a purely professional basis, "I bring the equipment, I show them how to use it and I'm done!"

On 15 June, the operations directors of the different MSF sections took note of the situation in the Benaco camp. D5




Minutes of the international meeting of Operations Directors, Paris, 15 June 1994 (in English).

Extract:

It has become clear that the first influx of refugees that arrived in this area had fled on orders of their town leaders who had told them they had to flee the RPF. The refugees in the camps are for the most part second-hand rather than first-hand witnesses of RPF violence. The movement had been well organised with lists, etc. The local leaders have total control of the population. For example, the NGOs asked that the population not drink the water from the lake because of the risk of infections, and within hours not a single person was going to the lake - this has never been seen before. The refugee camp has become a haven for the FAR, shielded by the civilian population. The figures stating number of refugees in the camp has been overestimated, the amount of aid being distributed is more than needed, and a well-organised black market has been set up.

That same day, several thousand Benaco refugees, armed with clubs and machetes, took UNHCR staff hostage. By using threat, they convinced the authorities to allow Jean-Baptiste Gatete, known as one of the

organisers of the genocide in Murambi commune, to remain in the camp.²

 *When the refugees crossed the border, the Tanzanians arrested a few of the leaders, locked them up and seized some weapons. But they were released, including Jean-Baptiste Gatete, the butcher of Murambi. He was told, "We're going to let you go, but you're not to enter the camp." The first thing he did was enter the camp. UNHCR wanted to get him out of the camp because his presence instantly changed the atmosphere in the camp. UNHCR was immediately faced with a protest, several thousand people wielding machetes and surrounding the UNHCR tent in the middle of the camp. UNHCR realised that things could turn nasty very quickly. As long as we were nice to the refugees, they were nice to us, but if you took a closer look at what was really going on in that camp, you realised that things could change very, very quickly. There were virtually no Tanzanian police around. There was no security of any kind to ensure the safety and protection of the refugees in the camp, nothing at all. A few months later we learned that they had massacred the last remaining Tutsi in the camp. They laid down the law. It came as a shock to us all to realise that in that camp, as nice and peaceful as it was, people were also capable of becoming violent. They were well organised. When someone mentioned the name 'Gatete', there were thousands of men ready to leap into action.*

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995 (in French).

All the aid agencies launched a 'humanitarian strike' to pressure UNHCR to introduce measures to limit the leaders' control in the camp. MSF expatriate volunteers were the only aid workers to prolong the strike action for a week.




'MSF Denounces Use of a Rwandan Refugee Camp in Tanzania as a 'Rear Base' for Hutu Forces,' **Agence France-Presse**, 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

According to Dr. Pécoul, who returned from Benaco, all representatives of humanitarian aid organisations had to leave the camp on Wednesday, abandoning food and

equipment due to threats by several thousand refugees led by people "identified as responsible for killings." (On Thursday, UNHCR in Nairobi had announced that an uprising occurred after the humanitarian organisations protested when several Hutu suspected of carrying out massacres returned to the camp.) "We can't go back to the camp now," Pécoul said, regretfully. "We are on a humanitarian strike of sorts." He said "the humanitarian aid that is needed must be strictly controlled and must not go to persons responsible for genocide."



'Nicolas de Torrente,' MSF Activity in the Rwandan Crisis: **A Critical History**, July 1995, (in French). **D6** 

Extract:

From then on, MSF F tried to adopt a strategy of conditional aid. Followed by the other sections, MSF France demanded that certain measures be taken to limit the leaders' control over the camp and linked its continued assistance to satisfactory compliance with those conditions.

MSF France's key demands to UNHCR included:

- the presence of a neutral police force to guarantee safety in the camp and prevent the militias from continuing their rule of terror;
- a process for excluding leaders responsible for genocide;
- the dismantling or partitioning of the Benaco camp, which had become unmanageable because of its size (220,000 people), and the creation of several smaller, more manageable camps;
- a refugee census, which would serve as the basis for food distribution to prevent massive diversion of aid;
- greater UNHCR involvement in the camp in terms of administration and protection of individual refugees.

On 17 June, MSF held a Press conference to launch its appeal, 'You Can't Stop Genocide with Doctors.'³ MSF described the Tanzanian camps as 'a humanitarian façade' and denounced the presence of killers there.



'MSF Denounces Use of Rwandan Refugee Camp in Tanzania as 'Rear Base' for Hutu Forces,' **Agence France-Presse**, 17 June 1994 (in French).

Extract:

At a Paris press conference on Friday, Dr. Bernard Pécoul, Executive Director of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF),

2. Jean-Baptiste Gatete was arrested in northern Congo on 8 September 2002 and transferred for trial to the International Tribunal for Rwanda.

3. In "Genocide of Rwandan Tutsis 1994" MSF Speaking Out, Laurence Binet, April 2014 - <http://www.speakingout.msf.org>.

denounced the use of Benaco refugee camp in Tanzania as a “rear base” for the Hutu “profiting from humanitarian aid” Dr. Pécoul explained: “every night, trucks come to the camp to collect supplies delivered by humanitarian aid organisations for the refugees. There is enormous trafficking of aid that serves to finance the objectives of these leaders” who MSF describes as “génocidaires.”

Even the camp’s division into 19 communes, based on the Rwandan administrative and social model, could only have been accomplished by the actions of these leaders, some of whom stand accused of massacres in their country and “have manipulated and taken the civilian population hostage, forcing them to leave their villages and seek refuge in Tanzania... This camp isn’t like the others. It’s too well-organised and supervised...” The Tanzanian police are unable to arrest those people, clearly identified, who are responsible for the massacres. Dr. Pécoul’s distress was proportional to the energy expended by all the NGOs in this part of Africa. “We witness and even participate in the rehabilitation of the executioners through international humanitarian aid. It’s disgusting.”

On 21 June, MSF Holland called UNHCR’s attention to deteriorating security standards in the Benaco camp and explained the volunteers’ ‘strike’ methods.



Draft of MSF Holland letter to UNHCR Geneva, 21 June 1994 (in English). [D7](#)

Extract:

Herewith, Médecins Sans Frontières would like to draw your attention to the recent dramatic deterioration of the security situation in Benaco refugee camp in Tanzania... First of all, we would like to underline that MSF has continued its operations [during the humanitarian strike]. MSF Rwandan personnel maintained MSF’s activities in the camps... Last Friday, MSF asked for a one-week reflection period in order to consider our position. MSF expatriate staff remained on standby. We are very concerned that UNHCR did not appreciate the reasons behind this difficult decision. The security situation and the presence of alleged war criminals in the Benaco camp remain of critical concern to us. The presence of alleged war criminals has contributed to the rise of tension among the refugee populations in Benaco and has created serious conditions of insecurity. All efforts should be made to restore a secure situation in the camp. This can be achieved by a quick arrival of a security force of the Tanzanian police in the area and the prosecution of the alleged war criminals. As you may know, the Tanzanian government has competence to bring the war criminals to justice under the well-recognised principle of universal jurisdiction for war crimes. Furthermore, persons who have committed war crimes cannot be considered refugees under the 1951

Convention relating to the status of refugees. In this light, MSF shall assess the security situation during the coming two days. MSF will also monitor and follow up on actions taken towards alleged instigators of war crimes committed in Rwanda. Pending the outcome of these assessments, we shall decide at the end of this week whether or not we shall reassume our duties.



That’s when issues came up. We had to conduct a census because enormous amounts of food were being distributed. During the month of June, many things were called into question and the first clashes between MSF and UNHCR and the others occurred. MSF was saying, “No, this is unacceptable. We can’t run this camp the way other camps are run.”

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995 (in French).

The MSF teams were aware of the specific nature of these camps but held divergent views concerning the approach to be adopted.



Samantha Bolton, **Sitrep** to MSF communication departments from the international press officer, Goma, 6 July 1994 (in English). [D8](#)

Extract:

There was a difference of opinion in the Tanzanian Benaco incident. MSF Holland was the first to go back to work because of suffering innocents. MSF France and Switzerland held back in protest of the killers and security, before eventually sending in reduced teams to resume work. The killers still roam the camps, but security had improved.

On 22 June, UN Security Council Resolution 929 authorised the French army to intervene in Rwanda for a two-month period (to be replaced by UNAMIR), to protect civilian populations and humanitarian aid in the framework of ‘an operation that shall be led in an impartial and neutral fashion.’



Resolution n° 929 (1994) Adopted by the Security Council at its 3392nd meeting, on 22 June 1994 (in English). [D9](#)

Extract:

The Security Council, Reaffirming all its previous resolutions on the situation in Rwanda, in particular its resolutions 912 (1994) of 21 April 1994, 918 (1994) of 17 May 1994 and 925 (1994) of 8 June 1994, which set out the mandate and force level of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR),

Determining that the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda constitutes a threat to peace and security in the region,

1. Welcomes the Secretary-General's letter dated 19 June 1994 (S/1994/728) and agrees that a multinational operation may be set up for humanitarian purposes in Rwanda until UNAMIR is brought up to the necessary strength;
2. Welcomes also the offer by Member States (S/1994/734) to cooperate with the Secretary-General in order to achieve the objectives of the United Nations in Rwanda through the establishment of a temporary operation under national command and control aimed at contributing, in an impartial way, to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in Rwanda, on the understanding that the costs of implementing the offer will be borne by the Member States concerned;
3. Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, authorizes the Member States cooperating with the Secretary-General to conduct the operation referred to in paragraph 2 above using all necessary means to achieve the humanitarian objectives set out in subparagraphs 4 (a) and (b) of resolution 925 (1994);
4. Decides that the mission of Member States cooperating with the Secretary-General will be limited to a period of two months following the adoption of the present resolution, unless the Secretary-General determines at an earlier date that the expanded UNAMIR is able to carry out its mandate;
5. Commends the offers already made by Member States of troops for the expanded UNAMIR; [...]

By early July, the 'humanitarian strike' had led to several improvements in the Tanzania camps.



Nicolas de Torrente, 'MSF Activity in the Rwandan Crisis: A **Critical History**', July 1995, p. 40 (in French). [D6](#)

Extract:

After a week of arm-wrestling with UNHCR, all MSF sections rejoined the other agencies that had resumed their activities after only two days of stoppage. In the months

that followed, this conditional aid strategy would, in a sense, trap MSF France because its only real means of pressure was the threat of withdrawal, pure and simple. Relations between MSF and UNHCR were tense, and this was a difficult weapon to wield because the situation was becoming increasingly complex. In fact, the situation in the camps improved partially and gradually, but without changing the fundamental context. On the other hand, health conditions worsened.

On a positive note, a census was conducted in early July, reducing the population count and, thus, food distribution from 350,000 to 230,000 people. UNHCR and the Tanzanian government managed to convince Gatete to leave the camp for an unknown destination. UNHCR obtained a decision in principle from the Tanzanian government approving deployment of a police force of 350. The Lumasi camp opened but did not relieve crowding in Benaco despite its rapid growth in late July (63,000 refugees) because of the continuing influx of refugees.

But the state of insecurity continued. A Belgo-Italian mercenary who had encouraged the genocide in broadcasts on Radio Mille Collines even held political meetings in the MSF Spain clinic. The MSF Spain team had to dismiss one volunteer who was won over by the vengeful and revisionist arguments of the refugee leaders.




There was this Georges guy, a former Belgian-Italian mercenary, who was a very good friend of Madame Habyarimana's [wife of the Rwandan president. His plane was shot down on 6 April]. He had worked at Radio Mille Collines and was suspected of involvement in the murder of the Belgian peacekeepers. He considers himself Rwandan and came to Benaco as a refugee. We kept asking each other, "Who is this white guy?" Little by little, he started to make speeches of a political nature in MSF Spain's dispensary. It was the biggest dispensary in the camp, with about 300 to 400 people, and it was really difficult trying to convince them not to do that. For our own security, we said, "If he isn't sick, he can't come in," because we would never have been able to make him leave. The expat logisticians tried to talk to him. It didn't work and so I ended up having a somewhat longer discussion with him. He was really vicious and psychopathic. It was hard to force him out. He commanded a group of Interahamwe who were very active in the camps. We began to have many incidents of a mafia-type nature. I remember that a two-storey restaurant made of plastic and wood was completely burnt down. The owner had refused to pay tax to the Interahamwe. Shots were fired during the night and he was killed... The MSF Spain local logistics staff was dangerous; they converted a Spanish expatriate to the Hutu cause. He had started to mix more and more with them and attended meetings in the camp. He was the logistician in charge of security and would


say that he was looking for information sources. Little by little he was brainwashed until he was completely drawn into their story, claiming, "they've been oppressed, it's historical revenge." We made him leave. He was verbally violent upon departing, threatening to kill the other expats. I don't think he was right in the head.

José-Antonio Bastos, MSF Spain Coordinator in Tanzania, July 1994 to July 1995 (in French).

In early July, Arjo Berkhout, MSF Holland's emergency pool coordinator in Tanzania, resigned on his return to Amsterdam. He published an article in a Dutch newspaper denouncing the situation prevailing in the camps. Invited to present his point of view at MSF Holland headquarters, he made a straightforward call for a withdrawal from the camps.

 *Arjo Berkhout, the coordinator in Tanzania, resigned, saying "I am stopping working for these people because I cannot take any further responsibility for this project". He came back to Holland and wrote a small article in a Dutch newspaper explaining his dilemma. As a director, I found it a very good thing. I remember in the office a lot of people said, "why is he saying that in the newspaper?" but my reaction at the time was, "Great! He has something to say." I asked him to come to the office and organised a debate. That was even before the first report. Arjo was already thinking about the limits of humanitarian action in such a situation, about our responsibilities etc. He contributed to the internal discussion.*


Dr. Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland General Director (in English).

 *Arjo Berkhout came back and we had a big meeting in the canteen in Holland. He said we should leave the camps in Tanzania. By that time even the camps in Goma did not exist. He came back from Tanzania and said, "we are working for killers. We should not work for killers. And we should leave these camps." So there was discussion... I think it was at the beginning of July. Actually nobody understood him very well, to tell the truth. And we didn't want to leave. He resigned. Arjo Berkhout, the only Dutch person I think, who resigned in protest. He resigned from MSF because he did not agree to work for killers.*

Wouter Van Empelen, MSF Holland Emergency cell then programme manager (in English).

During that period, a report written in early June and published in MSF F's internal magazine, Messages, distributed to over 100 journalists, highlighted the control of the 'génocidaires' over the refugees and the implausible nature of their statements.



Anne Fouchard-Brown, 'Benaco: An Open Shame,' *Messages*, July-August 1994 (in French). [D10](#) 

Extract:

Set up in late April following the exodus of 220,000 Rwandans, the Benaco camp is today under the control of leaders who participated in the genocide, organised the flight of refugees, and hijacked the massive humanitarian aid provided to this population. Fleeing the RPF's advance, entire communes arrived from eastern Rwanda as refugees. They offered detailed accounts of killings by the armed movements in Rwanda, which they left about one month after the war began. But when pressed, the refugees admit they did not directly witness such horrors. These accounts are presented repeatedly on the radio or recounted by some resident of a neighbouring village who is never identified. "A Tutsi was killed," one of them explained, "and in his pocket they found a copy of the RPF's plan: to attack the president on April 6 and then kill all Hutu. So we took pre-emptive action."

On 3 July, the UN Secretary-General authorised the deployment of French troops in Rwanda in a 'safe humanitarian zone,' which the French called the zone Turquoise. The area covered 20 percent of Rwandan territory in the western part of the country, including the prefectures of Cyangugu, Gikongoro and part of Kibuye. French troops protected 8,000 Tutsi from certain death and, on occasion, prevented militia and FAR violence. But the French did not systematically disarm them, prevent them from broadcasting propaganda on the radio, or arrest those suspected of committing genocide. Moreover, their presence in the zone slowed the RPF's advance and provided cover for former Rwandan army members escaping to Zaire. Fleeing advancing RPF forces, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans took refuge in the French zone. International journalists in the region repeated calls by the French military to humanitarian organisations to come to the population's aid.



Samantha Bolton, **Sitrep** to MSF Communications Departments, from the international press officer, Goma, 7 July 1994 (in English). **D11** [↗](#)

Extract:

“THOUSANDS LEFT TO DIE -WHERE ARE THE NGOS?” This is what journos are saying about the hundreds of thousands people fleeing the frontline, amassed around Gikongoro. Over 30 journos spent the past couple of days travelling around the Gikongoro area and seeing all the displaced sleeping in the open with little food and no medicine. The first batch got back to Goma last night, and they all had the same comments and questions. Why are there no NGOs? Where are the medical organisations? What was MSF waiting for? Even vehemently anti-military ones are saying that the military try their hardest to help the people but that they are not equipped nor supposed to do the work of the NGOs.

Having called for international armed intervention, MSF now found itself in a delicate situation as only the French army intervened. To avoid being associated with the French army, MSF would have to carry out its activities jointly with several sections and, if possible, with non-French volunteers. From 4-10 July, volunteers from MSF’s Belgian, French and Dutch sections carried out a common evaluation mission in the zone Turquoise. The mission revealed that thousands of displaced persons were living in extreme insecurity and noted that it was both necessary and possible to provide aid, while still remaining independent of the French army. **V2** [▶](#)



Minutes of the MSF Belgium Project Committee Meeting, 8 July 1994 (in French). **D12** [↗](#)

Extract:

FAR Zone

A major catastrophe is developing near Gikongoro. Famine and death rates have already reached alarming levels. Marie-Christine notes that we have been waiting for two months for the Dutch to arrive in the field. The situation was known to be catastrophic. Some scepticism as to whether this mission will be international. It may start from Bukavu, towards Cyangugu and Gikongoro. Coordination: MSF Holland – MSF France ready to join. MSF Belgium: no personnel. We must have a presence in the FAR zone to assert our neutrality. Other possible organisations in the field to manage the new camps? Oxfam UK, CARE?

Conclusions: The mission in the FAR zone is international, coordinated by MSF Holland; MSF Holland has supplies in Bujumbura for the FAR zone. The mission’s activities will be divided into modules. MSF Belgium wants to participate

but lacks necessary resources at this point. MSF Belgium will spend a month recruiting necessary personnel.



“Rwandan Crisis - **Situation Report**, MSF France - 4-10 July 1994 (in French). **D13** [↗](#)

Extract:

Southwest zone, Turquoise security zone.

An MSF International exploratory mission to Gikongoro, via Bukavu, was conducted independently and without escort. This mission had been postponed for several days after a FAR helicopter attacked an MSF vehicle in the RFP zone. The evaluation mission did not encounter security problems and was able to make appropriate contacts with the civilian and military authorities. A preliminary evaluation revealed 300,000 – 500,000 people in the northern part of the prefecture, while 1 million were reported to be in the southern part, populations are moving (source: French army)... MSF decided to intervene and assume management of the three camps... a 14-member team is planned, operational sometime next week, coordinated by MSF France. Supplies pre-positioned by MSF Holland in Burundi will launch the operation. MSF Belgium is supporting the operation with non-Belgian personnel and is sending an expert to analyse the region’s food pipeline.



Samantha Bolton, **Sitrep** to MSF communication departments, from the international press officer, Goma, 11 July 1994 (in English). **D14** [↗](#)

Extract:

MSF mission expo: the four-person international exploratory mission in the south-west of Rwanda, including the famous Gikongoro area, ended on Sunday. All sections agree to start work but under conditions of strict independence and neutrality (MSF H particularly insists upon this). Please only communicate on this once you hear from MSF in Brux/Paris. Paris responsible for coordination and communication.




I remember very well that, the day when France decided to intervene in Rwanda, we received a phone call from the African cell of the French President’s office, inviting all French NGOs saying “ we need you.” I was with Dominique Martin and we told them to piss off, saying, “we are not the army’s social branch and we have decided not to intervene”. Of course, that was taken very badly by the French army. We did not think that there were any particular needs. Afterwards we said to ourselves “we cannot refuse the principle of an exploration. This is not the Khmer Rouge but the French army.”

The exploratory mission took place and we realised that

there were things to do but that it was better that it was not the French section to do it. As in Somalia, we said to ourselves: "We must be careful to avoid sending humanitarian workers to regions where military contingents of the same nationality are present. It was a rationale very clear in our heads. Afterwards, why did it not happen this way? Operational decisions... I don't know.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Senior Legal Adviser
(in French).


In the end, MSF Belgium decided not to intervene due to a lack of personnel. MSF Holland withdrew for similar reasons, but also because it refused to work in the same area as the French army.

 Marc Gastellu [Emergency Desk] from Paris called me and said, "Wouter, I want to work with you. I want us to do an exploratory mission together in the Turquoise zone and then, depending on what we find, we can start a mission." Of course, I was very happy. We had some staff and cars in the north of Burundi so we could... And so I agreed. But when I came to the office on Monday morning I was called by Lex Winkler [Director of Operations] and Jules Pieters [Emergency Desk] into Lex's office. They asked me, "what did you do on Friday with the French?". I replied, "Oh, Marco and I agreed we would do an explo and if there is need we will do a mission together." They could have killed me! "What the hell did you do that for? All our resources will be eaten up. We are busy because we have a secret mission called Pluto in the northern part [of Rwanda]!". It was not so secret that others in MSF didn't know about it, of course. But we had people from an emergency team arriving from Uganda behind the RPF troops in liberated territory, and starting a mission. So they said to me, "you call Marc and you refuse." But I said "no, I gave my word. My word is my word and there is no way I can go back on my word. I promised we would do this mission together and we are going to do this mission together unless you sack me."

Lex and Jules told me, "Let the French go to zone Turquoise and let them do the zone Turquoise thing. What did you exactly agree on with Marc?". I told them word for word. "OK, you agreed and promised an exploratory mission together but you didn't as yet promise a common mission." So they said, "you can go, you do your exploratory mission but we are not going to do a common mission". I had only been in the office for a couple of weeks. They were the big hot shots. So I called Marc and said, «Marc I have to tell you...". I was really uncomfortable - I didn't like this phone call and I think Marc knew. After this whole affair, Marc was accused of being associated with the French army in zone Turquoise. There was nothing I could do. Now, after


so many more years, I have a lot more authority in MSF Holland and I could tell Lex to go to hell with this whole shit, and I would do what I thought was right. But at that time I couldn't - I was too little.

Wouter Van Empelen, MSF Holland Emergency cell
then programme manager (in English).

 The only time that I stopped something was in the zone Turquoise when MSF France proposed sending teams into the zone where the French military was already present and I said no. I didn't want MSF to be too close to any army and I had a big argument with Marc Gastellu because he wanted to go there and Wouter wanted to go as well and I said, "You can go there but MSF Holland will not." I didn't want to get too close to the French Army. Like elsewhere in Rwanda, the conditions were bad so it was obvious that assistance was necessary. But from a political point of view, I was completely against intervening because we can't be seen together with, I think it was the French Foreign Legion that was there — they're killers. It was quite clear that they were protecting the Hutu. We couldn't be there... An MSF volunteer is an MSF volunteer. For me, it didn't make a difference whether it was a French or Belgian or Dutch team. MSF is MSF and for a journalist, it doesn't make any difference either.

The French and Belgian colonial history in Rwanda, and the Congo and Zaire was an issue as well as the fact that it was quite clear that French arms had been flown from Europe to Goma and into Rwanda and it was just not done to be present in that particular part of Rwanda. But Paris was upset and Wouter was upset with me but I simply did not want it to happen. I think that he was too emotionally involved. He had witnessed slaughters in Rwanda which I understand because I have seen that myself. You have to be careful that you don't lose your objectivity. Especially for MSF Belgium and the people in Paris — for me, they were sometimes too emotionally involved for obvious reasons. Here in Holland, we don't have a history with Rwanda and Zaire — there are no colonial ties.

Jules Pieters, MSF Holland Emergency programme
manager (in English).

 We sent a physician to conduct an exploratory mission with the Dutch and Belgians, via Bukavu, so that we could get into the Turquoise Zone. It had been agreed that we would do the assessment to know what was happening to the people who had regrouped in the Turquoise Zone, that is to say the Tutsi and the Hutu. The French weren't going to step in, to avoid creating confusion. It had been agreed that the Dutch and the Belgians would make some room for us in Goma, and that since they had

the energy and capacity to respond quickly, they would be in charge of the Turquoise Zone, because the French could not go there. We made our evaluation and found that various people had indeed been regrouping here and there. The food situation was very serious, as was the sanitation problem. People were regrouping on the hills and building their own little bunkers, but they didn't have anything to eat. There were many sick people. We had to intervene. It was at that moment that all the refugees arrived in Goma, and we quickly increased our presence in Goma. Once there, we discovered that the Dutch were too busy to get involved in the Turquoise zone, that the Swiss were more interested in Goma because that's where the action was. As for the Belgians, they were opposed to Opération Turquoise, so decided not to enter the area. As for us, swallowing our anger, we decided that the fear of creating confusion was not going to keep us out of there. We weren't going to let people die just to avoid getting our shirts dirty with the French military. But it took us a while to get organised. We had recruited a lot of people for Benaco and for Goma, and we needed a lot for that mission too. It was a big mission. The Dutch let us down at the last moment, and we found it sickening...

I went there myself at the time, and saw people eating leaves, tens of thousands of displaced people who risked dying of hunger. There were very few humanitarian organisations, apart from UNHCR which was completely lost, like us. So we went there and it cost us heavily, because we knew that we would be accused of collaboration with the French Government. The other MSF groups had a good time sneering at us. It would be interesting to look at why we always found ourselves on the Hutu's side during this whole affair. It undoubtedly because of the cynicism of the other sections, who kept saying, «We will not side with the perpetrators of genocide. Go ahead if you want, we already have too much to do here. We don't want to be on the wrong side of the story.»

Dr. Philippe Biberson, President of MSF France
(in French).

From 12 July, MSF's French section intervened alone in the zone 'secured' by the French army. A letter was sent to the United Nations Security Council on behalf of the MSF movement asking the international community to encourage the return of the displaced persons, while assuring their safety and increasing aid to Rwanda.



'Three Hundred French Soldiers to Leave the Country Before the End of July,' **Le Monde** (France) 14 July 1994 (in French). **D15** [↗](#)

Extract:

On Tuesday, the humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) launched an aid mission to Gikongoro prefecture in the heart of the security zone created by the French, but which is completely independent of French authorities, announced Philippe Biberson. MSF will have 12 field-based volunteers and will accept no government aid. "MSF wants to set itself apart from Opération Turquoise," the group's president explained. "It's a matter of credibility." According to estimates from MSF's evaluation mission in the region, there are between 700,000-800,000 displaced persons - 99 percent Hutu - in this zone.



'MSF Launches Independent Aid Program in South - western Rwanda,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 14 July 1994 (in French). **D16** [↗](#)

Extract:

At the end of this week, MSF will launch a medical aid project, independent of French military operations, to assist at least 200,000 displaced persons in south-western Rwanda. In a letter addressed to the United Nations Security Council, MSF also issued a forceful request that the displaced persons in the area be allowed to return home as quickly as possible... MSF notes that this operation in no way constitutes support to the French policy being carried out in Rwanda. The aid provided in the French 'secure zone' can only be considered a short-term solution to meeting the most pressing needs. From a political or humanitarian perspective, the 'secure zone' does not have a viable future. Massive aid cannot be maintained for an indeterminate period in this zone... In a letter addressed to the Security Council, MSF called on the international community to encourage the return of the displaced persons. Their return will be possible only if aid increases to other regions of Rwanda and if the safety of returnees is guaranteed. The population must be assured of humanitarian aid and protection against political violence.

In early July, tens of thousands of civilians, pushed by militias. The FAR and fleeing the advancing RFP, began heading towards the city of Gisenyi in the north-west of the country. The MSF Holland team based just on the other side of the border in Goma, Zaire had been operating a medium-term medical assistance program for several years in the Kivu region.



Florence Aubenas, 'From Kigali to Gisenyi, the Hutu Grand Exodus', **Liberation** (France) 11 July 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Villages north-west of Kigali have been emptying for a week, pushed by RPF troops that had progressed a further 20 km. But instead of heading south toward the humanitarian zone delimited by the French army, the people headed to Gisenyi, in Rwanda's far north-west, at the Zairean border, beyond reach of all control and organisation. According to several estimates, they totalled more than one million in one of the most impressive flights in history.



I knew that the refugees were going to arrive but I had to fight with everyone to get there. Since I was following the story, I had to move with the journalists, not with the teams. I had the support of Jean-François Alesandrini, the communications director for MSF France. I told him, "I have to collect information. We must speak about what is going on. I will have a telephone and I will call the teams and get them to tell the journalists what we know, but I must be with the journalists." There was a huge fight at headquarters level because no one could agree. They were very strict and said that I couldn't move if there was no team and no operation.

I discovered that there was a French explo team taking a boat from Bukavu to Goma. Nevertheless, I took a plane. Jean-François covered for me and told me to go. I'd asked the Dutch, who had a program in Goma, "Can I go to Goma? This is going to be the biggest story that we've ever had in Goma. I must be there." They replied, No, you can't go. We don't need you. We are going to do it ourselves. Our mission heads are competent, etc." So I sent a radio message directly to the teams saying, "There is an AIDS prevention project for pygmies which I would really like to cover up where you are. Now is a good time, not much is going on. Can I stop by to cover this project, which I find very interesting?" Obviously, the head of mission replied, "Sure, it's great that you're interested in the pygmies. Of course you are welcome. Nobody pays attention to us here in Goma." I remember receiving his answer on Wednesday or Thursday. I faxed the message back to Jean-François, telling him, "When they wake up on Monday, I'll be in Goma." I sent it to Amsterdam very late on Friday night so that they wouldn't have time to react. I knew that they were not really following what was happening in Rwanda because they'd not predicted what would happen in Zaire. I arrived in Bukavu and slept on the ground in a sleeping bag with the journalists. I paid CARE to use their phone to talk to the teams and to other journalists, to tell them what was going on, what we were seeing. Then two logisticians arrived. We took the car and left Bukavu for Goma. When I arrived, Wouter Van Empelen, from Amsterdam, had contacted his teams. He was furious.

He said, "How could you even think of inviting her? It's unbelievable; she's there for Rwanda! She will screw things up! She's coming with French teams." He had been brawling with the French. Jean-Hervé [Bradol, MSF France programme manager] and Jean-François were behind me and told him, "Even if she doesn't stay and work with you, she will, nonetheless, stay there and speak on behalf of MSF France." The Dutch had been there for years, but MSF didn't have any projects there. And besides, they'd invited me. I arrived at the house in Goma. There was a terrible atmosphere in the team because everyone thought I'd come to work on the pygmy story. I talked to the head of mission and convinced him. I told him, "You have your work to do. I'll still write a story about your project, but I have to follow the news because I am missing information about what's going on with the French soldiers. And the refugees are going to arrive, I am sure of that. You're going to be right in the middle of a world event." He allowed me to stay one week. I was able to get a car. ICRC, OXFAM and MSF were the only ones there. Each day, ICRC would cross the border to see where the refugees were, because people had started to go down the road from Kigali to Gisenyi. We knew that they were coming and that it would take some time. The ICRC were the only ones crossing the border. I attended all the NGO meetings and informed the operations departments of what they were saying. We didn't have a program for the refugees, because we weren't crossing the border, and we were there to continue with a long-term project! We had already launched the appeal: "You don't stop a genocide with doctors!" The French soldiers were making up all sorts of propaganda about the refugees, the abandoned people, and the humanitarian workers that didn't want to come along with them. Every day they invented propaganda against MSF saying, "All of MSF's cars circulate in Goma, yet they aren't doing a damn thing."

Samantha Bolton, MSF International Press Officer for East Africa, 1994-1995 (in French).

Between 13 and 17 July 1994, 500,000-800,000 Rwandans⁴ streamed into Zaire, north of Lake Kivu, where they settled in and around the city of Goma. Lacking clean water, food and medical care, they were in a state of total exhaustion. V3



Samantha Bolton, **Sitrep** from MSF International Press officer in East Africa, 14 July 1994 (in English). **D17**


Extract:

That is it. The refugees are flooding over - tens of thou-

4. UNHCR's first estimate of 1.2 million people was reduced following field surveys and aerial photos. Goma Epidemiological Group, 'Public Health Impact of Rwandan Refugee Crisis: What Happened in Goma, Zaire in July 1994?', *The Lancet* (February 1995): 339-344.

sands into Goma this morning. Woke up at 05.30 to sound of machine gun fire and gunshots. Then the flood came - worse than Benaco. MSF is immediately deploying medicines and mobilising for 300,000. It is not enough. MSF teams have also gone up by the Virungo (volcano) where last night 10,000 were pouring in per hour. The main problem is food - there is no WFP here - and plastic sheeting, etc. The aid agencies cannot cope - not clear what the French army will do yet. The town is totally inundated with goats, kids, people and baggage. The Zairean authorities are disarming everyone in the squares before trucks move them on to the stadium and other places. This morning I had to go and wake UNHCR up.

On the morning of 14 July, MSF's Press officer alerted the international press to the arrival of a flood of refugees in Goma.

 Once the refugees began arriving, I ran to the MSF camp where there was just a battery powered cell phone that only lasted half an hour. We didn't have a satellite phone. I went to the Head of Mission's room and took his phone. I wasn't allowed to do that but I thought, "Too bad, this is news. It has to be done." I immediately called the BBC and said, «I must speak with the newsroom immediately. I don't have much time. I'm calling from Goma. There is a river of human beings arriving here in Goma. The entire population of Rwanda is crashing down on us." It was very early in London. A journalist asked, "Who is it? Does anybody want to talk to a girl from... which organisation again? From Médecins Sans Frontières. She says that she's over there and that there is a river of people coming in from Rwanda." They said, "OK, transfer her to the studio." It was the morning news. They let me speak on the news and I started to explain what was going on. "It's like a river. Rwanda is emptying into Zaire." I called CNN and did the same thing. I called Voice of America. I called everyone. It was all over the news. I said that UNHCR hadn't done its job, that the refugees didn't know where to go, that it was a scandal. UNHCR was furious. They immediately sent people over because everyone was complaining. When I was done alerting the media, I woke up the Head of Mission to warn him about the arrival of the refugees. He immediately dispatched a medical team. We heard on the radio that some refugees had gathered in a stadium. The teams were ready to operate. We had the first medical kits... I had befriended an Italian in a bar who worked with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and owned a satellite phone. He wasn't using it and so he lent it to me. We had a whole system worked out. We sent out messages and numbers. I called them myself because I didn't want them to call IOM directly or they would have done the interviews in my absence. I had all the fax and telex lists of the people that I needed to call. I spent one or two hours on

the UN telephone... attacking the UN! After a while, they discovered where the calls were coming from. The guy said to me, "I can't lend you my phone anymore because it seems that you've been saying horrible things about the United Nations and the IOM." That was the end of my phone.

Samantha Bolton, MSF International Press Officer for East Africa, 1994-1995 (in French).

During a teleconference on 15 July, MSF's sections made decisions about their operational strategies. MSF Holland and MSF Belgium agreed on a joint intervention coordinated by the Dutch section. MSF France, already heavily mobilised in Tanzania and in the zone Turquoise, chose to hold off until a possible intervention in the south of Kivu, around Bukavu.



Jean-Benoit Burrión 'Evaluation of the Coordination and Cooperation Among MSF Sections in Goma' (13 July – 15 September 1994), AEDES (European Agency for Development and Health), 1994, (in French). [D18](#)

Extract:

On Friday 15 July, the second day after the fall of Ruhengeri, MSF Holland sent a comprehensive situation report to its headquarters, which immediately forwarded the document to Brussels and Paris. That same day, Brussels decided to launch an operation in Goma. The strategy was to begin working immediately under Dutch coordination for four to six weeks, at the end of which the two sections would resume their operational autonomy. The next day, 16 July, the first Belgian logistician arrived from Kinshasa, accompanied by two physicians. In the meantime, the Dutch oversaw a distribution of kits to Goma hospitals and clinics. They also opened two clinics in Kibumba and one in Munigi. The Belgians put themselves under Dutch supervision and were accommodated in the Dutch compound. The team grew very quickly.



Nicolas de Torrente, 'MSF Activity in the Rwandan Crisis: A Critical History', July 1995, (in French). [D6](#)

Extract:

During an intersectional operations teleconference on 15 July, MSF France decided not to intervene in Goma. Why? The decision was based on the recognition that its lack of personnel constituted a major operational limitation. MSF France, which already had a large team (more than 20 people) in Benaco, had just decided to intervene in Gikongoro. Further, with MSF Holland's withdrawal, that

mission fell entirely on MSF France. MSF France concluded that it had reached the limits of its operational capacities in the Rwandan crisis in terms of human resources. The various headquarters divided responsibility for interventions as follows: MSF Holland, supported by MSF Belgium, would take responsibility for Goma. MSF France would remain available in case of serious problems in Bukavu.

On 16 July, Médecins Sans Frontières mobilised its operational resources in the Goma region and announced the action to the press. [V4](#)



'MSF Speeds to Goma,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 16 July 1994 (in French). [D19](#)

Extract:

This weekend, Médecins Sans Frontières will mobilise several teams and 65 tons of emergency aid supplies to help accommodate hundreds of thousands of refugees in the city of Goma, Zaire. A cargo plane will leave from Ostend with four people and 25 tons of supplies. Forty tons of materiel will also be transported from Amsterdam... The Belgian team is working with MSF Holland teams, which already have a strong presence in Goma... MSF Belgium will finance its own operation. Funds still available for the Rwandan crisis are almost depleted...

On 18 July, MSF Holland's humanitarian affairs department sent a message to the team in Tanzania explaining MSF Holland's position regarding individuals in the Benaco camp suspected of having participated in acts of genocide or other violations of human rights in Rwanda.



Hanna Nolan, 'Presence of alleged perpetrators of genocide in the camp: explanation of MSF Holland position,' **Memo** from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, MSF Holland to all MSF Holland staff working or having worked in Benaco camp, 18 July 1994 (in English). [D20](#)

Extract:

Should we continue to give humanitarian aid to people, especially to the so-called leaders - who had planned such atrocities- and about whom it is said that while receiving the good care of the aid agencies they are preparing themselves for a return to Rwanda to continue their murderous practices? Moreover, UNHCR is employing people selected by these 'leaders' to patrol the camp... Choosing to whom

to give or not give aid would be impossible. We are not judges who have the evidence to decide who is guilty of such a crime. MSF's charter demands us to give humanitarian aid indiscriminately. We should continue our activities in the camp, but at the same time we should continue to press publicly for these perpetrators to be brought to justice and no impunity should be given to those suspected of having committed gross violations of human rights... MSF International has written several letters to UNHCR and the Security Council and issued a press statement calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Wouter Van Empelen desk manager for Rwanda and Hanna Nolan, department of Humanitarian Affairs, also visited UNHCR in Geneva in person to make our position known once more.

From the time they arrived in Goma, refugees were subject to violence by the militias, former FAR members and Zairean soldiers. [V5](#) [V6](#)



Samantha Bolton, **Sitreps** to MSF Communication Departments, 18 July 1994 (in English). [D21](#)

Extract:

Rwandan army: It looks as if the entire army has turned up in town. Thousands of soldiers everywhere, and most are armed. Although the Zairians are trying to disarm them, they are still coming in with their arms including heavy weapons. Even when they are disarmed they give in the guns but not the ammunition. Very destabilising. There is also a basketball court full of wounded soldiers, who the ICRC is taking care of. All around town there are military swaggering around with guns and wounds and nothing to do, or else you see them in the refugee camps in CD plate pickups stealing goats and blankets from refugees.

Zairean security: As you all know the Zairean police and army are never paid, so this is a great opportunity to pillage and steal both from refugees and from the Zairean population. MSF local staff today reported shooting throughout the night, and pillaging of neighbourhoods. Zairians are moving out of town. Throughout town, I have seen Zairean military driving BMWs and other cars (mostly stolen at the border), collecting goats and chickens from refugees as they go along. Mobutu has sent in the special paratroopers as well as the Presidential guards, but apart from hanging around Mobutu's summer palace, it is not clear what exactly they are doing.



MSF Belgium **Situation Report**, 18 - 24 July 1994 (in French). [D22](#)

Extract:

Goma, Zaire - Population and division among camps: The

number of Rwandan refugees as of mid-July is close to 1 million. The presence of well-armed Rwandan soldiers (20,000?) is visible. The Zairean government wants to group these soldiers in a camp and disarm them. Three thousand Zairean soldiers arrived early in the week. After the bombing of Goma airport on 17 July and tensions in Goma (normally 150,000 residents), 50,000 Zairians fled the city. Zairean soldiers looted empty houses.

During a Press conference in Brussels on 19 July, MSF Belgium directors described the situation in Goma as 'hell on earth' and called for the refugees' return to Rwanda and the necessary guarantees to facilitate the return. MSF Holland took the same position.



'MSF Demands that Refugees Return Home,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 19 July 1994 (in French). [D23](#)

Extract:

"Political and humanitarian conditions compel the return of Rwandan refugees to their homes as quickly as possible. This is of vital importance." Such is the summary of the message launched by MSF concerning the Rwandan refugee crisis... Everything must be done to ensure that conditions in Rwanda offer the guarantee that refugees from Goma and camps in Rwanda and neighbouring countries can reintegrate into their areas of origin... If a sustainable political solution is not found quickly, we can expect an even greater catastrophe in Bukavu in the coming month. The French army's mandate expires at the end of August and UNAMIR is not yet prepared to take over from those troops. If UNAMIR, in its current state, were to take on the job of the French, the RPF would be able to break through in southwestern Rwanda - meaning that the massacres would probably continue. The millions of displaced persons in the French security zone would have to flee towards Bukavu in Zaire...

According to MSF, political problems are growing along with the humanitarian catastrophe. Tensions with the local population are exploding in areas where the refugees are assembled... Furthermore, the refugee camps may serve as ideal recruiting grounds and entry points for extremist militias. In this sense, it is in the militias' interests that as many people as possible are able to take refuge in the camps.



MSF Holland **position** on Rwandan Refugee Crisis, 20 July 1994 (in English). [D24](#)

Extract:

Background: it has been suggested that the reason behind

these refugee flows is the military strategy of the RPF and their victory. However, there are reports that refugees are incited to leave by the old extremist Hutu regime through their radio station Mille Collines which continues to spread the message that all Hutus will be killed by the new government.

MSF message: There can only be one clear message - the refugees have to return to Rwanda as soon as possible. For the humanitarian agencies present in Zaire, it will be virtually impossible to achieve an adequate level of protection and assistance for these huge numbers of refugees.

That same day, UNHCR announced an influx of 200,000 refugees at border posts in Bukavu. MSF France sent an exploratory mission and a cargo plane, and launched a public appeal to recruit medical staff.



'UNHCR Coordinates a Massive Humanitarian Airlift to Goma,' UNHCR **Press release**, 20 July 1994 (in English). [D25](#)

Extract:

About 200,000 Rwandan refugees have arrived in Bukavu at the southern end of Lake Kivu, and another 200,000 have reportedly flooded into Uvira, further south. Refugees said they left southwestern Rwanda after their leaders told them in a radio broadcast they could no longer be protected. About 1.9 million people were reported to be displaced in the southwestern region.



'Status of the Gikongoro and Bukavu Missions, 19 July 1994,' MSF France **situation report** (in French). [D26](#)

Extract:

According to UNHCR, nearly 100,000 Rwandans have taken refuge in Bukavu and almost 400,000 more are reported to have passed through Kamanyola, 40 kilometres south of Bukavu... Several hundreds of thousand more are believed to be on their way from the security zone towards the Bukavu region. Radio Rwanda encouraged people to leave the zone, telling them the French would not be able to guarantee their safety. Isabelle Navarre and William (MSF Belgium) left Bujumbura for the Bukavu region on the morning of the 20th to evaluate the situation. A team of five left Kinshasa and is expected to arrive in Bukavu on the afternoon of the 20th to start up an aid program for around 100,000 people. A team should leave Paris for Bukavu at the end of the week with a full charter plane to provide the Kinshasa team with reinforcements.



Minutes of the MSF France Board meeting, 29 July 1994 (in French). [D27](#)

Extract:

Early last week, MSF was limited in its actions by a lack of resources. The 60 million Francs (€9 million) allocated for emergencies has already been spent. It was necessary to launch an appeal to volunteers and donors... Out of 7,000 telephone calls for volunteers, 1,000 applications were opened for candidates ready to depart, including 500 physicians and 250 nurses... A flood of physicians cancelled their vacations to be able to leave on mission... 25,000 donors sent donations to headquarters. More than 15 million francs (€2 million) have been raised.

On 21 July, the MSF teams announced 800 cholera deaths in the Goma camps. The epidemic spread very quickly. [V7](#)



Iseult O'Brien, 'Cholera Confirmed in Goma,' **memo** from MSF International office in Brussels to all MSF Communication Departments, 21 July 1994 (in English). [D28](#)

Extract:

800 people have died of cholera in Goma, according to MSF teams. Thousands more are at risk. This evening, MSF is sending a plane with 33 tons of medical material on board, most of which is to combat cholera (sanitation material, water chlorination, plastic sheeting). There will be at least 5 volunteers on board, maybe more. On Saturday another full cargo will leave from Amsterdam. MSF is running dispensaries in Katala, Kibumba and Munigi. The authorities have asked that the corpses be placed along the roadsides, so that they can be collected. As one of the MSF teams drove from Katala to Goma yesterday, they counted 200 dead bodies.



MSF Belgium **Situation Report**, 18-24 July 1994 (in French). [D22](#)

Extract:

A serious cholera epidemic broke out around 19 July. Thirty cases, including 3 deaths (clinical diagnosis) were registered in Katala on 19 July (on that date, only 3,000 refugees were in the camp, with the others on the Goma-Katala road). Amsterdam was able to provide laboratory confirmation based on samples taken by MSF Holland. The epidemic has since spread like wildfire, leaving hundreds, even thousands, dead. As of 23 July, a total of 5,639 cases, including 1,340 deaths, were recorded

in MSF cholera centres. But these are only part of the existing cases.



"Rwanda Emergency - Call to All Editors," MSF Belgium **Press release**, 25 July 1994 (in French). [D29](#)

Extract:

An MSF plane now leaves Belgium every other day carrying thousands of infusion kits required to treat patients suffering from cholera. Each airplane represents 10 million Belgian Francs (€250,000). Médecins Sans Frontières urgently needs funds to carry out these operations. We would be extremely grateful if you would publish Médecins Sans Frontières' bank account number to enable the Belgian public to show its solidarity with Rwanda by making contributions.

On 24 July, only 80,000 refugees arrived in Bukavu instead of the 200,000 that UNHCR had predicted. Part of the MSF France team on stand-by in Bukavu repositioned itself in Goma to lend reinforcements to the other sections.



Minutes of the MSF France Board meeting, 29 July 1994 (in French). [D27](#)

Extract:

UNHCR predicted that 400,000-500,000 refugees would arrive in Bukavu (and had made plans for 13 camps). Later, Agence France-Presse referred to 200,000 people. MSF sent five people to evaluate the situation. We have had no news from them for several days. The emergency cell in Paris announced a disaster situation in Bukavu and, despite Michel's suggestion to wait until Isabelle Navarre had investigated, sent 40 expatriates and two charters loaded with 35 tons... The people in the field were annoyed that they were ignored. In fact, there were only 50,000 refugees and Michel considers that this was poor operations management... Bernard [Pécoul, MSF France Executive Director] responded that the emergency cell has to make decisions in the face of diverging opinions. If we want to be useful, we've got to act quickly - at the risk of making mistakes. We had thought that since MSF Belgium and MSF Holland were already in Goma, it would be a good idea for MSF France to go to Bukavu. It was a bad decision. As soon as we recognised our mistake, the expatriates were transferred to Goma. Let's not forget everything MSF has been through these last few weeks, fearing that we'd be serving soup to executioners by restoring to prominence people who, three months ago, had organised the genocide.

Based on lessons from the Benaco experience, MSF France developed a 'Bukavu strategy,' which strictly limited interventions emergency to refugees medical and nutritional assistance.



Nicolas de Torrente, 'MSF Action in the Rwandan Crisis: A **Critical History**,' July 1995, (in French). **D6**

Extract:

The volatile environment of violence and insecurity dissuaded the MSF teams from considering mid-term actions in the camps. Given the lack of security, there was no interest in doing so and given the presence of other NGOs, there was no need to continue MSF's action in Bukavu. Further, if MSF had undertaken a medium-term mission, it would obviously have been necessary to refocus the programs to also assist the Zairean population, as they were living in very difficult conditions. MSF recognised that it was the only operational NGO that could take on emergency medical and nutritional care of refugees, as well as the supply of water and sanitation. MSF thought its action could prevent a repeat of what happened in Goma: ensuring the rapid transfer of refugees into camps would help to avoid epidemics, improve medical management, and reduce tensions in the city. For MSF, the Bukavu strategy, which followed from all the above factors, was to take on only the emergency phase in the city and the opening of the camps. As soon as possible, MSF would hand over operations to other NGOs, once the refugees were settled and the situation stabilised. This strategy was developed in the field and received ongoing approval and support from Paris.

MSF movement deployed all operational means during the acute phase of the cholera epidemic, and made great efforts to increase awareness among the public and Western governments of the size of the catastrophe and the need to increase the resources available.



Stephen Smith, 'According to MSF, 80,000 People in the Zaire Camps Have Cholera,' **Libération** (France), 25 July 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The cholera death toll rose yesterday to 7,000 in the camps. According to MSF, at least 6 percent of the 1 million refugees have contracted the disease. Delivery of foodstuffs and potable water remains inadequate and sanitary facilities are lacking everywhere.



Sitrep by Anne-Marie Huby, MSF International Press officer (interim) in Goma to MSF International, Brussels, for distribution to communications departments, 28 July 1994 (in English). **D30**

Extract:

Only a short note from hell tonight - every one of the 120 expats here is too tired to come up with brilliant quotes.

MAIN NEWS

The cholera epidemic continues its steady course. According to the French army and others involved in bodies collection, there are about 1,000 dead per day. Although that continues to be reported as cholera-related, we keep stressing that people die of various causes, such as dysentery and thirst.

Our press briefings today concentrated on the following:
 - MSF is achieving good results on the cholera front with the death rate in our CTCs [Cholera Treatment Centres] falling well below 10 percent. However, visits to the cholera camps today showed that the number of admissions is still very high. The only thing this shows is that those in our CTCs are only the lucky few.

- Our good record will further improve as we organise outreach health teams that will concentrate on bringing more patients in and better sorting out patients. In the initial chaos, we probably mismanaged resources by putting too many patients on IV fluids because we did not have the ability to diagnose properly. In the coming days, MSF will be able to provide a clearer breakdown of what people are dying from. You might think it all comes a bit too late, but it seems that journos quite like the nitty gritty of epidemiology.

As you must have gathered, the cholera story is close to exhaustion and we will not be able to come up with many new mad angles like the above. As everyone else, we have started putting the focus on repatriation.



'Rwanda-Zaire - Médecins Sans Frontières launches an emergency appeal for water trucks and tankers to carry water to the refugees in Goma - Only clean water will prevent spread of cholera.' **Press release** by MSF International, Brussels, 28 July 1994 (in English). **D31**

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières is very concerned by the inability of the international community to get under way a large-scale water distribution program for the refugees in Goma. Although purification plants provided by the Americans as part of their 'Support Hope' Operation are now producing clean water, there is a desperate lack of transport to carry it from Lake Kivu to the Rwandan refugees in Goma (Zaire). The cholera epidemic is continuing to spread at a staggering rate that has not yet reached its peak, and there is no improvement in sight. The number

of victims continues to grow, especially in the provinces in north Zaire, near the towns of Goma and Katale.

There have been an estimated 14,000 deaths so far, mainly from cholera, but also as a result of dysentery, dehydration and malnutrition. MSF considers it likely that 6% of the refugees, from 60,000-80,000 people, are likely to be infected by cholera over the next three weeks, with a mortality rate of 30%. This means that 24,000 people are likely to die from cholera if every means possible is not employed immediately to prevent this happening.



Message from the Executive Director of MSF-USA to the Rwanda emergency desks, 28 July 1994 (in French). [D32](#)

Extract:

We have contacted various institutions to find out whether it might be possible for water trucks (or trucks with water tanks) to arrive in Goma in the coming days and we have increased the pressure via the media.

1) Media

We have insisted on the water issue and, in addition to the attached scathing press release, Alain [Destexhe – Secretary-general of MSF International] has been in touch with several evening television programs and newspapers to move this issue up to a news story. It has been covered on the large news networks.

2) Government

We made many phone calls to see if it was possible to have trucks arriving soon. It looks like nothing has happened recently on this question and little is likely to happen soon...

Next steps: I'm calling three Pentagon contacts on Thursday. The press release will be circulating widely and the issue will be raised in several powerful media outlets. That may push the Pentagon to take action. I am also faxing the press release to the National Security Council, which I left out of yesterday's distribution.



Iseult O'Brien, **Message** from MSF International Press Officer in Brussels to all Rwanda programme managers, Communication Departments, Directors, and Presidents, 29 July 1994 (in English). [D33](#)

Extract:

Lobbying on the Rwandan crisis:

Yesterday Georges Dallemagne and Eric Goemaere (Operation director and Executive director MSF Belgium) visited the German representative to the European Commission. One of the reasons for the visit is that Germany holds the presidency of the European Community and could play a role in the European response to the crisis. It was clear from the meeting that the European Union is aware of the lack of its visibility in the emergency, but

unfortunately nothing concrete seems to be on the agenda for the time being. The deployment of European observers will not take place immediately.

Alain Destexhe (IO) has returned from the United States, where in addition to testifying before the Senate committee, he had a meeting in the United Nations headquarters. The UN plans to deploy 2,500 troops along the Zairean/Rwandan border at the end of August. Only 10 Human Rights observers will be sent. This means that the civilian presence in UNAMIR will only amount to about 100 people, most of who will be carrying out administrative duties.

MSF used every media interview to call attention to the fact that the leaders of the former Rwandan administration, who organised the genocide, held the refugees under strict control, and that the situation was dangerous. [V8](#)



'They're All Going to Die!' Interview of Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF senior legal adviser, with Jean-Claude Raspiengeas, *Télérama* (France), 27 July 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The Hutu government lost the war but maintains control of the population and economic resources via humanitarian aid. Hutu political and military authorities control all food distribution in the camps. This is a first: a State with its population and wealth, but without territory. The interim government keeps its people as hostages and organises all population movements. Using Radio Mille Collines and loudspeakers, it incites civilians to flee toward such-and-such a zone. Behind them, the militias and the army loot the abandoned cities.

Some 400,000 people have arrived at the world's largest refugee camp in Benaco, Tanzania, driven there by their leaders. The humanitarian system was established based on a naïve discourse: 'Let's not allow famine to complete the genocide.' But it's the killers, not the victims, who are there. Between one-quarter and one-half of the Tutsis have already been wiped out. In Benaco, they threatened to kill us when we wanted to evaluate the population. The leaders exaggerate their numbers and extort international aid. Their entire economic survival is now based on this bluff and trafficking of aid... We can't accept it any longer. If things go on like this, they'll all die! More than 1 million refugees suddenly arrived in Goma, Zaire (3,000 every hour!), pushed by their army, fearful of encountering the RPF. They're bullied by their army and then by Zairean troops. Let me repeat: these are not spontaneous population movements. The leaders are now pushing them from Goma towards Bukavu, further south. As for us – we're just running along behind! We can't set

up health facilities or cholera treatment camps, treat dysentery or distribute antibiotics. We can't stave off the epidemics. We no longer have any influence. We're obliged to run along behind these droves of terrorised, famished, sick and exhausted populations. As far as money goes, we've scraped the bottom of MSF's barrel. We need 50 million Francs (€7.5 million) and physicians who are available immediately... We've got to reassure people and help them to get back to Rwanda, where they don't face any risks. We've got to cut off the loudspeakers and arrest their leaders. But the refugees have a political noose around their necks... As long as their leaders remain free and continue to feed this bizarre fear of the Tutsis (who they have themselves killed!), we won't be able to save them. The whole world has seen the tactics already used by the Khmer Rouge: force the population into exodus and take them as slaves. The final, more perverse, phase comes later: democratic reconciliation. The UN will organise elections, thereby providing democratic cover to a totalitarian regime.

The aid organisations' work with Rwandan cholera patients attracted journalists and their cameras on a daily basis as they searched for 'new angles' on the subject.



Samantha Bolton, **Sitrep** from MSF International Press Officer to MSF Communication Departments, 5 August 1994 (in English). [D34](#)

Extract:

Most of the journos are now interested in feature stories, profiles, and in alternative stories. The latest of interest has been the MSF F model field hospital in Goma town 'Cebze,' which takes all the excess burden off local structures and has 30% Zairean patients. 12 tents for 20 patients are rapidly being filled, and more tents are being erected. There is a "salle d'observation" and a morgue. Every day the hospital produces 1 cubic metre of bloody diarrhoea, which the logs dispose of. The expat teams and local teams work day and night shifts and during the day a bus and a truck trundle around town picking up the sick from the streets and the excess patients from the centres de santé. This hospital is visually very good for TV because it is so 'chic'. All the MSFs run around in green pyjamas/outfits, with white gloves and all the patients are covered in gold metallic paper blankets with clipboards and pens hanging above their heads. You get your feet and hands spray-disinfected as you walk in and out. Also Marc Vachon, the super log Canadian ex-Hells Angel's bar manager covered in tattoos is a selling point. The lighter TV programs love him as he is an alternative to the usual humanitarian workers and speaks English... The medical coordinator in the hospital is also a hit with the media as he represents the '15 years and still doing it' MSFer. In

the field, the MSF H and B teams continue to do brilliantly with the press. The MSF orphan tent in Kibumba is good starting point for the orphan stories as that is where the orphans/non-accompanied kids are first brought to.

In early August in Tanzania, a new wave of thousands of refugees swelled the camps and the health and nutritional situation worsened.



MSF International **Update** on Rwandan crisis, 3 August 1994 (in English). [D35](#)

Extract:

Tanzania: MSF Holland, MSF Spain and MSF France are working in the Benaco camp in Ngara. MSF Holland and France are also present in Lumasi. There are 280,000 refugees in both camps. MSF Holland has 26 expatriate staff members and MSF Spain 11. MSF France?

In Benaco, the camp mortality rate is 1.9/10,000 per day. For under-fives, the rate is 5.52 per 10,000 per day. 47.43% of the refugees suffer from malaria, and 7.37% from bloody diarrhoea. One of the main problems in the camp is security. The desks has been diverted in recent times because of the scale of the Goma crisis. There is a lack of experienced local staff. The operations directors are discussing the possibility of setting up an inter-section crisis cell for Benaco. Future plans include a cholera preparedness programme and a nutritional survey.

Estimates vary from 3,000 refugees arriving each day (MSF H) to 10-15,000 refugees arriving each day (MSF Spain). They seem to be coming mainly from Kibungo and Byumba prefectures, as well as some from Butare. MSF Switzerland is working in three refugee camps in Karagwe district. There are 14 expatriate staff, backed up by 25 local medical workers and an unknown number of non-medical local staff.

On 2 August, the refugees left Goma and moved some 50 kilometres north of the city into UNHCR-organised camps in Kibumba, Katale and then Kahindo and Kituku. The cholera epidemic began to subside. But shigellosis appeared in the camps and malnutrition rates increased, particularly among children. The first cases of meningitis were reported.



Jean-Benoit Burrion, **Evaluation** of the Coordination and Cooperation Among MSF Sections in Goma (13 July - 15 September 1994), **AEDES** (European Agency for Development and Health), 1994, (in French). **D18** [↗](#)

Extract:

Shigellosis is highly endemic in the region. It appeared fairly suddenly in the camps and is interlinked with the cholera epidemic. As of 27 July, it represented 20 percent of cases in some clinics. In early August, that number reached 40 percent. Although the antibiogram of the first samples showed sensitivity to nalidixic acid, clinical resistance appeared fairly quickly. In late September, the dysentery epidemic was still underway... Infant nutritional status is poor, with global acute malnutrition rates in Katalé, Kibumba and Mugunga at, respectively, 23.1, 20 and 21.3 percent (acceptable threshold = 10 percent). The rates of severe acute malnutrition are, in the same order, 6.6, 2.7 and 3 percent... The first confirmed cases of meningitis were reported on Wednesday, 27 July in Munigi (2 cases), Saturday, 30 July in Katalé (2 cases) and Tuesday, 2 August in Kibumba (1 case). In Kibumba, the epidemic threshold (15 per 100,000/week) was exceeded between 10–16 August and in Katalé, between 14–21 August (24 August, according to the MSF Belgium FAX-OUT). Epidemic peaks were reached simultaneously in the two camps during the week of 21–28 August.

On 4 August, during a Press conference held in Goma on behalf of the entire MSF movement, Philippe Biberson, President of the French section, asked the international community to increase its aid and demanded the presence of international observers and UNAMIR troops in Rwanda. He stated that the refugees' physical condition was too weak for them to return to a country where reception facilities were not prepared for them.



'Rwanda: Death Rate Still Unacceptable,' MSF France **Press release**, 3 August 1994 (in French). **D36** [↗](#)

Extract:

Twenty days after the massive exodus of Rwandans to Zaire, the basic needs of the refugees remain un-met despite significant efforts by the international community and non-governmental organisations. States have not mobilised adequately and considerable efforts are required in the coming days to reduce the refugee death rate... A month and a half after Opération Turquoise began, the issue of the refugees' return - the key to avoiding a huma-

nitarian catastrophe - remains unresolved. No guarantees of a return under normal conditions have been offered by the international community. Deployment of an international military force under a UN mandate is essential to overcome the refugees' fears. The UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali has announced that the organisation has the resources to deploy only 1,000 of the 5,500 men hoped for... On the eve of the French withdrawal from the so-called security zone, Médecins Sans Frontières is launching an appeal to the United Nations to replace French troops with an international peacekeeping force. It is inconceivable that humanitarian organisations fill the void left by the troops' withdrawal. That is neither their job nor within their capacity to do so. The refugees' significant un-met humanitarian needs should not allow us to forget or exonerate the international community from its political responsibilities towards those who instigated the genocide. They hold sway even today and operate in complete impunity in the safe humanitarian zone and in the refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania.



Samantha Bolton, **Sitrep** from MSF International Press Officer to MSF communication departments, 5 August 1994 (in English). **D34** [↗](#)

Extract:

The press conference went well and we got good coverage. Philippe spoke of security problems and how there needs to be international observers and UNAMIR troops throughout Rwanda to ensure safety... He added that at this moment in time most of the refugees were not in physical condition to go back, especially when the structures to receive them were not even in place. Philippe also spoke about his visit to the South-west Safe Zone where "no food has been distributed for the past 10 days... children are eating chewed sugarcane which has been spat to the ground... everywhere people are killing their cattle and very few beans or flour are visible anywhere." Philippe appealed to the international community to make an effort to bring in food - as the food pipeline is weak - into the region or we could face a massive exodus, when the French leave, of refugees into Bukavu in Zaire... To summarise, the press conference emphasised, that although the international community had done a great job mobilising, the crisis is only just beginning and there is no time for back-patting. The traditional 3-week reprieve when refugees arrive was coloured by cholera, which is now under control. Now the real work, epidemics, malnutrition and insecurity will begin, additional help is needed.



'MSF protests lack of international response to plight of Rwandan refugees', MSF International **Press release**, 4 August 1994 (in English). **D37**

Extract:

Three weeks after the first Rwandan refugees arrived in Goma, the international community has still failed both to meet their most basic needs in the camps and to provide guarantees for their safe return to Rwanda... Deployment of a military force is an important step that is already foreseen, but the primordial requirement is for the deployment of civilian human rights observers. Médecins Sans Frontières stresses that such observers should be spread throughout the country with at least two in each of the 150 largest communes... With the approaching withdrawal of French forces from their 'security zone', MSF is calling for a UN peacekeeping force to be mandated to take over from them. There is absolutely no question of the relief agencies fulfilling this role for which they are untrained and unsuited. In the camps in Zaire and Tanzania, it is imperative that those who are allegedly responsible for inciting and carrying out the genocide are not allowed to continue to take a leadership role among the refugees. To this end, MSF calls for the deployment of a small international police force within the camps. In no case should policing activities in the camps be carried out by refugees selected by the so-called leaders. MSF has been witness to numerous incidents of intimidation in the Benaco and Goma camps.

Conclusions: Médecins Sans Frontières would like to reiterate that a crisis on such a huge scale not only requires but also expects a response on the part of UN member states, particularly Security Council members, and the EU countries. Such a response must be at both the humanitarian and the political levels. The humanitarian organisations must be able to rely on military logistical units to provide the heavy logistics that they are unable to cover themselves. Such a huge crisis requires that intervention is geared to the real requirements of the situation and is not made dependent on the opportunity for flattering media coverage of an individual country's generosity.

During his Press conference, Philippe Biberson was questioned about rumours of abuses committed by RPF troops against those repatriated to Rwanda. Initially, he answered that MSF did fear abuses had been committed. He later returned to his comments, acknowledging that he had no proof of abuses and declaring the situation in Rwanda too uncertain to be able to encourage the refugees to return.



The journalists were only interested in the rumours that were going around. Philippe told them everything we had decided upon from a medical standpoint regarding cholera. He made his statement in front of about a hundred journalists. Somebody asked him, "Has MSF heard anything about the fact that the RPF is committing acts of violence in Rwanda?" I thought to myself, "O.K. He's going to say what we said. That this is not MSF information, that we are concerned but cannot comment on the matter." And he replied, "Yes, as a matter of fact, it's true. We believe that too. I am also afraid that acts of violence are being committed." That's when everything got crazy. The journalists were writing down every word. They were very excited because it was the first time anybody had said anything about it. I was uneasy. I told myself that I needed to interrupt him, and so I knelt beside him and said, "You have to take back what you just said because we don't have the right to say that, we don't have any proof." He answered, "I can't, I just said it." I stood up and announced, "I just want to clarify something here. This is our President's first press conference in English. What he meant to say is that, in fact, we've heard a lot of rumours but we don't have any proof. We are not able to verify whether this is true or not." I looked at him and he said, "Yes, it's true, I apologise for my English. We don't have any proof of this. I did not make myself clear." The journalists were looking at me. They knew me pretty well and didn't know what to think. I repeated once again "Is this clear? We don't have any proof, this is not MSF's position, so you can't quote us on that." I called Jean-François Alesandrini, the Communications Director, to warn him and make sure that I hadn't done anything stupid. He said that I had done the right thing and that it absolutely shouldn't have been said.

Samantha Bolton, MSF International Press Officer for East Africa, 1994-1995 (in French).

During a teleconference on 5 August, the directors and presidents of MSF's operational sections again addressed the serious security problems in the camps. They decided to increase awareness of the issue at UNHCR in Geneva and the UN in New York and to send two people to study the situation in the field.



Minutes of telephone conference of 5 August 1994 (in English). **D38**

Extract:

Jacques [de Milliano] emphasised the security problem in the camps in Goma and Benaco. Bernard [Pécoul] said UNHCR paints a much too positive security picture and Jacques said that the OFDA officials he spoke to in a videoconference yesterday were quite unaware of what

was really happening. Philippe [Biberson] reiterated that the problem comes both from the Zairean factor (armed robberies of warehouses at airport, shootings every night in Goma town before refugees were moved out) as well as ex-government people. But he stressed that it is impossible for those in the field to really speak out openly because of the climate of violence...

MSF needs to have a better understanding of the security situation in the camps. It was therefore decided to send at least two people (one to Benaco and one to Goma) with some background in human rights, security, etc to carry out this task in the camps. They should work in close collaboration with UNHCR. We still think that the deployment of a small international police force in the camps would be useful. Each section will carry out a search for suitable people and a decision will be made on Monday. MSF France will get in touch with UNHCR Geneva about the overly optimistic data it is handing out and Alain [Destexhe] will contact the UN in New York to discuss the security issue in the camps.

The international Press reported on the violent behaviour and the misappropriation of aid by Zairean army soldiers and members of the former Rwandan army in the Zairean refugee camps. The camps were under the strict control of uniformed, armed ex-FAR soldiers and militias preparing to return to Rwanda to rout the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), overthrow the new regime and complete the genocide.



Guy Benhamou, 'Goma - Open City for Profiteers of Humanitarian Aid,' *Libération* (France), 4 August 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Marshal Mobutu's soldiers carried out two recent attacks on volunteers of the American aid agency, CARE, the organisation responsible for transferring airlifted cargo onto trucks for delivery at warehouses. "A huge volume of goods arrived on Monday," said Ralph Hazleton. "In the disorder that reigns here, several incidents occurred. Because of the lack of a closed-off area and access control, the airport has become a gathering place for hundreds of Zairians with nothing to do. Some are looking to be hired; others are after a good deal - a bag of flour or sugar... The night before last, UNICEF's medicine warehouses, located near the city hospital, were looted. The thieves carried off 100,000 Negram tablets, or 20 percent of the supply of this rare and costly antibiotic, the only one that can treat the hundreds of patients suffering from the dysentery epidemic.



Guy Benhamou, 'The Rwandan Army Recovers its Health in Goma,' *Libération* (France), 5 August 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Rumours of the FAR's re-arming are especially worrying. Pastor Hulburt has no doubt that weapons are present. "There are closed trucks on my land," he says. "No one knows what's inside." However, the mortar in the back of another truck is quite visible. It's enough to terrorise the local population but not to launch a campaign to retake Rwanda. And General Bizimungu is putting off any offensive for now. "We're resting," he says. "We're reorganising. But we don't expect to resume fighting. This is the time for negotiations." The UN did not hide its concern about the military concentration just outside the Mugunga camp. According to a UNHCR official, the FAR commandeers 40 to 60 percent of humanitarian aid delivered to the 100,000 refugees at the site. Indeed, the FAR was in nearly complete control of the Mugunga camp. At yesterday's food distribution, soldiers with lists of names were visible overseeing the process. "It's like that every day," confirmed a French physician working in the Médecins du Monde health care centre in the camp. "They divert entire truckloads of food and head off who knows where. Their rule is law. Every morning, we treat machete wounds. They're recovering their health, eating and receiving medical care. In two months, they'll be ready to leave again," he says with a sigh.


The head of the UN mission confirmed that UNHCR timidly requested the Goma governor to help deal with this "politically and legally very complicated" problem. And the day before yesterday, the decision was made to move the Rwandan soldiers much further west, towards the city of Saké... As a former high Kigali official, now a refugee in Goma, explained, "It's a real windfall. At the new site at Lac Vert, the FAR troops will be much better set up, out in the open spaces, in the foothills. They'll even be able to resume their training discreetly."



Keith B. Richburg, 'Saving refugees of Rwanda: Is the Sympathy Misplaced? Some being helped are behind the genocide,' *International Herald Tribune* (Europe), 9 August 1994 (in English).


Extract:

But there are many refugees and relief workers who say they believe the world's sympathy has been misplaced. They wonder: where was the world when Hutu were slaughtering Tutsi? Why didn't the world act sooner inside Rwanda, when Hutu were subjecting the minority Tutsi to a campaign of genocide? The irony is not lost on relief workers: some of the people they are struggling to save in Zaire are Rwandan Hutu responsible for the worst case of genocide since the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia in the mid-1970.

 One day in Goma, Philippe Biberson and I ran into a security problem. Some soldiers and Zairean policemen caught one of our drivers. We tried to help him out by following the car. It got pretty heated at a certain point, so we got out of there fast. We kept going and found ourselves behind the Munigi camp. It wasn't located on the main road, but on a little road running alongside the lake. We ended up in the middle of a group of Rwandan soldiers and tarp-covered trucks carrying artillery. They had supposedly laid down their weapons when crossing the border. Apparently, they had left their Kalashnikovs, but not their artillery! The Zairean soldiers had let them pass. We ended up in the middle of it all and so we quickly took off. They were taken by surprise because no one ever went there. Obviously, some soldiers and heavy weaponry had gotten through and were now behind Goma.

Dr. Didier Laureillard, MSF France coordinator in Goma, July to September 1994 (in French).

During a Press conference in Goma on 7 August, Jacques de Milliano, Executive Director of MSF Holland, made public the disastrous results of an epidemiological survey conducted by MSF and Epicentre in the Katala camp.

 'Rwandan Refugees in Goma Region – MSF survey in Katala refugee camp suggests catastrophically high mortality rate for all refugees in the Goma region,' MSF International **Press release**, 8 August 1994 (in English). [D39](#)


Extract:

The results of the survey, which were presented in Goma on 6 August, indicate a crude mortality rate of 41 deaths per 10,000 people per day. If the refugee population stands at one million, as has been estimated, the fact that 8.3% of the population surveyed had died over the 20-day period covered would indicate that as many as 80,000 refugees may have died since they began to arrive en masse on 14 July. It is assumed that the mortality has been decreasing since 3 August, but this will have to be confirmed by further surveys... The survey also revealed that only 3.8% of Katala's population are living in a tent; plastic sheeting protects 51.8% and 44.3% had no appropriate shelter whatsoever. The global malnutrition rate is indicated at 23.1% and the severe acute malnutrition rate is 6.5%.

With the operational management of the camps hitting an impasse, MSF saw no solution but the refugees'


return to Rwanda. But this could only take place when security in the country was guaranteed. Following this logic, MSF participated in information and lobbying efforts to place human rights observers on site in Rwanda.

On 10 August, MSF Belgium held a Press conference in Brussels to review the operations and financing of the intervention in Goma. MSF Belgium President, Réginald Moreels, asked the UN to increase its observers and private, non-profit human rights organisations to take an active role in Rwanda.

 'Goma One Month Later: An Assessment of Médecins Sans Frontières' Operations and Finances,' invitation to the MSF Belgium **Press conference**, 9 August 1994 (in French). [D40](#)

Extract:

Nearly a month after hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees arrived in Zaire, Médecins Sans Frontières is assessing its activities in the field and the refugees' situation. Although the cholera epidemic appears to have been stopped, other problems have arisen... We will also share with you several original and generous actions on the part of the Belgian public, as well as of several companies, to show their support for the refugees. We will then present an income and expense report for the period since the crisis began.

 'Médecins Sans Frontières Calls for Human Rights Monitoring in Rwanda,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 10 August 1994 (in French). [D41](#)

Extract:

MSF is not only calling on the UN to send UNAMIR troops in force with an explicit mandate to monitor human rights, but also asks the many specialised NGOs to take on that task. The massive presence of observers will significantly increase the sense of safety ... Such action is all the more critical because the French army is scheduled to withdraw soon. Everyone fears that massive numbers of refugees will then head for Bukavu again. Thus humanitarian organisations are preparing to organise camps in Bukavu. However, MSF believes that everything possible should be done so that people do not leave their country. That is why MSF will open the first 'way station' along the Gikongoro road (in the zone Turquoise) to Butare to provide medical care to returning refugees. MSF will simultaneously bring the hospital and three clinics in Butare back into operation. Further, MSF France has established health stations around Gitarama, thus drawing people to a "health zone," administered by international aid organisations, just as they are drawn to the French security zone. These efforts will attract refugees only if they are guaranteed proper

treatment. That is why MSF insists that recent rumours of 'disappearances' on the RPF side be investigated immediately by specialised organisations.



"Opinions and Debates,' interview with Réginald Moreels, President of MSF Belgium, *Le Soir* (Belgium), 11 August 1994 (in French). [D42](#)

Extract:

We are going to appeal to human rights organisations to change their policy. This is a significant "first" and a new dimension in humanitarian aid. We will ask them to move from being investigators to permanent monitors, similar to conflict prevention. A field organisation of diplomats must be created that will remain on-site for between six months to three years to rebuild relationships among different communities and ethnic groups. Organisations like Amnesty, Africa Watch, Common Cause, Avocats Sans Frontières and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers must go into the field and remain there. The Authorities in Kigali have assured me that they are completely in favour of this kind of action. There are currently 20 UN human rights observers in Rwanda. There is a need for 450 monitors, stationed in each of the country's communes and employed by the UN and private, non-profit organisations.

In the international press, Alain Destexhe, MSF international General Secretary, denounced the 'genocidaires' stranglehold over the camps, comparing their behaviour to that of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.



'Opinions and Debates,' Interview with Alain Destexhe, *Le Soir* (Belgium), 10 August 1994 (in French). [D43](#)

Extract:

The scenario developing in Rwanda is beginning to look dangerously like that in Cambodia where the international community restored the Khmer Rouge to power, thanks to humanitarian aid. If the UN does not quickly create the conditions for the Rwandan refugees' return, it will be too late to prevent the génocidaires from gaining control over the refugees and the rebirth of an endless conflict.



Alain Destexhe, 'Hurry to Prevent a Cambodian Epilogue in Rwanda,' *International Herald Tribune* (Europe), 11 August 1994 (in English).

Extract:

The army of the former Rwandan government daily rein-

forces its control over the refugees. And with each daily improvement in the aid effort to the camps in Goma, the refugees are less motivated to return home. As long as the situation in Rwanda is uncertain, they prefer to stay put. And who can blame them? In the refugee camps in Tanzania, the former village heads use the daily food distributions both to consolidate their power over the 300,000 Rwandans there and to discourage them from going back to their villages. The international humanitarian effort, which is saving thousands of lives, is also rapidly sowing the seeds of a future conflict in which, as with the Khmer Rouge, the army of the former government will use its political control of hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced people to legitimise its power. The international community, continuing to treat the crisis as an exclusively humanitarian issue, seems blind to the vicious circle that is forming... An urgent response is required. There are only two possible scenarios that can be envisaged over the next few weeks: either the refugees return, or they dig in among the remnant of the former government's army. The last act remains to be written.

The MSF International Council decided to send 'facilitators'⁵ to Rwanda, Zaire (Goma) and Tanzania. Their job was to collect information on the situation, particularly the genocidaires' power structures in the camps.



Minutes of the International Council Teleconference on Rwanda, 10 August 1994 (in English). [D44](#)

Extract:

Human rights observers: human rights organisations usually work on a short-term basis, but some of them are examining the possibilities of sending permanent observers to Rwanda. However, this will need more time. Because of our medical work, MSF will not be directly involved in human rights observation, but it was decided that MSF will send a facilitator into Rwanda. We are expecting names and suggestions today. MSF will continue to encourage private initiatives and is ready to support (financially, logistically, etc) their actions.

5. The Dutch section sent two legal officers to Goma and Benaco. The French section sent a third officer to Kigali.



'MSF and Human Rights in Rwanda,' Le Zarwabuta: Information on the Rwandan Crisis (an MSF France temporary internal publication), No. 1, 25 August 1994 (in French). [D45](#)

Extract:

In late July, MSF International decided to lobby in favour of increasing the presence of human rights observers among the Rwandans. These actions were directed towards the international community (the UN and member states) to increase the number of UN observers, and pressure was also directed at private organisations like Amnesty International, Avocats Sans Frontières, the International Federation of Human Rights and Africa Watch. Some of these organisations were in an exploratory phase in the region, their goal being to establish permanent field teams to investigate both the course of the genocide (registering victims and establishing files) and current abuses in the camps and in Rwanda... The second objective is to station MSF volunteers with legal expertise in Goma, Kigali, Benaco and Bukavu. They will liaise between the teams collecting information during their missions and the independent human rights observers.

MSF volunteers witnessed increasing security incidents in the Tanzanian and Zairean camps throughout the month of August.



Situation update on Rwandan Refugees, MSF International, 8 August 1994 (in English). [D46](#)

Extract:

Zaire-Katale: MSF team forced to take safety measures to be prepared for rapid evacuation if necessary. Problems with both FAR and Zairean soldiers stealing food and vehicles.

Tanzania: Problems with certain members of Hutu local personnel who refuse to treat Tutsi patients.



Situation update on Rwandan Refugees, MSF International, 9 August 1994 (in English). [D47](#)

Extract:

Zaire-Goma: Security causes increasing concern. Zairean soldiers (2 at Katale and 1 at Kibumba) have been killed by refugees frustrated by food aid thefts. A Médecins du Monde doctor was shot at and journalists have also been attacked.

Bukavu: Some 2,000 Rwandan soldiers have taken over the

Chimanga area. The log who was there evacuated the MSF F house on Sunday evening. The Rwandan log kidnapped last week has turned up. He had been arrested by the police.

Tanzania: Security is good, although some NGOs have experienced thefts, particularly of generators. Leaders still saying it is dangerous to return but it looks as though they are beginning to lose their influence now that the refugees are living under better conditions.



Message from the Press Officer in Goma to the MSF Communication Departments, 11 August 1994 (in French). [D48](#)

Extract:

Demonstration this morning. A Zairean soldier reportedly killed a student who was exchanging money. Rocks were thrown and roads blocked until the army managed to clear the way by shooting into the air. Yesterday another refugee was beaten to death during the food distribution. That makes four deaths in one week in the Kibumba camp... There are only two distribution points for the entire camp and the crowd surges forward at each distribution, machetes raised. In response, UNHCR today decided to stop all food distributions... Yesterday, refugees also killed another refugee who was accused of being an RPF agent inciting people to return home. According to UNHCR, another person was killed several days earlier under similar circumstances. It's not a good idea to look like an RPF agent... People are saying that the FAR is really getting back on its feet in Bukavu... The Zaireans don't miss a trick - they're taxing foreign cars and a visa costs \$130 (plus \$20 for the customs officer). Zairean soldiers are attacking refugees who remain in the city of Goma, especially Rwandan women who wait for nightfall to fetch water. Some are said to have been attacked and raped.

In an article in the International Herald Tribune on 11 August, Alain Destexhe denounced the genocidaires' stranglehold over the camps, comparing their behaviour to that of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

On 11 August, the UN Security Council announced its support for the 'rapid' return of refugees and displaced persons to Rwanda. But UNHCR and the aid organisations were not in favour of such a return due to the refugees' poor state of health and rumours of abuses against those who returned to Rwanda. The first mass return scheduled for 16 July was cancelled.



Matthias Lüfkens and Stephen Smith, 'Rwanda: Refugees at the Heart of Controversy,' *Libération* (France) 12 August 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The UN Security Council yesterday asked all Rwandan parties to promote the 'rapid' return of refugees and displaced persons to the country to help resolve the country's current 'massive humanitarian crisis.' The repatriation of some 800,000 Rwandans from the Goma region, however, aroused concern and controversy among humanitarian organisations. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that there was "no question of requiring refugees to return" and that any decision to return should be "personal and voluntary." This reluctance, relayed by other NGOs, is based on rumours of abuses committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF, in power) against Hutu refugees, as well as reprisals committed against candidates for return by soldiers of the former army. As of today, 110,000 Rwandan refugees - around 10 percent of the refugee population in Goma - have returned to their country. Every day, some 5,000 set out on the road home, departing from the nine border stations in north-eastern Zaire... While the Security Council has just announced its support for a "very rapid" return of Rwandan refugees, several NGOs believe that for epidemiological reasons, rapid repatriation would unleash cholera, dysentery and, perhaps, typhus, which has not yet been diagnosed conclusively. In an aside, these NGOs also criticise UNHCR for "minimising abuses committed by the RPF," which recently took power in Kigali. These accusations were fueled when five Protestant ministers carried out a UNHCR-sponsored tour on Wednesday to "reassure" the refugees. Panos Moutmtzis, a UNHCR spokesman, denied that abuses committed by the RPF would be ignored in order to speed the Rwandans' return to their country. The Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) representative summarised the dilemma this way: "The only solution is for these people to go home, but there's no point in their going home dead."



Anne Le Coz, 'Rwanda: The Refugees' Impossible Return,' *Le Figaro* (France), 17 August 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Organised very quietly over the last several days, the first convoy of refugees scheduled to leave Zaire for Rwanda was cancelled yesterday morning following threats against those preparing to return. Seven trucks, chartered by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), crossed the border empty around 7:30 a.m. That day, 144 refugees from the Mugunga camp (15 kilometres north-west of Goma) were to have been transported to Kigali, the Rwandan capital. Most of those scheduled to return were

farmers who did not want to miss the harvest. Until now, refugees have been transported exclusively from Gisenyi (Rwanda), 3 kilometres from the Zairean border. Despite the discretion surrounding the operation's preparations, Mugunga camp 'leaders' - officials of the former Rwandan government - had spread false rumours that those preparing to return were agents of the RPF, now in power in Kigali. According to Panos Moutmtzis, UNHCR spokesman in Goma, the rumours even "called for killings." By common agreement, UNHCR and IOM decided to cancel the operation to avoid "risking the lives of refugees" and attacks on the trucks.

In mid-August, the departure of French soldiers from the 'safe humanitarian zone' by the end of the month was confirmed. Thousands of civilians left the zone for Bukavu.



Message from the Press Officer in Goma to the MSF Communication Departments, 11 August 1994 (in French). [D48](#)

Extract:

UNHCR estimates that Rwandans from the security zone crossed the border for Bukavu at a rate of 1,000 per hour. According to French soldiers, 1,000 people left today for Bukavu, while 700 left heading further west. The French soldiers believe that 800,000 people are waiting in the zone to go to Bukavu.



'The Third Exodus of Rwandan Refugees has Begun,' MSF France **Press release**, 13 August 1994 (in French). [D49](#)

Extract:

The lack of a political action in the Rwandan crisis, particularly sanctions against those responsible for genocide, has led to the third mass exodus of Rwandan refugees. After the exodus towards Tanzania in April and towards Goma over the last few weeks, it is today the displaced persons in the humanitarian safe zone that have started moving towards Zaire. This flight is orchestrated by the same leaders responsible for the genocide. Over the last few days, our teams in the zone (Kibuye, Gikongoro, Kaduha and Rukondo) have observed major population movements toward Cyangugu, encouraged by members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR). These teams will evaluate the current situation in this part of Rwanda.

If the international community does not act in the coming days to protect these populations, this third exodus could well have the same tragic consequences as prior ones.



Jean Hatzfeld, 'Prelude to a New Exodus in the Turquoise Zone,' *Libération* (France) 15 August 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Around 8,000 refugees crossed the border on Saturday, their loads and their children making them easy to spot. Some 12,000 probably crossed during the day on Sunday. The French command is relying on those numbers to minimise panic movements and to deny that the exodus has begun, contrary to an announcement by the NGOs, led by MSF, and UNHCR. The French soldiers say they have not yet observed any "panic flight" or exodus towards Zaire. The soldiers are correct. For now, the word "panic" does not apply. This event does not yet compare with the scenes of exhaustion along the Goma road. There are no bodies in ditches and no ghosts - only people walking slowly. But there are already thousands of them along the 160 kilometres separating Gikongoro and Bukavu. And when you ask where they are going, they all answer, "to Zaire." If you ask them if they know what awaits them in Zaire, they say they know there is nothing for them to eat there. Not everyone has decided to cross the river. They only say, "we're going to Zaire. We'll see what happens along the way." Zairean radio is broadcasting repeated calls for calm. It's no use. Bukavu, which already shelters 300,000 refugees, appears to be choking.

UNHCR and the aid organisations had difficulty responding to this flood of refugees around Bukavu.



'UNHCR warns of impending Bukavu Crisis,' UNHCR **Update**, 12 August 1994 (in English). [D50](#)

Extract:

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees warned Friday that the Rwandese refugee situation in Zaire's Bukavu region could turn into a catastrophe unless massive assistance is immediately mobilised in the area... South of Goma, UNHCR is still having difficulty looking for appropriate sites for about 320,000 refugees in Bukavu and does not have enough relief supplies for them. In addition, UNHCR is struggling to care for some 150,000 Rwandese and 100,000 Burundi refugees in Uvira, near Bukavu... If an exodus happens, the situation in the Bukavu region could become worse than what is now happening in Goma.

At a Press conference on 17 August, MSF France and MSF Belgium confirmed that a new exodus of Rwandan refugees to Bukavu was underway. [V9](#)



'Rwanda: The Third Exodus is Confirmed,' MSF Belgium and MSF France **Press release**, 17 August 1994 (in French). [D51](#)

Extract:

As French troops prepare to withdraw from the Rwanda security zone, tens of thousands of people are leaving Rwanda to take refuge in Zaire's Bukavu region. Endless streams of refugees are heading from the cities of Kibuye and Gikongoro towards Cyangugu, Rwanda to cross the border and reach Bukavu, Zaire. Every hour more than 800 people are making their way towards the Zairean border. Around 20,000 people reached Bukavu in the last three days. Five thousand more are in Cyangugu and 15,000 are en route from Gikongoro... The city of Bukavu is already congested. The new arrivals are replacing the refugees transferred to sites outside the city. In addition, the sites set up around Bukavu will soon be swamped. The new sites that UNHCR identified for new refugees are inaccessible for logistical reasons. In the city, the refugees' condition is deteriorating. At the Médecins Sans Frontières clinic, the staff sees a marked decline in the health of the people. Endemic dysentery is increasing. Furthermore, the new arrivals show signs of malnutrition.

On 19 August, MSF Belgium and MSF France publicly criticised the French army's withdrawal. [V10](#)



'French Troops Leave Rwandan with Chaos in their Wake,' MSF Belgium and MSF France **Press Release**, 19 August 1994 (in French). [D52](#)

Extract:

As French troops pull out of the 'safe humanitarian zone,' tens of thousands of people - certain to reach hundreds of thousands soon - are fleeing in fear for Zaire. They are victims of an active FAR propaganda campaign... As French troops move out, their departure corresponds with what promises to be a tragic exodus. Although it provided six weeks of respite, the French operation is reaching the end of its mandate without having made any progress in the zone, a veritable sanctuary for ongoing militia violence and FAR propaganda.

Faced with this situation, Médecins Sans Frontières is shocked by the Security Council's failure to provide for the satisfactory replacement of departing French troops. While the French operation may have been a media success, it must be seen as an empty gesture without any impact on the Rwandan population's future.



Corine Lesnes, 'Humanitarian Organisations Are Pessimistic,' *Le Monde* (France), 22 August 1994 (in French). [D53](#)

Extract:

Humanitarian organisations had their doubts when French troops entered Rwanda, and today they are questioning the soldiers' departure. Aware of the contradiction, they cannot call for continuation of the Turquoise plan, but emphasise that the operation's end will "destabilise" the situation. For Médecins Sans Frontières, the French forces are leaving chaos behind. According to the organisation, humanitarian aid in Bukavu is inadequate to respond to a possible exodus, while 500 refugees continue to die daily in Goma.

On 21 August, the last French soldiers left the Turquoise Zone. Between 300,000 and 400,000 Rwandan refugees arrived in the Bukavu region.



Jean Hatzfeld, 'Tragic Scenes of Exodus at the Zairean-Rwandan Border: France Leaves, Fear Remains,' *Libération* (France) 22 August 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Operation Turquoise ended yesterday when French troops left the humanitarian zone in south-western Rwanda. Deprived of their protection, thousands of Hutu refugees rushed towards Zaire, whose border was partially open this weekend. UNHCR opened another reception camp in Bukavu. Humanitarian aid organisations denounced the UN's failure to prepare for the situation created by the end of Operation Turquoise at the conclusion of its Security Council mandate. Supported by the Zairean interior minister, the Bukavu governor also sounded the alarm by closing the border. He knows that the western organisations can no longer handle the flow of 15,000 to 20,000 Rwandans crossing the bridge every day. Small groups break off from the 10 km of road that crosses the city, sweep through neighbourhoods, crowd onto the smallest patch of sidewalk, embankment or alley, and slip beyond reach of any health or nutrition screening or monitoring. After exhausting their few foodstuffs, most rapidly weaken in the rain. Water and electricity services have already broken down. Schools are not functioning. The city could easily become a source of epidemic and a powder keg.

In Bukavu, as in Goma and Benaco, refugees as well as aid organisations were subject to intensifying violence

by former Rwandan leaders, their soldiers and militias, and by Zairean soldiers.



"Breaking the Cycle: MSF calls for action in the Rwandese refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire', MSF Holland **report**, 10 November 1994 (in English). [D54](#)

Extract:

On 22 August, 19 refugees were killed in Benaco camp because they were returning or suspected of returning to Rwanda... In Goma similar events were reported on 25 August when an alleged RPF spy was followed into a medical facility of Medicos del Mundo (MDM) in Mugunga camp. The medical personnel could do nothing but hand over the man to the crowd, paying the Rwandese military for their 'services'. One international medical agency reported fresh bodies in Mugunga camp every morning during September... On 29 August an MSF car was stopped and the radio and personal belongings of the two expatriates were stolen. On the same day a Canadian television crew was robbed of their equipment.



Each time I tried to speak to refugees in the camp and collect their stories, young Interahamwe immediately came over and the refugees would stop talking. They used to speak among themselves. They had a lot of bad faith towards MSF which started in Bukavu because it was there that we really began to push our message. They were the hardliners... in Bukavu it was horrible. There was a bad atmosphere among the refugees. There were refugees being killed left and right – all the worst Interahamwe were based in Bukavu. Everyone spoke about it. It was evident that the problems would start in Bukavu. Goma was much bigger, there were many more civilians. It was easier in Goma for the teams to see the good work they were doing compared with the bad. But in Bukavu, it was in your face, all the time.

Samantha Bolton, MSF International Press Officer for East Africa, 1994-1995 (in French).

On 25 August, UNHCR decided that it would no longer promote repatriation and publicly declared the camps in Zaire to be "in a virtual state of war" as a result of militia and FAR violence against the population and threats made against NGOs.



'Breaking the Cycle: MSF calls for action in the Rwandese refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire', MSF Holland **report**, 10 November 1994 (in English). [D54](#)

Extract:

In Goma UNHCR stopped encouraging voluntary repatriation after an incident which occurred on 23 August. A group of 200 to 300 people who were waiting to be transported along the road of Kibumba to return to Rwanda was attacked by the militia. As a result, several refugees got wounded.

The leaders choose the local staff to be hired by aid organisations. They selected 'politically reliable' individuals who propagated their deadly propaganda behind the cover of NGOs.



Corine Lesnes, 'Humanitarian Aid Workers' malaise,' **Le Monde** (France) 6 September 1994 (in French). [D55](#)

Extract:

Most humanitarian aid professionals... are disgusted at having to take part in the rehabilitation of executioners. Some of the killers are even found among their employees. One organisation, speaking on condition of anonymity to ensure that they don't find field volunteers "with a knife in the back" said that the organisation had to sack some medical assistants who had hoped to "finish the work against the Tutsis." The MSF team learned that one of its local staff, a Hutu considered to be pro-Tutsi, had received a threatening letter from other Rwandan health assistants.



'Weekly report 20/8 - 27/8 1994' from Ed Shenkenberg, security and protection monitor in Goma to Françoise Saulnier, MSF Kigali, 30 August 1994 (in English). [D56](#)

Extract:

It can be said that also among the local personnel working for the NGOs, people can be found who may have blood on their hands. Consequently, it could be discussed to encourage all NGOs and UNHCR to interview their local staff on their history.

The international Press began to lose interest in the refugees and reporters gradually began leaving the Goma and Bukavu regions.



Sitrep from MSF International Press Officer in East Africa to all communication departments, 26 August 1994 (in English). [D57](#)

Extract:

As you have seen on the news, the Rwandan story is almost over for the media. Everyone is leaving Bukavu and are now transiting in Kigali before packing up. The media still present here are the news wires - AP, AFP, Reuters - as well as VOA, The Daily Telegraph, The New York Times, and Libération and Le Monde also taking it easy in Kigali. In general there is very little interest in the latest humanitarian news. The UN says its operation is working wonders, so all journos are getting very bored. Their main interest is the political/reconciliation process with a few interested in following the security situation in Goma. So I pin my hopes on MSF and Amnesty, and will go on mission for the next interesting story, i.e. the deployment of NGO human rights observers in Rwanda in collaboration with the UN - a sort of historical first. You know that the UN has only money for 25 observers so far. Françoise Saulnier is back from the provinces tomorrow, so we expect to have something to say to journos about that human rights monitoring story early next week.

The September edition of the MSF Holland internal publication *Ins and Outs* contained Arjo Berkhout's article calling for MSF to withdraw from the Rwandan refugee camps. Arjo had resigned from MSF in Tanzania in early July.



Arjo Berkhout, 'Our aid is keeping criminal power structures intact', **Ins and Outs**, September 1994 (in English). [D58](#)

Extract:

It has also become clear that several mayors and other leaders within these communities organised the mass murders. And in the camps these leaders are reoccupying their old positions... This is even true within the health structures set up by MSF... I could no longer face this dilemma. It forced me to make a personal, clear choice. Upon my return from Tanzania, I rejected an invitation to go to Zaire, where the same dilemma is occurring on an even larger scale. As a final consequence, I handed in my resignation as a member of the field emergency team... But especially in such a dilemma we, as an independent organisation, must make a choice. By withdrawing from the camps in Tanzania, we would no longer open ourselves

to the risk of being used by criminal power structures, thus enforcing our advocacy activities.

Another article in the same issue described MSF Holland's advocacy strategy concerning the situation in the camps.



Anita Baars, Headquarters reaches boiling point', *Ins and Outs*, September 1994 (in English). [D59](#)

Extract:

Besides sending volunteers on missions, MSF is trying to alleviate the situation in crisis areas through an intensive advocacy policy, implemented by the Humanitarian Affairs department. Governments, the UN, and other organisations have been systematically bombarded with letters demanding explicit (security) measures in the refugee camps and in and around Rwanda... Advisers for the protection of the refugees were sent to Goma and Benaco to report on the security situation.

In the Press, MSF representatives continued to point out that the international community was much more concerned with cholera victims than by genocide victims and denounced the 'humanitarian' treatment of a political tragedy.



Corine Lesnes, 'Humanitarian Aid Workers' Malaise', *Le Monde* (France), 6 September 1994 (in French). [D55](#)

Extract:

There is another reason for this malaise, but it is difficult to discuss while the organisations continue to launch appeals to donors' generosity: the difference in the mobilisation in favour of victims of genocide and those of cholera. Cholera is a disease, Rony Brauman points out, "not an atrocity". The organisations have received significant support – 30 million Francs [€4.5 million] for MSF and 40 million [€6 million] for the French Red Cross. The cheques are sometimes accompanied by letters explaining, "doing this, I feel less alone". Motivated more generally by rights rather than pity, the 'humanitarians' regret that the international community is more sensitive to bodies suffering disease than by people beaten to death upon presentation of their identity card. They see this as another case of politicians abdicating their responsibilities. After all, treating a disease - a politically neutral event - does not require a moral choice. Former MSF President

Rony Brauman describes it as "ambulance-based morality." For him, the Rwandan affair is "not a humanitarian catastrophe but an absolute political tragedy."

Riots broke out in several camps on 2 September 1994, after the Zairean authorities announced that refugees would have to leave the country at the end of the month.



'Breaking the Cycle: MSF calls for action in the Rwandese refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire', **MSF Holland report**, 10 November 1994 (in English). [D54](#)

Extract:

On 2 September, the Zairean authorities announced following a cabinet meeting in Kinshasa, that the refugees should have left Zaire before the end of the month. The refugees believed that the aid agencies would terminate their activities over the weekend. Crowds started to demand their relief supplies.

The number of refugees registered for food distributions was exaggerated, leading to the diversion of significant quantities of aid. The leaders were violently opposed to UNHCR's efforts to conduct a census.



Sitrep from the MSF International Press Officer in East Africa, 29 August 1994 (in English). [D60](#)

Extract:

All sections out there agree we should try and get more press coverage of the following: as the numbers of refugees in Goma's refugee camps are still grossly overestimated, a lot of food is distributed but it continues to end up in the hands of the former bourgmestres of Rwanda and associated militia. The main complaint by the large majority of refugees is hunger, as the baddies get fat on food aid. Thursday 1st September would provide an ideal opportunity for UNHCR, which still has not registered refugees, to do so when it moves all the refugees from Kibumba camp into Katale. They could easily count and register while they truck them up north but are probably afraid of potential trouble and violence from the camp leaders. As you know, the other angle of the story is that the food distribution agencies (CARE and the Federation of the Red Cross) continue to channel their food through the former Rwandan administration.



Corine Lesnes, 'Humanitarian Aid Workers' Malaise,' *Le Monde* (France), 6 September 1994 (in French). [D55](#)

Extract:

Aid organisations are concerned to see reproduced in Zaire, as in Tanzania, the classic construction of what they call 'humanitarian sanctuaries', where under the cover of international aid, refugee camps serve as a rear base for movements that have not disarmed. UNHCR is contributing to the situation by relying on local leaders who exaggerate population numbers for food distributions. According to MSF president Philippe Biberson, the organisation estimates Goma camps' population at only 200,000, while distribution is carried out on the basis of lists that Hutu local officials drew up containing 500,000 names. "The Rwandans are the kings of the list," Biberson said sarcastically.

In early September, programme managers visiting teams in the field confirmed that MSF France wanted to limit operations to emergency refugee care. In mid-September, an MSF France team took charge of setting up an emergency camp at the Kamanyola site in the Bukavu region. But the team had to evacuate quickly when soldiers from nearby Burundi stepped up punitive forays. At the end of September, MSF France also took on the job of refugee settlement in the Kabira camp since no other organisation was in a position to do so.



Nicolas de Torrente, 'MSF Action in the Rwandan Crisis: A **Critical History**,' July 1995, (in French). [D6](#)

Extract:

The 'Bukavu strategy' was confirmed in early September during a visit from Brigitte Vasset and Martine Lochin. The decision was made to limit the MSF Bukavu mission as much as possible to the emergency phase, including refugee settlement in the camps. Barring unforeseen circumstances, MSF decided to disengage and to transfer activities to other NGOs by 1 November. The contract signed with UNHCR, which ran until October 31, confirmed that decision. [...] On 12 September, UNHCR began transferring refugees... to the new Kamanyola site south of Bukavu near the Burundian border. Given conditions at the site, MSF warned UNHCR that the situation would soon become uncontrollable. MSF took charge of providing water and screening arrivals, including measles vaccination. Despite the precarious conditions, more than 1,000 transfers daily were scheduled from Bukavu. The camp would experience serious security problems given its proximity to Burundi. Burundian soldiers stormed the site, and militias rapidly

established a stranglehold over the population. The situation rapidly became volatile. Riots occurred and the MSF team decided to evacuate. [...]

By late September, between 10,000 and 20,000 refugees remained in the city, mostly the weakest and most vulnerable people including widows with large families and unaccompanied children. This population was to be housed north of Bukavu, in Kabira, the last site opened by UNHCR. Although MSF France was not planning to commit to new camps, the group decided to undertake the settlement phase at Kabira given that no other organisation was ready, CONCERN had done a good job organising the camp, and it would take in the most medically vulnerable people. Everyone understood that this decision would extend MSF's stay in Bukavu by a month. The contract with UNHCR was prolonged until the end of November, with a possible extension.

On 23 and 24 September, the coordinators of all MSF sections in the Zaire and Tanzania camps met in Kigali to analyse the situation in the camps and review MSF's position.



Minutes of the MSF Regional Meeting on the Rwandan Crisis, 23-24 September 1994 (in French). [D61](#)

Extract:

Information exchange on the political-military situation: Goma ... the militias and the former regime's political-administrative leaders maintain their hold over the camp. The violence in the camps continues, both organised economic crime and political violence (settling of accounts with machetes in cases involving accusations of being an RPF agent, etc). Rumours, backed by disturbing events, suggest that an attack is being prepared for October 5-15 by the FAR with support from elite Zairean divisions and, possibly, French legionnaires.

Developments: French trucks are moving on the northern axis; Zairean Red Berets have arrived in the zone; FAR has left the Mugunga camp; influential traders linked to Mobutu have departed; former Belgian colonists are anxious; and Rwandan and Zairean carriers refuse to handle transport between Goma and Kigali. No anti-NGO, anti-MSF or anti-French feeling. Danger for the teams: being caught in a camp confrontation (no evacuation, only one access route and organised economic crime).

Bukavu: Tensions are quietening down in the city and the Zairean military authorities are making a show of force there. Militias are tightening their grip on the refugees and camps are increasingly militarised. At least one violent incident daily at each site. The militias run the new Kanganiro camp, which was visited by concerned Burundian soldiers. No rapprochement between Zaireans and FAR as in Goma. If

a FAR attack from Rwanda were to be anticipated, it would come from south of Bukavu (Shimanga training camp). Anti-MSF sentiment is subsiding; MSF previously thought to be responsible for refugee presence in Bukavu. Danger for the teams: same as in Goma. No valid protection/security entity - UNHCR ineffective and absence of blue helmets. UNHCR indicated it was negotiating with Kinshasa over the camps. That would certainly be a disaster...

Tanzania: Same issues as in Goma and Bukavu, but without the Zaireans... The control of the former regime's political-administrative leaders over the refugees is also strong here, but there is less open violence and no visible presence of armed militias in the camps. Nevertheless, each night 3-4 violent deaths occur, and unidentified trucks arrive in the camps... As for refugee security and protection in the camps, the Tanzanian police are ineffective and UNHCR has no resources - there is no security officer and only two protection officers.

Conclusion: We're seeing rising regional tensions and antagonisms; everything is connected; nothing is resolved; and the current situation is very unstable. We didn't need a meeting to reach that conclusion!

MSF Programs: try to identify the limits of MSF's Action in the Rwandan crisis:

Expatriate security is the only criterion that would bring MSF's activities to a sudden halt. Political limits currently visible, especially in Goma and Bukavu: the dilemma between humanitarian principles/medical ethics and the political reality of the use of humanitarian aid. In the emergency phase, humanitarian morality prevailed (cholera in Goma, abandonment of refugees in Bukavu), except in certain cases (FAR camp in Mugunga, Shimanga and Kanganiro camps in Bukavu). Currently, as the emergency eases, the position is that MSF should disengage as quickly as possible from a situation in which those responsible for the genocide are profiting from aid and where other NGOs are capable of providing assistance in MSF's place. This disengagement is underway in Goma, supported by MSF internal policy, which rejects missions focused exclusively on sanitation: the mission should be closed by the end of October. The Bukavu situation is more complicated: the settlement phase in the camps is not yet concluded. There are still vulnerable groups to deal with and there is a lack of competent NGOs to take over the camps. MSF is getting caught up in the whole system of middle-long term missions, but "above all, we do not want this to turn into 'Thailand II.'" (Sylvie). Political limits also exist in Rwanda, as shown by the RPF's behaviour towards its own population and the NGOs. Nonetheless, we're not there yet and disengagement is not justified...

Conclusion: Although our interventions are based on needs, we must retain a certain coherence in our criteria for engagement and disengagement across missions... We should avoid double standards in our actions. Our response to certain RPF practices in Rwanda should be comparable to our response to similar practices in Zaire.

Press/Public Relations: Everyone agrees on using journalists carefully. Prepared positions are preferred to spontaneous interviews. These positions should be common to all MSF sections (Goma model also applicable to Rwanda).

There was a mixed assessment of the work of the human rights 'observers' that MSF sent to Rwanda, Zaire and Tanzania in August to support the teams. The field coordinators asked that the project be placed under international coordination and that monitoring of human rights abuses be strengthened.



Minutes of the International Meeting of Directors of Operations on Rwanda, 5 October 1994 (in English). [D62](#)

Extract:

Views from the field:

There were differences of opinion from the field as to whether a particular person should be assigned to investigate and gather information on human rights...

Conclusion: It seemed that, in general, the teams in the field were not sure what the legal officers were there to do, or what was to be done with the information they collected: this has led to mistrust and difficulties of communication. It was agreed that the terms of reference should be reviewed explaining clearly the role of the legal officer. More stress should perhaps be put on the fact that their role is to train the coordinators on how to collect and pass on the relevant information: their role is one of technical assistance. Under no circumstances would these officers represent MSF before other agencies e.g. UNHCR: this is the role of the coordinator... The decision as to whether to continue having legal officers in the field in Rwanda and Zaire would be discussed after having received the comments and views of the international commission's visit.

In Rwanda, the new government increased its oversight of MSF teams. Forced population displacements and abuses by Rwandan Patriotic Army (APR) soldiers continued to weigh on the possibility of refugee repatriation.



Minutes of the MSF Regional Meeting on the Rwandan Crisis, 23-24 September 1994 (in French). [D61](#)

Extract:

Rwanda: ...growing desire by the government to control NGO activities. RPA strong-arm methods in the former

Turquoise zone; requisitioning of vehicles (MSF) and houses (ICRC) in Cyangugu; forced displacements of internally displaced persons (Runegera camp, Kibuye). UNAMIR falling into line with RPF official position that internally displaced persons must return to their homes; growing passivity in the face of security incidents (no investigation); high tolerance for RPF methods vis-à-vis displacements (official denial of MSF allegations of forced displacements in Kibuye). Danger for the teams: mines in Kigali, organised crime at night, and certainly some violent anti-French feeling if the FAR attack.



Sitrep from the MSF International Press Officer in East Africa, 27 September 1994 (in English). **D63**

Extract:

South-east Rwanda: rumours of incursions by former government troops in the south-east of Rwanda and also of RPA misbehaviour. The incidents are obviously creating a lot of insecurity. Killings have taken place, as a result people flee again to Tanzania at a rate of approximately one per day... Gikongoro: new info concerning the two incidents that took place on the night from 16 to 17 September and during which 6 persons were killed and two injured. Witnesses on the scene say that the assailants were dressed in uniforms... The house searches carried out by the RPA in this region caused some panic on Tuesday 20 but according to Major Plant, "everything's back to normal now". Then again on 23/9 2 persons killed and 4 injured by an RPA soldier, supposedly as a reprisal for killing his family. The MSF teams also report that on the same day an RPA soldier threw a grenade on the Gikongoro market place, injuring 4 people of which 2 severely. He was arrested. According to a local team member in the camp of Rukondo, 6 persons were lynched when going to the fields to harvest. Militia trying to destabilise the region or others? UNAMIR in Gikongoro told NGOs that they were not sure if they could guarantee their security in case of an attack. Kibuye: on September 7th, RPA demanded that the displaced population of Rubengera camp (according to MSF, 1,500 persons) leave the camp within the hour. RPA soldiers burnt down several grass huts to hasten the movement. RPA destroyed the latrines constructed by MSF. RPA also made people leave by force from the Rubengera college, where 500 displaced are staying. A similar scenario at Birambo, where less than 3,000 displaced are staying. ICRC confirmed these reports. We considered going to the press with these testimonies but agreed it would be more sensible to urge the government and UNAMIR to act or investigate these incidents. By informing the journalists we wouldn't accomplish anything except endangering our programs in the area.

Security continued to deteriorate in the camps around Goma and Bukavu. Troop movements were observed.



Minutes of telephone conversation between MSF Belgium and MSF France Programme managers, 22 September 1994 (in French). **D64**

Extract:

Alex [Parisel, Coordinator in Goma] called me regarding security concerns in Rwanda and neighbouring countries. A lot of information is coming in from Goma and has been forwarded by [...]. We don't know the sources. Security in Rwanda and neighbouring countries: (a) RPF moves: it appears that the RPF would like to move ahead to isolate ex-FAR officers. This is occurring in the Gisenyi/Ruhengeri region but may also be occurring in the Goma region (??). No further information on this subject. (b) according to [...], the FAR is reorganising vigorously and preparing to attack Rwanda from several peripheral locations (between 5 and 15 October, if not sooner): Goma-Bukavu-Benaco. There have allegedly been meetings of high-level FAR officials inside (and outside) these camps. The meetings appear to coincide with several events: the FAR is withdrawing from the camps; civilians are reportedly being recruited by force in the camps (especially in Goma); the préfets (Rwandan refugees in the camps) have asked UNHCR to speed the refugee return process (interpreted to mean infiltration and setting up of advance bases in Rwanda). (c) Zairean moves: Zairean authorities reportedly said that with the French army's help, they were going to (wanted to) move the ex-FAR to the (Zairean) interior... Mario expects the situation to deteriorate significantly in the coming weeks.

On 30 September in the Katala camp, the MSF Holland team treated nine Rwandan 'Scouts' injured by militiamen and evacuated them to hospital. One died as a result of his wounds. Twenty-nine others disappeared. Death threats were made against CARE staff, so all aid organisations evacuated the camp at UNHCR's request.



Minutes of the International Meeting of Directors of Operations on Rwanda, 5 October 1994 (in English). **D62**

Extract:

The refugee camp of Katala is under the responsibility of UNHCR. CARE is covering the management of the camp (food distribution, plastic sheeting) and MSF/H is covering the medical needs. In order to cover for the absence of a law and order system in the camp, UNHCR assigned the responsibility of traffic and crowd control to "Scouts" (adolescent Rwandan refugees supplied with whistles). The "Scouts" have been in place for several months now. As in the other camps, there is strong presence of Hutu militias whose leaders still hold influence over the com-

munity. These leaders increasingly felt the role of the "Scouts" as a threat to their authority. On Friday 30th September there was a violent clash between the "Scouts" and the militia. There was one death and 8 wounded. The wounded (both "scouts" and militia) were taken to the MSF/H IPD for treatment, followed by a large, agitated crowd. Once the patients were stabilised they were transferred to a hospital.

The "Scouts" were very afraid after the incident and UNHCR advised the NGOs to evacuate, which they all did. UNHCR returned in two cars together with police. They saw some 300 people marching and singing "in very high spirits". The leaders of the militia told them "We are in charge of the camp now". UNHCR advised the NGOs not to return for the moment and started daily meetings with the leaders to find out who they were and what they wanted (representatives of the Zairean authorities were also present). They were told that the leaders wanted to organise security in the camps themselves: this UNHCR refused. UNHCR laid down certain criteria that were to be respected if the NGOs were to return:

- the laws of Zaire were to be obeyed;
- a Zairean magistrate was to investigate into the above incident (involving murder)

The above points having been accepted (the NGOs are desperately needed), UNHCR advised the NGOs to go back with a skeleton team only i.e. MSF H covering emergency medical care only. The aim of sending only skeleton teams is to keep up pressure on the leaders to respect the criteria: if they are not respected the NGOs will again withdraw. Registration of the refugees is to start on 9 October. Solidarity between the NGOs and UNHCR was difficult. On one side CARE is fed up with the situation (they are particularly targeted because of their role) and on the other, Concern is very worried about the consequences of the NGOs pulling out (everyday costs lives).



Summary of a meeting at UNHCR regarding incidents at Katala - from MSF France/Goma to Paris Programme Manager, 1 October 1994 (in French). [D65](#)

Extract:

Wednesday, 28 September, tensions erupted in the Katala camp between a band of militiamen and a group of 'Scouts'. The tensions stemmed from a decision by UNHCR, CARE and the refugee social committee to give the Scouts responsibility for directing traffic in the camps. Thursday 29th, the leader of the militia gang was found dead. Tension mounted and fights occurred between the Scouts and the militia. The militia captured some Scouts. UNHCR and Zairean police negotiated with the leaders, particularly the national president of Jeunesse Rwandaise (Rwandan Youth), and managed to recover four Scouts - two men and two women. At the end of the day on Thursday, a rumour spread that an American had paid the Scouts in dollars to kill the militia leader. Friday morning the militia went into action and tensions mounted. There were rumours of

a black-list which supposedly contained the names of two, then four and, finally, seven expatriates. At 13.20, CARE decided to evacuate. At 14.00, UNHCR recommended that all expatriates leave Katala. All the organisations evacuated. A meeting between UNHCR and the North Kivu governor is scheduled for Saturday morning, which the heads of the NGOs concerned were invited to attend. UNHCR recommended the NGOs not return to Katala before Saturday's meeting with the governor. CARE and OXFAM are relatively close to UNHCR's position. CONCERN thinks the evacuation was unjustified. MSF Holland has not spoken up but tends to agree with CONCERN. UNHCR is calling attention to the need for blue helmets in the camps.

In the meantime, the coordinator of the MSF France programme in Goma called the programme manager in Paris to report that the entire team was disgusted with the situation in the camps.



One day we were in a meeting. Marianne Bollaert, the coordinator in Goma at the time, called us. We asked her, "What about such and such problem? What are we doing in such and such camp? Are we going to start building the latrines again?" and other work-related stuff like that. Marianne told us "Enough is enough." She speaks her mind, to say the least. We asked her, "What's wrong Marianne?"

"It stinks here..."

"What stinks?"

She started to tell us, "They control everything. They make the laws, they take advantage of everything..." They were the perpetrators of the genocide. We looked at each other. It had been a long time since we had talked about it, but we were not surprised. The problem presented itself in exactly the same way as in Tanzania, but it took Marianne's phone call for us to stop and talk about it.

Dr. Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Programme Manager (in French).



I was in Paris and it was a Saturday when the team called and the Goma coordinator said, "We need to talk to you, to the Operations Manager and to Pécoul." Bernard [Pécoul], Philippe [Biberson] and Brigitte [Vasset] were there, and we were all listening. The coordinator said, "Listen, we have to discuss this seriously, because we don't really see why we're here. We want to re-open the discussion. This can't go on." The team on location

felt that nothing else could be done in these camps and that they were being manipulated from all sides. It was the announcement from the field that started the ensuing discussion.

[...], MSF MSF France Emergency cell (in French).

On 30 September 1994, the MSF France board of directors discussed the situation in the Zairean and Tanzanian camps and how MSF might best take a position on this issue.



Minutes of the MSF France Board Meeting, 30 September 1994 (in French). [D66](#)

Extract:

The Goma refugee count must be revised downward. There are some 300,000 refugees; the number never reached the 1,200,000 announced by UNHCR... On the medical front, the situation has improved with respect to mortality rates, which are between 3 and 6 deaths per 10,000 persons per day. Nevertheless, these figures remain alarming. Fighting to defend their territory, the 80 NGOs present have not yet deployed all the medical services. It's appalling. Rumours are swirling on the political front (though we have few testimonies) about corruption among the leaders involved in food distribution and genocidaires helping the FAR prepare their revenge. They're enrolling and training youths from 10 to 20 years old in all the camps. Incidents are increasing. Today these incidents compelled the NGOs to evacuate the Katala camp. Rumours are circulating about FAR preparations for an attack around 15 October but we don't know where or exactly when. None-theless, the rumours all report the same thing. Humanitarian aid is still helping the FAR and militias are becoming stronger and are getting back on their feet. Violence is increasing in the camps. Around five people die every night (assassinated) in the Benaco and Lumasi camp, which makes an average of 150 deaths per month. The teams are increasingly worried. In Zaire, we're on track to leave Goma, where we were unable to forge a real medical mission - the work focused instead on sanitation, water and latrines. The Katala camp is closed to us but has the most difficult situation and highest death rates. In Bukavu, the new sites that UNHCR found were immediately overrun by people other than the ones that UNHCR wanted to install there. The only people left in the city are the wounded and invalids, and the city resembles an open-air hospital with high mortality rates. The refugees have blended in with the Zaireans, which makes the work difficult. Politically and programme-wise, we cannot do what we want... We're opening emergency programs that we transfer to other NGOs, but since they don't do a good job, we are obliged to take them back. We're having problems with the Zairean authorities, which are trying to extort the teams. In Kashusha, a paramilitary

organisation was set up to provide security in the camp; even the ex-FAR supposedly offered to handle security... Further information from Jean-Hervé [Bradol, programme manager] on Benaco: the situation regarding abuses has improved markedly in the last three months, especially after statistics and distribution were revised and the camp leader left. But there has been no progress since then. Furthermore, UNHCR has hired suspect Rwandan security teams. There are only 20 Tanzanian policemen for 350,000 refugees. There are not enough UNHCR protection officers: two people for two camps. UNHCR has ignored our comments. Regarding sanitary conditions, the site is congested, with fewer than 10 square metres per resident. The death rate is 4 per 10,000 per day. Our efforts to split up the sites for security and health reasons have not been successful...

Philippe Biberson: We will have to take a position on our presence in the Goma camps. A common position will be discussed at the international level during the operations meeting on Wednesday. The question we face in taking a position is how to do it - with or without program interruptions or withdrawing from a certain number of places.

Bernard Pécou: UNHCR's position regarding the camps is not viable. The numbers have been inflated but UNHCR continues to use them. They're not putting enough pressure on the Tanzanian and Zairean governments to improve camp security. They accept that whatever is distributed in the camps will be handed out exclusively by the leaders. In the meantime, there has still been no census in the camps (10 weeks after the refugees' arrival)... We thus have a duty to continue pressuring UNHCR, but also to go further. We have to appeal to governments but also to the public. We've got to use the threat of withdrawal from the camps to pressure UNHCR. They would be in a really bad position if MSF, with its high profile, were to speak out strongly. They're in a very awkward position with respect to their mandate. We have to lobby and speak out. Our response must be measured and nuanced. We have to think about the impacts, avoid spreading rumours and be very demanding with respect to our information networks.

In Tanzania, the systems of refugee registration and aid distribution served to strengthen the leaders' control over the camps. Security incidents multiplied. Militia groups were formed and trained.



Message from MSF France coordinator in Ngara (Tanzania) to MSF France desk, 4 October 1994 (in English). [D67](#)

Extract:

The control of the population by the leaders is very obvious in the camps from administrative procedures to security issues. Large-scale diversions of food and non-food items are not apparent since all distributions of

food and non-food items are supervised by international NGOs and are undertaken at the family level. However, a taxation system of food and local staff salaries is known to exist in the camp through which the leaders profit. We do not think the issue of aid diversion and access to services in the Ngara camps are as relevant as perhaps elsewhere, but it is important to recognise that the hold of the leaders is strong enough to ensure compliance to this system of taxation.

The security issue on Thursday also clearly illustrates the support and influence the leaders have over the population. The newly-appointed prefecture head from the district of Kibungo was arrested by the Tanzanian police, and within 10 minutes of his arrest crowds of people armed with machetes were gathering. UNHCR staff involved the other commune leaders to help calm the crowd, which successfully worked until the Tanzanian police fired tear gas at the crowd and their guns into the air...

3. MSF "parole": Just so that you know, the local opinion of MSF's previous moral stand on assisting suspected criminals in Benaco was seen to be totally compromised by the decision to work without question in Zaire, and thus MSF is locally accused of inconsistency. In terms of the consequences of speaking out, all the refugees have an excellent information system and will know as soon as something is stated in the press. In general, statements made locally would probably have stronger repercussions than those issued from France... The security conditions in the camps remain precarious although there are no direct threats to expatriates. Spontaneous incidents which quickly mobilise the crowds are the greatest threat to safety of expatriates, and evacuation routes from the camps are insufficient and unsafe (especially from Benaco).



Minutes of the International Meeting of Directors of Operations on Rwanda, 5 October 1994 (in English). [D62](#)

Extract:

Benaco and Lumasi, Ngara district, Tanzania... The camps are very organised through bourgmestre structures. There was an efficient registration carried out at the beginning of July, and since then there has been systematic monitoring. Once the new arrivals are registered they are sent to a sector of their community. The system has the advantage that the aid is well distributed, but the disadvantage that it puts the old leaders in a position of power. There is currently an epidemic of dysentery... Security incidents are mainly directed at UNHCR and are politically related, rather than related to lack of food, etc. The figures on the number of violent deaths per week vary: according to UNHCR, 5 per week, according to the community health workers, 20-60 per week. There are rumours that people are actively being prevented from returning to Rwanda. There were road blocks on the road to Rwanda. At one point the number of new arrivals to the camp went down to 2,000 per week: this coincided with the RPF preventing

people from leaving the country. MSF Spain reported that around 150 people in uniform had been marching and chanting through the camp at 11.30 this morning. It is thought that some people come to Benaco expressly to have the status of being a soldier. There is no forced recruitment going on as there are enough volunteers.

On 5 October, the operations directors decided to send a three-person team, called the Troika, into the field to evaluate the situation in the Zairean and Tanzanian camps. Bernard Pécoul, MSF France's executive director, went to the camps in the Gikongoro region of south-western Rwanda (the former safe humanitarian zone) and Bukavu. Josep Vargas, MSF Spain's executive director, went to Tanzania, and Alain Destexhe, secretary-general of MSF International went to Goma. A summary report would be drafted.



'T.D.R. [Term of Reference] Mission to Zaire, Rwanda and Tanzania', **Annex to Minutes** of the International Meeting of Directors of Operations on Rwanda, 5 October 1994 (in English). [D68](#)

Extract:

Purpose of Mission

Given the most recent events in the refugees camps in Tanzania and Zaire, i.e. the deteriorating security situation for refugees and humanitarian workers, MSF needs to define criteria when to withdraw its presence and on when to go public. Relevant to this question is of course the effectiveness of our work (coverage); do we still reach the most vulnerable with our aid?

1. Required information for the mission to formulate advice:

- Basic, general information:
- utilisation of aid, deployment of agencies, overlap etc...
- 'military' information: location of training camps, active recruitment in the camps
- security situation in camps and Rwanda proper: no. of deaths/wounded; who are the leaders
- protection issues: number of protection officers and their role, policy of UNHCR, results so far

2. Criteria to withdraw and go public:

- we do not reach vulnerable groups
- open human rights violations
- MSF becomes a target or a 'hostage' of the situation
- Clear diversion of aid to military system in support of remilitarisation

- (guerrilla) war resumes from camps into Rwanda

- obvious military (training) activities in camps

3. Consultation with field staff and their coordinators

A) The mission will:

- 1) Give its views on how effective MSF operational input

has been (coverage, reach of most vulnerable groups, coordination with UNHCR and other NGOs)

2) Give its view on whether MSF runs the risk of supporting a military system in the camps and if so, how to avoid such assistance

3) give its views on how effective MSF advocacy has been thus far and how to continue

4) give criteria for when MSF should consider withdrawing from the camps

B) Reporting and communication

1) Meeting with coordinators 24 October 1994 in Kigali

2) The mission will prepare a summary document and recommendations within 48 hours after return from the field. A meeting with the desks should take place within 4 days of return.

3) information gathered by the various MSF protection (field) officers (written info, reports) will be used as basis. This info will be made available to MSF International before the departure of the mission.

4) No public statement by whatever means will be made by the mission. In case of sudden events which would make a statement necessary, the European desks and operation directors must be consulted first.

On 11 October, Hanna Nolan from MSF Holland's humanitarian affairs department sent a memo to the teams in the field to help them prepare for their meeting with the Troika members. [D69](#)



Hanna Nolan, 'Meeting in Kigali on Friday 15 October 1994' **memo** to MSF Holland teams in Kigali, Goma and Benaco (in English).

Extract:

Herewith some thoughts on issues which may be raised during the meeting between Josep Vargas, Bernard Pécoul, Alain Destexhe, Dominique Martin and the coordinators of all sections in Kigali this Friday...

II. Should we continue our operations?

A number of criteria which have been put forward so far to assess whether or not to continue our operations:

a) MSF's giving of humanitarian relief is not reaching the most vulnerable and most in need any more

b) We support a military system and our support has more negative than positive side effects.

c) Our advocacy is no longer effective and we cannot come up with any new advocacy initiatives

A number of arguments in favour of continuing our operations:

a) Our advocacy initiatives have not been exhausted. We can still step up our lobbying initiatives within the UN system and for that we also need now a public document on the situation in the camps. Furthermore, being optimistic we would even say that our advocacy may be

gaining some effect. For example the idea of an international police force is now also supported by UNHCR and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Yet we MUST collect more data to support our conclusions that humanitarian relief is being abused, that the security situation in the camps is deteriorating etc... because we cannot prove anything at the moment.

b) We still reach the most vulnerable and, if we do not believe we can reach them adequately, the medical department and the desk still have ideas to redirect the emphasis of our operations to benefit the most vulnerable.

c) By being present we can advocate and be witness on behalf of those in need. If we leave, it is our last step and we have nothing to report any more to the outside world.

d) Although here it concerns a genocide, MSF has worked in situations in camps where people were present who had committed serious violations of HR. Making a selection to whom to give or not give aid is not possible. We are not judges nor do we have the evidence.

III. Conditions for continuing/recommendations to be put forward publicly.

a) An international police force in Ngara and Goma should assist the local police (Tanzanian/Zairean). The international police force could probably be most effective in training the local police, setting up an effective program to patrol the camps, supervise the activities of the local police, etc... They should not themselves be directly involved in law and order control. Properly trained local police should be visible and present in the camps.

b) The UN should send human rights monitors to Rwanda and also to the camps. These monitors should report about security incidents and human rights violations to UNHCR and the relevant UN bodies and make recommendations as to what steps the UN needs to take to tackle these problems.

c) Smaller camps so as to reduce the influence of the leaders on the distribution of humanitarian aid.

d) Registration should take place as soon as possible (Goma) with as main aim ensuring that all refugees have access to humanitarian relief. The distribution of humanitarian relief should be supervised by independent bodies and as much control as possible should be exercised.

e) Disarmament should be done by national police.

f) The UN should now act quickly and follow the advice of its own experts (commission of experts and the special rapporteur) to extend the mandate of the ad hoc tribunal for the former Yugoslavia to Rwanda so that those suspected of having been involved in the genocide can be brought to justice according to internationally accepted norms for a fair trial.

The international community should give aid and expertise for the reconstruction of the judicial system in Rwanda to enable trials of those involved in the genocide and other grave breaches of humanitarian law.

IV. Our questions to you...

b) we do not have hard facts and figures at this stage on the following issues:

- humanitarian aid is being abused/manipulated
- the relationship between the misuse of humanitarian aid and malnutrition

- do all refugees have access to humanitarian aid?
- amount of aid which disappears and has this affected the nutritional status of the most vulnerable?
- militarisation
- are threats/security incidents to refugees/local staff/expats organised and planned or incidental?

To write a credible report, we would need facts and figures regarding the above.

In mid-October, UNHCR continued its resettlement of Bukavu refugees in new camps, which soon fell under the control of militias.



Minutes of the meeting of the MSF France Programme manager in Paris with Alain, a physician returned from Bukavu, 14 October 1994 (in French). [D70](#)

Extract:

Bukavu: ...UNHCR transported the refugees under unacceptable conditions, cramming them into dump trucks. We have seen worse, when Rwandans had to travel in containers...

Kashusha (60,000 refugees)... The Rwandan militias have tight control over the camp. They've set up a prison and a tribunal... "Order reigns in Kashusha..." The camp leaders direct the militias. For now, their only weapons are wooden clubs. Refugees have been lynched. At the hospital, we took in people with machete wounds. At present the militias have not targeted expatriates. They have even suggested to us that they should handle hospital security. We declined the offer. In case of problems, it would be very difficult to evacuate the camp. The camp is a real snare.

On 14 October, at the end of the Troika's tour, its members met in Kigali with all the MSF coordinators in the region to discuss the situation in the camps and the position MSF might take. At the end of the discussion, the decision was made to spend the next six weeks trying to convince the international community of the gravity of the situation and the need to act. At the end of that time, an inter-section meeting would be held to assess whether there had been positive developments and, if necessary, prepare to withdraw. The summary report following the Troika field visit would provide information and a basis for reflection.



'Summary report on the International Council's Visit to the Rwandan Refugee Camps,' 17 October 1994 (in French). [D71](#)

Extract:

The situation in the camps

In light of developments in the camps on questions of health as well as of the leaders' control, MSF must examine its involvement and take a stand... Massive international assistance has undoubtedly limited the consequences, in terms of mortality, of the massive exodus. Nevertheless, the health situation remains precarious and there are still significant needs.

As several coordinators have emphasised, the situation in the camps is not exceptional in terms of the manipulation of aid and the control of political-administrative leaders. That's not the real problem. Rather, there is sufficient evidence that the same people who perpetrated the genocide in Rwanda are running the camps, using them in one way or another to establish their legitimacy. It is the question of genocide and the prior government's responsibility that must be at the centre of the debate. For NGOs, particularly MSF, the instrumentalisation of aid by the leaders raises the question of manipulation...

What role for MSF?... MSF's possible departure from all the camps was the subject of many conversations. What emerged from the discussion was that no one expects to leave the camps suddenly tomorrow, and that opinions on the issue vary across sections and individuals. However, the discussion did result in consensus on the need to present MSF's possible departure as a final action.

What Should Our Strategy Be? MSF was not slow to denounce the genocide and those responsible for it. However, the international community will gradually forget (if not intentionally neglect) the genocide, and the génocidaires will manipulate the aid. We're also faced with a refugee population held hostage and the unease, clearly and justly articulated, of many in MSF. So we need a breakaway strategy. This is not just about refining our analyses or strengthening our critique. We have to find approaches and a new process. The following strategy was adopted in that spirit:

a) faced with the impunity of those responsible for genocide, we must: denounce the international community's failure to respond appropriately (desire/will to judge those guilty) – denounce the farce of the human rights delegates in Rwanda – develop a pressure campaign targeting UN member states and agencies – support the human rights organisations – push the press to investigate what is happening in the camps – alert and mobilise political leaders.

b) faced with aid diversion, we must: demand that censuses be conducted; carry out food basket monitoring; put pressure on those NGOs (Caritas) that participate in the diversion (as in Tanzania); improve targeting of our activities to vulnerable groups; reduce the currently exces-

sive level of assistance in some camps; conduct a public information campaign.

c) faced with security problems, we must: urge UNHCR to assume its full responsibilities; urge the UN system and member states to react to this problem (security forces); pressure put on the governments of Zaire, Tanzania, Burundi.

These actions should be taken both in the field and at headquarters.

Follow-up:

teams will receive reports as quickly and frequently as possible

regular monitoring will be carried out in coordination with the different sections

a summary of progress on these actions will be conducted six weeks after the meeting at the latest.



Ed Schenkenberg, **Commentary** on summary report, Humanitarian Affairs Department of MSF Holland, 21 October 1994 (in English). [D72](#)

Extract:

Upon the basis of the present arguments, MSF Holland does not envisage a withdrawal. Only if the absence of international action leads to the deterioration of the situation of the most vulnerable and we have evidence that their situation is being manipulated by the leaders, we may envisage a withdrawal.



They brought all of us together which was excellent. We were treated like our opinion really mattered.

This initiative to debate the subject together was important and interesting because it became clear that we all felt uncomfortable about what we were doing, and all of us thought it was more or less unacceptable, but the division came over what we should do about it. There were big debates on different levels but one of the biggest was over impact versus duty. To me it seemed like MSF Holland wanted absolutely to maximise the impact of leaving and therefore they needed to collect more information to produce documents like 'breaking the cycle'. We debated whether leaving the camps and going public was more about the impact this might achieve, or more about our responsibility for what was happening in the camps. Were we more concerned about what we were doing or what we could speak about? It was a big debate which I thought was interesting because, of course, you can never control the impact of your message... anyway headquarters was quite pushy. I think Marianne from Goma was fairly convinced by that stage that we should leave. I was new in my post, new in MSF, so was mostly listening. I was receptive to the arguments but really had not contemplated pulling out.

It was that meeting that for me was a watershed, listening to everybody. It was as much the weak arguments that some had for staying as the strength of the arguments Bernard and Alain had for leaving that convinced me that we should leave. Sometimes listening to the reasons for staying, I thought 'this is absurd compared to what we are doing here and what we are contributing to'. So at the end of the meeting the decision was made. We all had the same diagnosis but the decision was a compromise to stay a bit longer to fully document what was happening for the next six weeks. Then we were to make a decision on the basis of that. I agreed with this approach.


Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania, Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).




Around October 15th, we had a regional coordination meeting in Kigali. Bernard Pécoul [MSF France General Director] and Alain Destexhe [MSF International General Secretary] tried really hard to convince the heads of missions of the other sections that MSF France's viewpoint was valid, i.e., "It's ethically unacceptable to work with those who commit genocide. We must pull out, regardless of the consequences." You could say that it is linked to the development of my personal maturity vis-a-vis humanitarian action, but I have the feeling that at that moment we were faced with the dilemma of punishing the innocent for the mistakes of the guilty. In camps with 400,000 refugees, there could be some 50,000 Interahamwe, yet it was very difficult to completely understand why we had to make a decision and punish people. It's still being debated. But at the time it was even more shocking because it was a new concept for me. We had already been confronted with the situation. For me, the dilemma was more about dealing with the situation than pulling out. I understood what the problem was, but how were we going to handle it? When we were given the option of withdrawal, I was better able to understand the international dimensions of the situation and the responsibility of other international players, and how we wanted to call their attention to it. The discussion was powerful and interesting. I vividly remember Bernard Pécoul and Dominique Martin's discourse strategies. Sometimes they seemed formulaic, caricatural, such as, "when I realise that we are supporting people who are committing genocide, I can no longer stand to look myself in the mirror. I look at my face, and I see an accomplice to genocide." It's not quite that extreme! It was a very interesting discussion. In the end we came to an agreement. The push for standards always came from the instinctive reactions and the clear vision of the French and the Dutch. "We need indicators, we're going to try to see if we can push from the inside in order to change the situation." The French said, "Ok, let's define just how far we are willing to go." We established time frames for each course of action. We told ourselves, "we have one week to define the stages of development. Afterwards, we will have a month or two to see how things are progressing, and then, towards

the end of November, around the third or fourth week, we can have another meeting and we will all pull out together.

Dr. José Antonio Bastos, MSF Spain Coordinator in Tanzania, July 1994 to July 1995 (in French).


 *Basically, Destexhe was the ideological driving force of the operation, and Bernard was the operational, practical and concrete force. I thought that they had come on an evaluation mission to find out what needed to be done, but they had actually decided long before that departure was necessary. The Kigali meeting was just an attempt to get this choice endorsed and to make sure that everyone agreed. The problem was that there was an imbalance of power – the heads of mission did not have the calibre to stand up to Bernard Pécoul, who was sure of his arguments, determined in his convictions, and very insistent. In the end, the meeting in Kigali more or less determined that we had to leave. However, we could clearly see that there was no real agreement with the Dutch and the Belgians, who could not make decisions about the situation without the consent of their headquarters. The international mission was so biased that it was clear that people like Mario Goethals, the Operations Director at the time, were not going to agree with the decision. I had seen the light ever since Bernard's visit to Tanzania [in June]. I took Bernard very seriously and generally agreed with his arguments, plus I had seen what went on in Tanzania. I had not been to Goma at that time and I didn't really have an opinion. For the most part I agreed with Bernard, mostly because he had impressed me. His arguments were strong. I was not at all involved in this decision. The MSF Holland Heads of Mission did not see the issue in the same way. They tried to explain their criteria; for them, medical needs were the priority, and women and children were the ones receiving medical care. We did not provide food aid, thus we were not really supporting the perpetrators of the genocide, and so forth. Clearly, they had their reasons, but they couldn't defend them when confronted with Bernard. I remember an extremely biased meeting- it was not an exchange of ideas. And then we tried to reach a consensus. This left me feeling that the Dutch and the Belgians did not have any official representation. In my opinion, the Belgians had been ordered, more or less, to disregard what we were telling them.*

Nicolas de Torrente, MSF France administrator in Tanzania, November 1993 to June 1994 then MSF France Coordinator in Rwanda, August 1994 to March 1995 (in French).

 *We assembled all of the coordinators from the Kigali zone to decide where we all stood. And it was turbulent, people were already arguing. Mario Goethals*

had analysed the situation very well. He was pretty much convinced but things didn't go well at all with Alain Destexhe, although he basically agreed with the situation. It was really a mess. There were too many people. We told ourselves that we would give ourselves five or six weeks, and that at the end of November, we would take the decision to denounce the situation and leave. But the decision was already clear: when you denounce, you leave. Those five weeks were supposed to give us time to prepare ourselves to make a decision. The emergency was over in Tanzania but was far from over in the other camps. In Bukavu the refugees were dropping like flies. The team in Bukavu, who had no problem analysing the situation, said "If we leave today, we're going to let civilian populations perish". It wasn't as crazy in Bukavu as it was in Goma. I hadn't personally seen the Goma circus, but I imagined it. Bukavu wasn't like that. It was mayhem in many of the camps, and so people were saying, "if we want to be coherent, we need to continue emergency action." So, at the end of the meeting, we assumed that the evidence would be presented at the end of November and that the teams would subsequently pull out in the following weeks or months.

Dr. Bernard Pécoul, MSF France General Director (in French).

 *For me, MSF had to withdraw, it was obvious. We had actually discussed it at length with everyone in Kigali. Although it was a legitimate withdrawal, we were going to examine it with a list of criteria that had been established in Kigali, in order to see if there had been any positive or negative developments. Everyone in Kigali was saying that if the situation did not improve, we were going to withdraw. There was no deadline, time-wise, but there was a progress deadline with a constant analysis of the situation's evolution and reports stating that if the situation didn't improve, something had to be done, and indeed, make a statement by leaving. We didn't all agree amongst ourselves, but everyone agreed with the decision. It was afterwards that everything fell apart.*

Dr. [...] MSF Belgium Programme manager then Director of Operations (in French).

When he returned from his Troika mission, MSF International's General-Secretary informed the press of his concerns about the situation in the camps and called for the leaders to be removed from the camps in order to face trial.



Interview with Alain Destexhe, *Le Soir* (Belgium), 20 October 1994 (in French). [D73](#)

Extract:

Having returned from the Goma camps, Alain Destexhe is worried about the nasty turn of events there and the implications for Africa's Lakes Region. Today, Rwandan refugees in Zaire are prisoners of their former authorities. Those leaders control the camp organisation, food distributions and the population. This gives them more power than crate loads of weapons. The refugees have no choice. Those guilty of wrongdoing support the leaders. The others are held hostage, with neither the means nor the right to speak out, because the Rwandan administrative structure has moved to Goma.

In a Press release on 21 October, UNHCR spoke of its concerns regarding deteriorating security conditions in the refugee camps and denounced the FAR's threatening presence, the leaders' grip on the population, and the terror inflicted upon refugees preparing to repatriate.



'Security conditions deteriorate in camps for Rwandese refugees,' **UNHCR Press Release**, 21 October 1994 (in English). [D74](#)

Extract:

The threatening presence and activities of former Rwandese army, militia and civilian leaders in the camps have seriously disrupted humanitarian operations, particularly food distribution to vulnerable groups. The law and order enforcement agents in the countries of asylum are not adequately equipped to cope with the situation. UNHCR field workers say the situation is particularly dangerous in the camps around Goma, Zaire. In some camps, the former authorities have virtually taken control of all food and relief distribution in order to consolidate their power and to manipulate and dominate the camp population.

The victims are the most vulnerable: female-headed households, the weak, the sick and children. The lives of relief workers have been threatened repeatedly, seriously disrupting humanitarian efforts in the camps. It has been nearly impossible to set up independent refugee groups to help with distribution as these groups are also menaced. Refugees who express a desire to repatriate are terrorised and more than a dozen have been killed. Field staff say the increasing numbers of children abandoned by their parents at camp orphanages is a direct result of the diversion of food to the fittest, especially the military and the militias. Parents, the workers say, leave their children at orphan centres in the hope they will be fed. UNHCR, other

humanitarian agencies and the NGOs have tried to change the food distribution system but with little success. Registration of refugees in the Goma camps has had to be postponed due to security risks.

The High Commissioner, the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Rwanda and the authorities concerned are conferring on what urgent measures can also be taken to bring law and order to the camps.

On 22 October, the field coordinators of the different MSF sections became impatient because they had not received any news about the position of headquarters on the situation in the camps.



Special Situation Report following the 14 October 1994 regional meeting of the MSF Belgium, Spain, France, Holland and Switzerland Heads of Mission in Kigali, 22 October 1994 (in French). [D75](#)

Extract:

A week later, nothing has happened. The field's most important, yet perhaps not most explicit, recommendation was that headquarters should agree on a common position so we could begin active lobbying in the field. Eight days later, we've heard nothing. It's true that eight days isn't very long, but our six-week deadline is approaching and at this rate, nothing will be in place to make a decision. If we want to be able to convince other NGOs to adopt our position, we've got to start working now - not in a week or two. We formally request that you reach a common decision by Wednesday morning, the 26th, the date of our coordination meeting, when we will decide on our course of action.

During the six-week reflection period following the Kigali meeting, MSF inter-section meetings in Europe revealed the different interpretations of the strategy chosen.



Message from MSF France, MSF Holland and MSF Spain coordinators in Tanzania to the Programme managers and to MSF International Secretary General, 22 October (in English). [D76](#)

Extract:

Salut, hello, hola

In general we feel that Dominique's report [summary report] provides a good summary of the Kigali meeting. It clearly states that genocide is a moral issue which MSF

must strongly address, and specifies certain actions, agreed upon in Kigali, to be undertaken by each MSF section to attempt to change the current problems of diversion of aid and lack of protection. No specific criteria for withdrawal or continuation was established due to the difficulty of objectively and amongst all sections, judging overall progress other than specific demands such as the completion of censuses in the camps in Zaire. We understood that a meeting would be convened in 6 weeks in Kigali to reassess the situation and believed that it would be apparent by then whether or not MSF was making any progress in its appeals. The general consensus seemed to admit that the reliance on a broad 'feeling' of whether or not progress was made was not ideal, but at least the Kigali meeting had consolidated among sections the concern of the role and implication of MSF in the post genocide assistance to the refugees. At least we had a concrete direction in which to work. Regardless of head-office quarrels, the three sections in Ngara consider the Kigali accord to be the framework and will adhere to these.

We are disappointed to read the apparent confusion prevalent in the teleconference (if the MSF Holland minutes accurately reflected the discussion) and would like to clarify a few specific points.

We were shocked to read Bernard's statement about a withdrawal after 3 weeks if nothing has changed. A reassessment after 6 weeks was agreed to in the meeting. We understood also that withdrawal was the last of several options, not a 'fait accompli'.

Apparently Alain mentioned that the food distribution in Benaco is affected by the Tanzanian mafia. Perhaps he is confusing the situation in Benaco and Karagwe, but in any case, the problems of Caritas do not prove the existence of a Tanzanian mafia, and the petty corruption in the camps of Benaco are no more extreme than one would find in any refugee camp in the world.

We feel that Jacques' [de Milliano, Executive Director of MSF H] list of withdrawal criteria is an attempt to confuse the issues and are a regression from the actions formulated in Kigali. The points agreed upon in Kigali are a better attempt to formulate a criteria of what is acceptable to MSF, and these are clearly indicated in Dominique's report. In summary we would request you to take a more mature and consistent approach to the issue and recommence from the point we all left in Kigali. It seems to us that common position can be found among all sections if a little moderation and consideration of the field position was combined with a solid commitment to MSF principles.



Minutes of the MSF France Board Meeting, 28 October 1994 (in French). [D77](#)

Extract:

Brigitte Vasset presented a summary of the last operations directors' inter-section meeting. Everyone acknowledged that the situation was intolerable, but the sections' conclusions differed:

MSF B: activities will probably decline in the Zaire refugee

campaigns, the MSF B teams will remain to care only for children; staff salaries in those camps will fall to bring them into line with Rwandan salaries; more resources will be invested in Rwanda.

MSF H: They believe it's more important to remain and care for people than to leave. They are developing a humanitarian advocacy action, rather than denunciations.

MSF E: they share MSF H's position and will only leave if security problems arise for expatriates.

The only sections in support of complete or partial withdrawal are France and Belgium.



Message from Wouter Van Empelen, Programme manager in MSF Holland HQ to MSF Holland coordinator in Goma, 27 October 1994 (in English). [D78](#)

Extract:

Within the sections there is some agreement and some disagreement.

- We all agree on the 'Dominique text' [summary report] for lobbying purposes (only), it is not an external document but meant for people who already know enough about the situation. For the public we (Hanna/Dominique & co) are drafting a more detailed document.

- All sections are behind the contents of the 'external' message in the 'Dominique document' to lobby with the message, 'if nothing will change then...'. We are playing a little poker with this document to put pressure on the UN system and the politicians by leaving departure dates open etc.

- Internally between the sections, the directors agreed that there is a different point of view. MSF-F is convinced that they are going to leave when there are no results of the advocacy activities within a couple of weeks, while MSF-H-B-S are of the opinion that after that period of intensive advocacy we should reconsider our position but that doesn't mean that we will draw the conclusion that we will withdraw.

- I think (between us) that MSF-F made up their mind already anyhow and were trying to make their ideas the policy for all the sections. Something in which they (as is apparent now after the Directors meeting) were not successful. So if MSF-F leaves it will not mean that MSF as such is leaving. For the French there is also a very complicated national political agenda behind their policy.

My analysis of this is that the point of gravity concerning MSF policy is again on the MSF-H-B-S side and France can not dictate MSF policy as a whole anymore.

During this period, the teams in the Bukavu region tried to disengage from activities in the camps, where security continued to worsen. On 28 October, after analysing the situation in the Rwandan refugee camps

in Zaire and Tanzania and noting that each MSF section had regained its autonomy, the MSF France board of directors voted to withdraw the French section's teams from all the camps in the region within one month, "without waiting for MSF International to reach consensus but simultaneously seeking to achieve it."



Fax from the MSF France Coordinator in Kigali to the HQ in Paris, 28 October 1994 (in French).
D79

Extract:

Greetings! Can you confirm the 'latest news and rumours' regarding MSF France's withdrawal from Bukavu, Benaco and Lumasi at the end of November?

The teams in the field accepted the decision to withdraw. Nonetheless, they regretted the hasty departure and the fact that this decision involved only the French section. Having been notified by a fax sent the weekend of 29-30 October, the coordinator of the team in Tanzania demanded an explanation.



Fax from MSF France Coordinator in Goma to the HQ in Paris, 30 October 1994 (in French).
D80

Extract:

Greetings to you all. We received notice of the MSF F decision and think that it is hard, even if it is the best decision. I am disappointed that we did not achieve a common position for all MSF sections – the Belgians in the field are of the same opinion as us.



Fax from MSF France Coordinator in Tanzania to the HQ in Paris, 31 October 1994 (in English).
D81

Extract:

What can I say? I guess there is little room for discussion now. However, even if it makes no difference, I shall still express what we think in Tanzania (I speak on behalf of the team).

1. The decision-making process

I remember being proudly told in my initial briefings that MSF is an association where everyone has an equal voice. At the time I realised that was an exaggeration but never realised the extent of this farce until today. Why were we asked our opinions in Kigali when MSF France had already made its decision? Why did we pretend to want an inter-

national consensus? Why did we bother even discussing demands to the international community when we never intended to wait for a change? If it is an issue of continually supporting the same leaders through the diversion of aid, then the argument is not strong enough in Tanzania.

2. MSF International

I am fully aware of the lack of concern of MSF France for finding consensus with the other MSF sections and, in general, I agree that we should not compromise our ideals if they clash with those of the others. However, I really believe that we had a chance to reach a common area of concern as MSF, and even encourage the other NGOs, notably Oxfam, to join our cause. The speed at which we are making this decision not only insults the participants of the Kigali meeting, but wastes a very good opportunity to achieve some change. I understand that, without a miracle, you do not anticipate any change in the international arena, but if MSF France withdraws alone it will not have much of an impact either, at least in Tanzania.

The feeling in Tanzania between the other sections (Holland and Spain) is extremely antagonistic to the French position and they would actively like to diminish the importance of a withdrawal by immediately moving into our medical structures in Lumasi. They feel ashamed of MSF France and prefer to dilute any impact we may make. OK, perhaps open fighting between the sections would draw more press attention to the issue, but are we really ready for the potential consequences of such a battle? Good luck with your meetings in Brussels, Barcelona and especially Amsterdam (the general coordinator in Ngara, Wouter Kok will be the Amsterdam desk officer for the region in a few weeks time and I know his position clearly)...

It is difficult for me to fully justify our position to the other organisations. Yes, on the moral issue I agree absolutely but in the face of all the points on aid diversion etc. I have little to say. I'm not convinced that I can use the argument used, for example in Ethiopia, that we are going to do more good for the people through withdrawal than staying here; if it was MSF international and I was convinced of an impact it would be easier, but if the other sections creep in behind us and assume all responsibilities in Lumasi we will only look stupid. I also need more detail before I can start preparing for the inevitable (unless by some miracle I have managed to convince you that the position is not so easy here).

When? On the 30 November we just do not turn up in Lumasi or will all the team be in Nairobi by then? Is it gradual or sudden? Do we assist in some kind of transfer or make a dramatic departure? Do we inform local staff in advance and hope not to be looted? Do we inform UNHCR now or shall I go ahead and sign the 1995 budget sitting on my table?



Message from Dominique Martin, MSF France HQ to the coordinator of the MSF (France) mission in Tanzania (in French). **D82**

Extract:

A few responses in the midst of chaos:

1. You are still in charge of departure details, including the date, while trying, of course, to hold as closely as possible to the end of the month. To put it plainly, if you need a bit more (or less!) time for operational or security reasons, it's your decision.

2. Our position is not illogical, it's the result of a series of events:

- at the end of the month, the six crucial weeks will have ended.

- we have the feeling here (and it's more than a feeling) that all the sections (except MSF France) are backing out of what they said in Kigali. In other words, we do not think that they will leave!

- we have thus decided to reverse the order of things: we're setting a departure date and announcing it (already announced internally) and will reconsider that decision only if there are major changes as referred to in the paper. We also want to increase the pressure and put forward our position clearly.

3. It's true that from the beginning, we have found our position in the camps untenable for moral (ethical) reasons, which, for us, is fundamental. But we were ready to try to find a common MSF position to try to change the situation. We only strengthened our position when our MSF colleagues pulled back (that's how it was perceived, anyway) and when we faced up to the near-certainty that nothing was possible at the international level.

4. Regarding Tanzania, there was an in-house discussion similar to yours. One group thought we should make a distinction and stay in Tanzania. The problem is that, in the end, diversions are only a secondary issue in the whole matter. The leaders' grip on the camps is at the heart of the problem. This strengthens them both economically and politically. Agreeing to focus only on the problem of aid diversions means agreeing to stay in Zaire if we win the minimum (census, etc.). That's unacceptable to us. So it's impossible to separate the two.

5. The moral question should not be understood as simple sensitivity or a problem of good conscience. Our key responsibility is this: we cannot allow our presence to strengthen the legitimacy of criminals responsible for the most heinous crimes. And all the more so as everything suggests that this affair will disappear into history and

be forgotten. The minimum, then, is that we must not strengthen the killers' position. The other point is that we have no international mandate or any obligation other than that which we are willing to take on. In other words, we are not obligated to help populations if we believe that should not be done. What is fundamental is that for us, people are not just bellies but also human beings, distinguished above all by values like freedom of choice, etc. and that these values are not respected in the camps. We make choices continually (sometimes we decide not to go into a specific camp) on the basis of our principles and our only overriding rule - the respect of these founding principles. Of course, you can say that the others obviously have a slightly different notion. I agree with you and, in our view, that's the subject for a fundamental discussion.

6. It's important to see whether common action with Oxfam and Concern is possible and if, in order to leave together (for example), we would have to stay a little longer, I think that would be worth it (with limitations that we'd have to talk about)

7. Regarding departure details, it would be best if you talked directly with Jean-Hervé [Programme manager]. In any case, we're available here to support you whenever you think it's necessary.

8. For external communication, we'll take all the intra-MSF and security factors into account. We'll talk about it again.



It was really out of the blue. I received a fax, one day, on a week-end, I think. It was after the Conseil d'administration. But I didn't even know there was going to be a Conseil d'administration, I didn't know it was the subject of the day on the agenda. So I just received this fax. It was in November. Basically it said that you will be leaving the camps. It was such a ridiculous thing [for Paris] to have done because I was really on side and really ready to support a withdrawal. I had a team who didn't agree with the Kigali decision, so it was already difficult. Then to get this fax... it was absolutely a punch in the face. I would like to be able to say that I was mature enough to rise above the method and accepted the decision as the best one. But unfortunately I was not and my first thoughts were how disrespectful Paris was to the Kigali process, and that the others must be right: that the Kigali meeting was only a show, Paris had already made up its mind. I was really disappointed by the way the decision was made after all the discussions we had had. So I understand why MSF France is sometimes accused by other sections of playing unfairly as I have seen it myself. It is so often the method used that causes the problem rather than the issue itself.

Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania,
Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).

In a common Press release on 2 November 1994, fifteen NGOs, including MSF Belgium, Holland and France, announced their support for UNHCR and their deep concern over deteriorating security conditions. They threatened to consider withdrawing from the camps if the security situation did not improve for expatriates and refugees.



“Relief Agencies Demand Action’, Press release from MSF USA, 3 November 1994 (in English). D83

Extract:

In a joint statement issued in Goma today, Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Rescue Committee, American Refugee Committee, OXFAM UK, Médecins du Monde France, Medicos del Mundo, Farmaceuticos sin fronteras Espana and Care declare that the current relief operations are untenable. Living and working conditions for refugees and aid workers in the camps are becoming unacceptably dangerous. The organizations say that they will be forced to withdraw if the international community does not take steps to improve camp security. The statement reads as follows: “We strongly support the October 21st statement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees regarding deteriorating security conditions in the camps. Furthermore:

- 1) Under present conditions, the UNHCR is prevented from fulfilling its mandate of protecting and assisting refugees
- 2) The work of the humanitarian organizations is largely compromised due to the current power structure within the camps. When aid workers attempt to intervene on behalf of the victims of discriminatory practices, their lives are threatened
- 3) The relief operation is unsustainable. Refugees are denied the right to return to their homes, equal access to humanitarian aid, protection and the guarantee of basic human rights. “They remain hostages”.

In order to provide equitable assistance and protection, the organizations call for the following conditions to be met:

“The former Rwandan military and political structure within the camp must be separated from the main body of the refugees, and all arms removed from the camps.

- 1) Those structures within the camps, which incite violence against refugees and disrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid must be separated from the main body of the refugees.
- 2) All arms must be removed from the camps.
- 3) Protection of refugees must be fully guaranteed: refugees must be free to stay in Zaire or return to their homes in Rwanda without intimidation of fear for their lives.
- 4) Relief agencies must be permitted to deliver humanitarian assistance without hindrance from the current power structure within the camps.

Aid workers are increasingly outraged that they are becoming unwilling accomplices. Unless there is an immediate and tangible effort to bring about positive change in the camps, the undersigned international agencies may be

forced to withdraw their assistance from the camps. We insist that the United Nations and international community take immediate and decisive action.



Jean Hélène, ‘Humanitarian Organisations Threaten to Leave Refugee Camps in Zaire,’ *Le Monde* (France), 5 November 1994 (in French). D84

Extract:

“There are massive diversions of aid,” says an NGO coordinator. “In the Katala camp (north of Goma), for example, the distribution of foodstuffs is conducted on the basis of 220,000 officially-registered refugees. We estimate their number at no more than 140,000, but the malnutrition rate is still 10 percent.”

What most concerns these humanitarian aid workers, several of whom have been threatened with death, remains the insecurity, which according to them, is related to “organised terror.” On 1 November, a man pursued by a dozen others armed with clubs and machetes took refuge in the tent of an NGO nutrition centre. His assailants followed and beat him in front of women and children there. The man managed to free himself. Recaptured a little further away, he was “finished off” in front of two expatriates who were unable to intervene because the crowd was so threatening. The victim had been accused of being a Tutsi who had infiltrated the camp...

Finally, the NGOs deplore the fact that the refugees may not choose freely to return home. Several repatriation candidates have been killed. “People are afraid to leave or even talk about the possibility of return,” says Alex Parisel of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). The camp ‘leaders’ thus continue to benefit from the humanitarian windfall, diverted to former soldiers and militiamen who, according to some sources, are training as guerrillas... The humanitarian agencies are calling for an intervention force to provide security in the camps and ask that the former leaders and militias be identified and separated from the rest of the refugees.



‘UN chiefs to meet over reign of fear in Zaire aid camps’, *The Times* (UK), 5 November 1994 (in English). D85

Extract:

Also expressing fears about the situation in the camps are the International Rescue Committee, Pharmacists without borders, and Médecins du monde. Another British charity, Actionaid, yesterday added its voice to the growing clamour for UN intervention in Hutu refugee camps. The charity wrote to Douglas Hurd, the Foreign Secretary, and the UN calling for UN troops to be sent to Goma. So powerful is the grip of members of the ‘Social Commission’, the shadowy organisation of the 16 Hutu extremists, many of them on the wanted lists of human

rights groups for their part in the murder of a million Tutsi and Hutu moderates earlier this year, the aid workers are powerless to intervene in saving the lives of targeted refugees. Three days ago, two members of MSF Belgium's medical team watched as militiamen beat a man to death on the road outside the team's hospital in Kibumba camp. The withdrawal of the 14 relief agencies from the camps around Goma would have disastrous effects on the refugees. But in a statement yesterday they said that "the relief operation is unsustainable; refugees are denied the right to return to their homes, equal access to humanitarian aid, protection, and the guarantee of basic human rights".

Alex Parisel, spokesman for MSF in Goma, said that the idea of the joint statement was to "force the hand of the UN to do something about the camps while there is still time", adding: "there is a basic ethical principle here that may overtake our humanitarian mandate. Are we to feed an evil system that will result in more war, and more genocide in Rwanda?"

Oxfam, which last month condemned the Security Council for its "supine inactivity and callousness in allowing genocide to continue unabated" after it halved the number of troops in Rwanda last April, called on the British Government to support proposals to send armed UN blue helmets into the camps around Zaire.



Clearly, the issue was to maintain this coalition, which had actually released a serious message with a stronger impact than MSF France's unilateral withdrawal. In the English-speaking world, it was non-stop for three days. Samantha, in Nairobi, was sending everything back to us. The narrative was very harsh towards the people committing genocide, as well as towards the international community. The statement was basically a list of conditions, saying, "If this, this and that don't go through, the thirteen NGOs will withdraw." We had been able to get thirteen leaders to agree that if a minimum of conditions hadn't been fulfilled within x-amount of time, the thirteen major NGOs would withdraw. You can imagine the mess it created. And we did it after the withdrawal of MSF France. For me it was more or less a question of four to eight weeks. This declaration of intent had quite an impact. It was signed by all the mission heads and was validated by the thirteen head offices. No...I'm not convinced that the thirteen would have withdrawn. I think that serious tension existed between the head offices and the field for all of the NGOs. In the field, I received a lot of support from some of the mission heads from Oxfam, UK and IRC. Clearly, they then had to negotiate with their head offices and institutional matters then came into play. We kept bringing it up, and people then negotiated with their head offices, which either agreed or disagreed. After two weeks, we got it. In fact, it happened just about two weeks after MSF France's decision to unilaterally withdraw.

Alex Parisel, MSF Belgium Coordinator in Goma, October 1994 to March 1995 (in French).



We made a statement with the other NGOs saying that the situation was unacceptable and that the Interahamwe had to stop manipulating the communities and the aid. This was in November, before we left. The different field operations made the decision, and I was the one who wrote it up for all the organisations. We were with all the programme managers. We got together. We knew what the message was. I wrote the basic text that circulated in all the head offices. Everybody approved it and we sent it out. That's when we asked UNHCR to guarantee that people would be protected and kept apart. After that, we experienced various consequences. First UNHCR staff got mad, and then they pretended to do something. The Interahamwe realised that they had gone too far and so they changed their tactics. In the camps, they organised civilian groups that served as liaisons with the NGOs. They separated themselves a bit from the camps. They created new bases just outside. They really controlled the camps. This statement was quoted a lot by all of the journalists.

Samantha Bolton, MSF International Press Officer for East Africa, 1994-1995 (in French).

As violence increased in the northern Kivu camps, the MSF Holland coordinator in Goma contacted the Amsterdam desk to inquire about possible repercussions of the Press release regarding expatriate security.



Message from Anja, MSF Holland Coordinator in Goma to Wouter Van Empelen, Programme manager in MSF Holland HQ, 2 November 1994 (in English). [D86](#)

Extract:

Dear Wouter,

I would like to inform you of the following incidents:

31 October:

The 4 detained persons seems to be spies from Kigali, as declared by 3 individual sources. Their mission was to infiltrate the camp and to kill some expats (??). This to achieve the departure of the NGOs. A new war is in preparation; so on both sides there are spies. From this side there should be around 300 persons spying around Kigali. Because of all this, the camp is guarded day and night. The refugees say that because they were upset after the withdrawal of the NGOs in October, they decided to protect the aid workers. The camp leaders and the Interahamwe decided that prisoners would be handed over to the Zairean authorities. Besides this, new scouts appeared in the camp (baseball caps with 'scout'). Sources say that these guys are good ones, different from the others... This information is collected in the camps, so difficult to test its reliability.

Incident Kibumba camp 1 November:

5 people killed during the day in front of NGO workers (1 even in/near the MSF-B feeding tent), because of suspicion of being a spy from Rwanda (RPF). No evacuation took place. Alex, the new coordinator for MSF-B, will have an extensive meeting about this today. I will keep you informed.

Incident Rwanda 1 November:

In the morning there were 36 persons murdered 15 km from Gisenyi. It has been a question of reprisal, in all probability by people from the camps.

With all these incidents the team has not been in danger (yet), but the situation seems to become more and more tense. When will there be a violent action towards an expat or local staff member? And, what are all NGOs going to do in case there is a murder on the NGO side? Again, do you think that the release of the statement will have any consequence for our security? Please, react on my fax from yesterday. This is all for the moment.

Warm regards, Anja

Discussions continued at the various MSF headquarters on the position to take given the situation in the camps. On 5 November, volunteers working in the camps wrote to MSF Belgium's board of directors to say they were sickened by what was happening there. Several called on MSF to withdraw.



Letters to the MSF Belgium Board of Directors, 5 November 1994 (in French). **D87**

Extract:

After a discussion among all the expatriates, these letters were written to present the Board with the positions of the MSF sections and the statement issued Thursday, signed by 14 NGOs, including three MSF sections...

Before Mario left, we talked a lot about MSF's policy in the Rwandan refugee camps. The more I think about what was said and everything I see, the more

I think about what was said and everything I see, the more difficult it seems to me, under these conditions, to pursue the initial plan to stay until December. Or I'll have to stop thinking and focus only on my nursing work, without watching what's going on around me...

Odile Chaze, nurse at the Kahindo camp hospital.

We've moved beyond the emergency phase, so why not withdraw? The structures we've set up are increasingly stable. We've built an entire town. We're stabilising and consolidating the refugees' status quo in the camps. We're institutionalising the military's and the militias' power by giving them time to reorganise and continue to hold the

Rwandan people captive. We're hostages to the situation ourselves. Why?

Dr. Gregoris Stratakos, physician at the Kahindo camp hospital.

What are we doing? Providing a rear base for the FAR? A launching pad for their violent and bloody return? No, I refuse to believe that that's what humanitarianism is all about. It's high time for us and the other NGOs to respond jointly. An ultimatum, a security and interposition force, a census, a general withdrawal - they're all still possible. It's up to you to think about this and act quickly. In two weeks it could be too late.

François Mayence, nurse at the Kibumba hospital.

What is especially troubling is that the only thing that seems to bring people together is violence. They get all worked up over the smallest incident or the most insignificant rumour. Clubs and machetes appear and groups begin to organise. You can feel the violence ready to explode... Life isn't worth anything anymore. People threaten to kill each other over the least annoyance. And it goes beyond threats. People really are murdered right in front of expatriates and inside MSF facilities. It happened in Kibumba. There are no limits. Hospitals and health facilities are not respected and the expatriates' presence doesn't bother anyone. You get the impression that nothing will stop them. They are ruled only by hate and violence.

Dr. Françoise Seive, physician in Kahindo camp hospital

On 6 November, MSF Belgium's Coordinator in Goma sent a message to MSF Belgium's board of directors expressing his strong opposition to withdrawal, which he considered an abdication of responsibility to the refugees. He accused the French section of 'abandonment and denial' and criticised it for conducting a 'scorched earth policy.'



Letter from the MSF Belgium Head of Mission in Goma to MSF Belgium Board of Directors, 6 November 1994 (in French). **D88**

Extract:

This withdrawal is a desperate, media-focused missile launch that might strike the monster, but might also miss and certainly won't kill him! ...MSF France came whining to the International Council for a place in a camp so they could operate in Goma. For a variety of reasons, they weren't able to and now they're whining that everyone should leave with them. MSF France is out of the action for good. All they've got left is the political field, noise and fury. But on what grounds?

On 7 November, MSF appealed to the Security Council to take immediate action in Rwandan refugee camps.



'Médecins Sans Frontières appeal to the Security Council- Call for Immediate Action in Rwandan Refugee Camps' **Press release** MSF USA, 7 November 1994 (in English). [D89](#)

Extract:

The urgency of the recommendations concerning the establishment of security in the Rwandan refugee camps cannot be over-emphasized. The most elementary rights are being flouted daily, there is hardly any opposition to the massive orchestration of aid by the leaders of the camps and the international community is only providing support to the authors of the genocide.

Our teams in the field, as well as those of other organizations, express ever more clearly their unease not only about the exactions and misappropriations, but also about the absence of international action.

The risk of a new genocide being prepared in the camps should not be ignored if nothing is done to limit re-armament and the political legitimization of the leaders.

Fifteen humanitarian organizations present in the field, including Médecins Sans Frontières, have made clear the exceptional character of the situation and refusing to become accomplices, have stated clearly that unless there is an immediate and tangible effort to bring about positive changes in the camps, they may be forced to withdraw their assistance.

Médecins Sans Frontières appeal the Security Council to take IMMEDIATE and CONCRETE measures:

1. Refugees must be protected from violence or threats of violence in their places of refuge, especially from the Rwandan militia and others responsible for the genocide in Rwanda. Refugees must have unimpeded access to humanitarian aid. Each refugee must be able to decide freely whether to stay or leave the camps without fear for his/her life. To this end an alternative international security force must be put in place immediately in a comprehensive and effective programme to maintain order and security in the refugee camps. The maintaining of law and order should under no circumstances be performed by refugees selected by the leaders, many of who are suspected of having been involved in the genocide.
2. Registration should take place as soon as possible in Goma in order to ensure that all refugees have access to humanitarian relief. The distribution of humanitarian relief should be supervised by bodies independent of the leaders and not be controlled by those suspected having been involved in the genocide.
3. All soldiers and militia who are present in the refugee camps should be disarmed.
4. Those responsible for the genocide and grave breaches of humanitarian law should be brought to justice. In particular, measures should be taken so that no impunity is given to those leaders suspected of parti-

cipation in the genocide who are currently allowed to walk freely in the camps. Governments of countries on whose territories the accused remain must ensure that they do not escape justice and remain in their countries unpunished. They must take all measures necessary, including extradition, for those accused to be brought before justice.

5. The UN should send an adequate number of human rights monitors to Rwanda and also to the camps as has been requested by its own Special Representative of the Secretary General and by the Special Rapporteur for Rwanda. They must be equipped with sufficient resources to carry out their tasks. These monitors should report on human rights violations to the relevant UN bodies and make recommendations as to what measures need to be taken in this regard.
6. The UN should act quickly and follow the advice of its own expert (the Commission of experts and the Special Rapporteur for Rwanda) to extend the mandate of the ad hoc tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for Rwanda so that those suspected of having been involved in the genocide and other serious violations of humanitarian law can be brought to justice according to internationally accepted norms for a fair trial.
7. The international community should provide aid and expertise for the reconstruction of the judicial system and police force in Rwanda. A climate of security and justice is necessary for the return of all Rwandans to their homes and the creation of a civil society.
8. Efforts to bring those responsible for the genocide to justice must be executed without forgetting the need for national reconciliation. The international community must support initiatives in Rwanda to promote the peaceful cohabitation of ethnic groups.
9. The international community should impose an arms moratorium on military aid or arms sales to Rwanda and take measures to reduce the flow of arms to the region in general.

The same day, in an interview with the regional daily newspaper, *Ouest-France*,⁶ Philippe Biberson, President of MSF France, announced the decision to leave the camps.



'MSF President Tells Ouest-France "Why We Are Leaving Rwanda,' *Ouest France* (France), 7 November 1994 (in French).

Extract:


Why is MSF... threatening to withdraw from the Rwandan refugee camps in the Goma region of Zaire? ... "These

6. This daily newspaper covers all of western France and has the highest circulation in the country. It regularly supports MSF's activities.

aren't threats. We've made a policy decision to leave based on an observation shared by all the NGOs: the principles on which our intervention is based are being distorted and used against refugees in some of the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania"...

"All humanitarian aid is instrumentalised by the same leaders who presided over the Rwandan genocide and the population displacements. People are subservient to this political organisation and humanitarian aid is making it possible! This is the issue we want the international community, states and the UN to pay attention to..."

"This system has operated from the start. But when people were dying by the thousands, the question didn't arise in the same way. Although the situation is still very difficult, we're no longer in a state of extreme emergency. So now it's time to step back and take a look at what we're supporting. This breach of our principles is serious enough that we are withdrawing. But this has to be a useful decision. That's why we've been contacting international organisations, the UN and governments for weeks to put forward our analysis. It's not about holding the refugees hostage or making their lives even more difficult than they are today."

 *I had gone to Rennes where the staff of the newspaper Ouest-France had organised an editorial committee to take a step back and try to assess what all the confusion was about surrounding Operation Turquoise, the armed intervention, MSF's position and our analysis, and so on. I got caught up in the discussion, I don't know if it was conscious or not, because after all, we were surrounded by journalists, by Ouest-France's entire editorial staff. I said, "Anyway, we've decided to leave the camps." - "Oh really? That's a serious decision. You don't understand..." We talked about it, and the next day it was in Ouest-France. As soon as it came out in Ouest-France, it came out in all the papers. The other sections were furious because we had broken the moratorium.*

Dr. Philippe Biberson, President of MSF France
(in French).

The MSF Belgium Board of Directors invited MSF France representatives to explain their unilateral decision to leave the camps. On 8 November, following the meeting, the board decided to leave the door open to its own possible withdrawal.



Minutes of the MSF Belgium Board Meeting, 8 November 1994 (in French). [D90](#) 

Extract:

It is still too early for us to make a final decision on continuing to work in the camps. Mario Goethals thinks we should try everything before we consider withdrawing. MSF France Representatives' Perspective

Philippe Biberson laid out France's decision to withdraw from the Bukavu refugee camps, citing an unacceptable situation (including killings, diversion of aid, intolerable insecurity for local staff and expatriates, intimidation and threats towards refugees). He believes that this situation calls for a final decision because we are unable to clarify what we are supporting. Withdrawal will take place gradually.

It is a shame that this decision was taken before consulting the MSF sections, and announced via the international press... MSF France (and MSF Holland) has taken a position, but the withdrawal will take place in a burst of publicity to arouse public outcry.

What Is MSF Belgium Doing?

Eric Goemaere confirmed that MSF faces a difficult situation, given the extent of the problem. The crucial point is and remains the role of the humanitarian aid movement, which cannot unwittingly be an accomplice in this situation. R. Moreels says MSF must remain open to the possibility of withdrawing, given the ambiguity of its role (humanitarian action colluding with genocide's perpetrators, possibly aiding the war's resumption). The alarm sounded by many members in the field is very significant. However, it is obvious that if all of MSF withdraws from the camps, there will only be more victims to mourn. Nonetheless, we must face things directly: What are we doing, apart from contributing humanitarian aid? R. Moreels says the decision about whether to withdraw has nothing to do with the genocide, which is part of the collective memory. Maintaining a presence legitimises international pressure, but the timeframe for that presence has yet to be set. Our presence legitimises our efforts to pressure the international community to react quickly to separate the real killers from innocent, or quasi-innocent, refugees. (R. Moreels). P. Harzé (Communications Director) says it is clear that if we withdraw, we will have to assume the consequences, and we must all agree on the process. Staying is no longer a question of courage, but of making a decision consistent with MSF's approach. What emerges from all this is that the sections' positions are becoming increasingly dissimilar. A consultation meeting has been planned on this topic for late December. If possible, MSF Belgium would like to wait until then.

Conclusion: Board of Directors' decision: "We are leaving the door open to possible withdrawal but will first exhaust all means of local and international pressure in hopes of avoiding such action."

MSF's Press officer in Nairobi announced to Agence France-Presse (AFP) that MSF volunteers were about to leave, but would remain if the conditions laid out in the 2 November Press release were met. She clarified that the closure of MSF France's Goma operations had been scheduled in advance. The same was true for Bukavu, where activities would cease at the end of the month.



'Médecins Sans Frontières will remain in the camps if certain conditions are met', **Agence France Presse (AFP)**, 8 November 1994 (in French).

Extract:

Members of the humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) will remain in the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire if they receive guarantees on the security of refugees and conditions for aid distribution, the Nairobi office of MSF announced Tuesday... The President of MSF France, Philippe Biberson declared in the name of his organisation that "the principled decision to leave (the camps) has been taken" in an interview with the daily newspaper, Ouest France, published Tuesday. The spokesperson for the various branches of MSF in Nairobi, Samantha Bolton, indicated that doctors from different countries working for the organisation were on the point of leaving but that they would stay if the conditions announced on 2 November with 14 other humanitarian organisations, were fulfilled... Ms Bolton emphasised that the closure of MSF France operations in the Zairean town of Goma, close to six camps, was planned in advance, as was the case for operations in Bukavu, on Lake Kivu, scheduled for the end of the month.

On 10 November, MSF Holland's humanitarian affairs department published **Breaking the Cycle**, a report drawn from information from all sections in the field gathered by the 'protection facilitators' in August. It described the situation in the various camps and established several indicators with which to monitor developments.



"'Breaking the Cycle: MSF calls for action in the Rwandese refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire', **MSF Holland report**, 10 November 1994 (in English). **D54**

Extract:

Extracts from the table of contents and introduction:

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I. Introduction


This report documents and analyses the situation in the Rwandese refugee camps and reports about human rights violations in relation to problems of security, distribution, repatriation and militarisation. The report illustrates the problems in the camps and provides background to the position of MSF. If no immediate measures are taken to establish order and security in the camps and to bring the perpetrators of the genocide to justice, MSF may be forced to halt its humanitarian relief operations.



*On 15 July, the RPF took over and attention shifted to Goma and to Tanzania. First it was the response to the cholera epidemic so there was not much advocacy involved. I think that it was in the autumn that we became concerned about what was happening in the camps. We decided to hire two people for Goma, who we called information officers. Someone also went to Benaco. We wanted to know what was going on. Everybody felt that there was a lot going on and we should have a better understanding of the camp structure, how the leaders are managing the camps, what the abuses were, etc. I think that our teams had a very good understanding, and had had various field visits from the directors. There was constant communication, a lot of situation reports about what was going on so we started to collect information. In October, it became quite clear that this was a big issue and we questioned how we should address it. We did not pull out (MSF France pulled out in Nov) - but we had the same discussions and were very concerned about what was going on, so we wrote a report called *Breaking the Cycle*. It was issued late November, early December. It was issued publicly, I think to the press, and there was a discussion at the Dutch Parliament at the time, which dictated the date of the release. It was publicly available to whoever wanted to see it. It was the MSF Holland response to our concerns. MSF France had decided to withdraw; we decided to issue this report. In the report there were six factors which were indicators of what was going on in the camps: the degree of*


control; the population; the manipulation of aid; the Interahamwe; to what extent it was possible to bring those who were responsible for the genocide to justice; and the separation of those suspected of genocide from the refugees. We said that these were the kinds of criteria that we should constantly look at in the camps to see what the developments were and to what extent it was justified that we were still working there. Those were the indicators for the coming months and meanwhile we continued to collect information. Of course, there was very little progress on these issues.

Hanna Nolan, Humanitarian Affairs Department,
MSF Holland (in English).

 My job in Goma was collecting information, sitting down with the team, the country managers first of all, and then all the staff on the ground, to talk with them and ask what is going on. Not only with them, of course, but also with other agencies and with UNHCR, and on the basis of their information, to come up with an analysis of what's going on...

MSF Holland's report *Breaking the Cycle* was the first time that a real human rights report - if you look at it, it was a human rights report - came out. It was the 8th or 10th of November. We had to bring it out that day because the Security Council was meeting to discuss the camps because in the field 15 organisations, including the three MSF sections but also IRC, and a couple of others, had met in Nairobi and had come up with a declaration which had gotten in the *New York Times*, together with an interview that the *NYT* did with the MSF Belgium director of operations. The 15 organisations had said that the situation is untenable, and if it continues like this we have to withdraw. That was early November or end of October. Madeleine Albright, who was then ambassador to the UN, had brought the situation to the attention of the Security Council. We wanted our report to be out for that meeting.


Ed Schenkenberg, Information Officer in Goma
(in English).

 I drafted part of the document, specifically the section dealing with the situation inside Rwanda in the prisons. The MSF sections jointly documented the situation in the camps and in Rwanda. The report's goal was to describe the situation based on objective and concrete information. It was supposed to explain and help others understand why we were leaving. It was written, but only the French section withdrew. A second version of the report appeared and it was only on the basis of that version that, one year later, the other sections left. We had sent volunteers into the field in 1994 to gather information, but

we never reached agreement on the process for using the information and writing and publishing a report. It was impossible to reach agreement on the goal of the report. Was it to justify and explain the decision to leave? Or was it intended to provide a counterweight voice for staying? Were we documenting the situation or the reasons why we could no longer stay in these camps? It was impossible to get a straight answer to those questions. Some people wanted to continue improving the document because, once we were gone, we would no longer be able to provide this information. That's the kind of explanation I got at the time, specifically from the Amsterdam team: "It's important to stay so that we can continue getting this information. If we don't stay, it won't be available to us any longer." So according to them, we should continue collecting information to update the report while we waited to decide about how to use it.

Producing the report created a new rationale for action. So if this rationale was evolving as we proceeded, we couldn't break off. In the beginning, it was a question of explaining why we were leaving and basing that explanation on facts and not on emotions. Later, it involved expanding and updating the report. In the end, it was about justifying the fact that we had to stay in the camps to be able to continue our advocacy work. That's how slippery it was — which made it impossible to manage the process. We no longer knew why we were doing this, where we had started and where we were going. Some might have felt betrayed along the way. The goal was not to document the situation for the sake of documenting it. The goal of *témoignage* was always to limit the adverse effects of our actions and to improve our work and the population's chances of survival. It wasn't to justify—after the fact—what we knew or to counter the action's negative effect. If *témoignage* can't save people, there's no point in it. We're not history's record keepers. We're not responsible for recording events. We are there, in the light of those events, to make operational and institutional decisions that serve our goal of defending human life and dignity. The strength of *témoignage* comes not from words but from taking action in keeping with the realities we denounce.

Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, MSF Senior Legal Adviser
(in French).

On 14 November, MSF International, MSF United Kingdom and MSF United States issued Press releases announcing MSF's withdrawal from the Bukavu camps. MSF criticised the deteriorating situation for the refugees and affirmed that it was ethically impossible to continue strengthening the genocide's perpetrators. A new appeal was launched urging the international community to provide security to Rwandan refugees and humanitarian aid workers in the camps. [V11](#) 



'MSF pulls out of Bukavu in protest', **Press Release** from MSF International, MSF UK and MSF USA, 14 November 1994 (in English). [D91](#)

Extract:

To protest against the deteriorating security situation for refugees in the Rwandan refugee camps of Bukavu, Eastern Zaire, Médecins Sans Frontières has today ceased all operations in Bukavu. MSF teams have been operating in the region since the emergency phase in July. For the past few weeks Médecins Sans Frontières and other agencies have been calling on the international community to take action to redress the unacceptable political and security situation in the Rwandan refugee camps of Zaire. Unless security conditions for refugees improve, MSF will be forced to withdraw its remaining teams. In Bukavu the situation has deteriorated to such an extent that it is now ethically impossible for Médecins Sans Frontières to continue aiding and abetting the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. Members of the former Rwandan authorities, military and militia exert total control over 10,000s of civilians in the camps of Bukavu.

In Bukavu MSF teams have witnessed:

The installation of a camp policing system, which prevents the free movement of populations; the installation of arbitrary tribunals and prisons.

Increasing intimidation, arrest or assassination of persons wishing to return to Rwanda or suspected of being opposed to the existing regime in the camps or simply suspected of being Tutsi.

The circulation of weapons in the camps; visible military training.

The political and military structures within the camps prevent the humanitarian agencies from fulfilling their roles. For security reasons UNHCR has been unable to register refugees. Agencies are prevented by the camp authorities in the camps from distributing food directly to families. In Bukavu food is distributed to the leaders for 350,000 refugees. MSF estimates 280,000.

Members of humanitarian organisations receive regular threats. MSF staff in Bukavu has received death threats and have been arrested. Teams were forced to evacuate after threats on the hospital in Kabira camp.

Once again, Médecins sans Frontières calls on the international community to provide the Rwandan refugees with a minimum of security and dignity, so that the humanitarian organisations still present in the Rwandan refugee camps area are able to operate under more acceptable conditions. MSF is strongly committed to assisting the most vulnerable populations among the refugees. However, MSF will be forced to halt all its operations in the Rwandan refugee camps of Zaire unless the international community takes action to ensure that:

- Those refugees (camp leaders, former Rwandan soldiers and members of militia groups) who are inciting violence against refugees and disrupting the delivery of humanitarian aid be separated from the main body of the refugees,

- All weapons be removed from the camps,
 - The registration of refugees takes place immediately in order to facilitate the distribution of food and assistance.
 - An international police force be deployed in the camps to ensure the above conditions;
- MSF has 340 volunteers working inside Rwanda and with refugees in Goma, Zaire, Burundi and Tanzania.

In the 16 November issue of the Belgian daily newspaper *Le Soir*, MSF Belgium's director of operations discussed his support of MSF France's decision. In the same issue, MSF International's Press officer explained the French section's departure from Bukavu. Although the other sections had no plan to leave Goma at that time, she did not rule out that possibility.



'MSF Leaves Bukavu Camps,' *Le Soir* (Belgium), 16 November 1994 (in French). [D92](#)

Extract:

"We were becoming trapped," says a Médecins Sans Frontières France official who left Zaire for Nairobi. "That was intolerable." MSF has ended all operations in the Rwandan refugee camps in Bukavu, eastern Zaire. "At the outset, it was absolutely necessary to work in the Rwandan refugee camps," explains Dr. George Dallemagne of MSF Belgium. "The humanitarian situation was a disaster. But things have changed and we completely support MSF France's decision. Ethically and morally speaking, it became impossible to continue working in the Bukavu camps."



'Opinions and Debates: On MSF's Withdrawal from the Rwandan Refugee Camps in Bukavu, Zaire,' **interview** with Samantha Bolton, MSF International Press officer in eastern Africa, *Le Soir* (Belgium), 16 November 1994 (in French). [D93](#)

Extract:

You returned to Nairobi from Zaire on Monday. Why did MSF decide to cease all activity in the Bukavu camps, south of Goma?

Because ethically, it was no longer possible to work there. Given the current circumstances, staying on clearly meant aiding and supporting those who committed genocide in Rwanda. The police force in the Bukavu refugee camps was organised by former Rwandan authorities. Made up essentially of militiamen, the force arrests refugees on the pretext of spying for the new government in Kigali, of committing treason by calling for a return to Rwanda - or on any charge. After they're arrested, they're sent to prison. The 'camp leaders' have converted a tent just in

front of MSF's tent into a prison. Prisoners are interrogated there and tried by tribunals that arbitrarily impose sentences, even the death penalty. Summary executions follow. That's unacceptable!

Viewed from abroad, however, the situation seems calmer in Bukavu than in Goma.

That's because the spotlight has been on Goma since the late July cholera epidemic and because there are three times the number of refugees there as in Bukavu. However, there are more 'bad guys' in Bukavu. The Goma refugees are people who fled the 'safe humanitarian zone' after the Opération Turquoise French soldiers left. Many of the former Rwandan officials remained there - government ministers, préfets, bourgmestres, soldiers and militiamen. In short, more of the old regime's key figures are in Bukavu than in Goma.

Was it solely for reasons of ethics or physical safety that it became impossible to work in Bukavu?

Particularly for ethical reasons. But we were threatened physically, too. If we tried to intervene between militiamen and the people they were pursuing, we would receive warnings. Two weeks ago, for example, a woman took refuge in our tent. The militiamen who accused her of spying came into the tent to kill her with a machete, right under our eyes. We couldn't intervene. And then one of our nurses, a Zairean, was arrested, jailed and fined 10,000 CDF (€22). Can you imagine? A Zairean judged and punished in Zaire by a Rwandan pseudo-court!

Might you decide to leave Goma?

It's not on the agenda. Leaving Bukavu is a way for us to pressure the UN to deploy an international police force in the refugee camps. That doesn't rule out our leaving Goma if things worsen there.

The international Press treated the French section's withdrawal as a continuation of the mobilisation that began when the 15 NGOs issued their 2 November Press release. The fact that a single MSF section was leaving did not necessarily represent additional information. Some journalists found it difficult to understand the seemingly contradictory positions within the MSF movement.



Stephan Smith, 'On Its Own, MSF France Leaves the Rwandan Camps,' *Libération* (France), 15 November 1994 (in French).

Extracts:

Confusion is as widespread... Yesterday, Médecins Sans Frontières International, the European-wide coordinating body for MSF's national sections, issued official word of MSF's withdrawal from the Rwandan refugee camps in

Bukavu, eastern Zaire. The reason given was deteriorating security conditions that had made it "ethically impossible to continue to help those who perpetrated genocide and be their unwitting accomplice." There was no explanation regarding the background of this decision. After weeks of intense discussion about the 'humanitarian blackmail' carried out by the genocide's leaders (who, serving as aid distribution supervisors, terrorise the refugees to prevent them from returning, and divert aid to support their armed fighters), only MSF France is determined to withdraw. MSF's Belgian, Dutch and Spanish sections, as well as most of the other European NGOs, decided 'to continue in spite of everything.'

As of last week, MSF France has withdrawn from the Goma camps where, theoretically, some 800,000 Rwandans have taken refuge. Yesterday the group also left the Bukavu camps, where 280,000 Rwandans are registered. However, no decision has yet been reached regarding the Benaco camp in Tanzania, which houses 300,000 refugees. The main point: for lack of agreement among the humanitarian aid workers on the principles to follow, public debate has been pushed aside.



One Humanitarian Organisation Leaves the Rwandan Camps', *The Financial Times* (UK), 16 November 1994 (in English).

Extract:

Médecins sans Frontières, the international medical charity, has evacuated its staff from Rwandan refugee camps in eastern Zaire where lawless Hutu militia have imposed a reign of terror. MSF said soldiers and militia linked to the ousted Rwandan government had taken control of the camps around Bukavu, home to some 250,000 refugees. MSF medical staff has witnessed the intimidation, arrest and assassination of refugees wishing to return to Rwanda. Charity workers who have tried to intervene to save lives have themselves received death threats. Hutu militia carry weapons inside the camps and are drafting young Hutu men into forced military training. They have also taken control of the distribution of food aid. «The situation has deteriorated to such an extent that it has become ethically impossible for MSF to continue aiding and abetting the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide," Ms Samantha Bolton, an MSF spokeswoman, said yesterday in Nairobi.



Thierry Fiorilli, 'According to Humanitarian Organisations, a Miniature Rwanda is being Rebuilt in Zaire,' *Le Soir* (Belgium), 17 November 1994 (in French). [D94](#)

Extract:

While waiting, the 38 MSF Belgium expatriates, divided between Kahindo and the different Kibumba sites, conti-

nue their mission. "The medical emergency is truly over," a physician explains. "Not long ago, we held between 50 and 60 consultations every day. Half were hospitalised, primarily for malaria. The mortality rate? Today it's 1.1 per 10,000 people/day, which is typical throughout Africa. But aid must continue because the preventive medical work is continuing full time. And the struggle against malnutrition is far from over."

On 20 November, the UN Secretary-General proposed deploying a peacekeeping force to the Zaire camps.



Afsané Bassir Pour, 'Security Council Expects to Deploy 2,000 to 3,000 Men in the Camps,' **Le Monde** (France), 23 November 1994 (in French). **D95** [↗](#)

Extract:

Concerned about lack of security in the Rwandan refugee camps, the Security Council is expected to adopt a resolution before the end of the month authorising the deployment of 2,000 to 3,000 'blue helmets' in Zaire... The UN Secretary-General is proposing to send a force to ensure the safety of staff of humanitarian organisations, guard food storage and distribution, and allow those refugees who choose to return home to cross the border safely. Initially, this force would establish security zones inside the camps for refugee reception. Motorised units would be deployed in a second phase to ensure that security is maintained in these zones.

With a force of 3,000 men, the operation could last between 24 and 30 months. However, in a report presented to the Security Council on Monday, 21 November Mr. Boutros- Ghali noted that 2,000 additional men would make it possible to shorten the operation by nearly 10 months. Security Council members are determined to launch the operation before the end of November while the US still holds the Council presidency. Coincidentally, the schedule calls for Rwanda to take over the Security Council in December. After a mission inside the refugee camps, the Secretary-General's special representative Shaharyar Khan announced that the only way to guarantee refugee security is to separate members of the former government forces from the rest of the refugees and, if possible, settle them in a third country. Mr. Khan says the operation will be "extremely dangerous" because "they will not leave the camps willingly and will use armed force to avoid being dislodged."

On 24 November, MSF's Belgian and French sections issued a Press release criticising Boutros-Ghali's pro-

posals and calling for the adoption of more ambitious measures. MSF Holland issued a more qualified statement.



'Médecins Sans Frontières Criticises Boutros-Ghali's Proposals,' MSF France **Press release**, 24 November 1994 (in French).



'Médecins Sans Frontières Challenges Boutros-Ghali's Proposals,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 24 November 1994 (in French). **D96** [↗](#)

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières takes issue with the measures the UN Secretary-General recommended to the Security Council concerning deployment of an international force in the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire. Several options have been proposed to the Security Council. Those offered by Mr. Boutros-Ghali as the most 'realistic' pose serious problems.

1. The measures call for gradual deployment of blue helmets, whose key task is to protect humanitarian personnel. Médecins Sans Frontières will not accept military protection. Rather, priority should be given to protecting the refugees, who are victimised daily by intimidation, abuses and killings.
2. While the report emphasises the 'leaders' responsibility for insecurity within the camps, the proposed measures do not provide for separating them from the rest of the refugees, apparently through lack of resources. The genocide's perpetrators enjoy complete impunity for their crimes and are reinforcing their power through the use of aid.
3. Mr. Boutros-Ghali's plan calls for 'safe zones,' where members of the former Rwandan police force - A party to the genocide - and Zairean soldiers will take over from the UN. It is completely unacceptable to strengthen the power of the former Rwandan police. In addition, Zairean forces have not yet proven themselves capable of maintaining fair and equitable order in the camps.
4. Deploying a force in the Tanzanian camps is not treated as a priority, suggesting that the situation there is acceptable. In fact, the Tanzanian refugee camps are organised identically to those in Zaire. They are controlled by representatives of the former Rwandan government, army and militia members and leaders of the genocide.

Médecins Sans Frontières calls for:

- Separation of the members of the former government, the army and the militias from the rest of the refugees;
- The arrest and trial of the genocide's perpetrators;
- The international community to take control of all refugee camps (Zaire and Tanzania);
- The international community to immediately join the battle against insecurity inside Rwanda so that conditions favourable to the refugees' return can be created.

Some of these recommendations appear in the second series

of Mr. Boutros-Ghali's proposals. The Security Council must do everything possible to adopt more ambitious measures.



Ed Shenkenberg, 'MSF **Position** on deployment of international force in Rwandese refugee camps' (**Draft**), MSF Holland, 23 November 1994 (in English). **D97**

Extract:

After several weeks of assessments, talks and negotiations within UN-circles, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued his report on the security in the Rwandese refugee camps early this week. In this report, the S.G. launched two options for a mandate of an international force, which would be deployed in the camps. This position paper will briefly outline the respective mandate. In addition, it shall be indicated to which extent these mandates are in line with the tasks of the international police force, recommended earlier by MSF.

It should be mentioned that, regardless of the option to be chosen, the S.G. supports measures promoting bilateral agreements with the Zairian or Tanzanian authorities through which security experts can be made available in order to train and monitor national security forces.

In the first option, the S.G. envisages a peacekeeping force of 3,000 troops for the area around Goma and 2,000 for the region south of Lake Kivu (Bukavu and Uvira). These forces would be deployed in two phases and are mandated to:

- Provide security for international relief workers,
- Protect the storage and delivery of humanitarian assistance,
- Provide a safe passage to the border for those refugees who wish to return.

This peacekeeping force would create safe areas in the camps where weapons are not allowed and humanitarian assistance could be intensified. After the formation and training of local security guards, those could take over the security functions under the supervision of UN-security personnel. The S.G. indicates as a timeframe for this operation a period of 24 to 30 months, depending on the development of the situation and the rate of repatriation. If the total number of 5,000 troops is deployed at full strength at once, the operation would take 10 months. The second option involves the deployment of 10,000 to 12,000 troops, who can use all means necessary, including force. This force is either an UN-operation or is initiated and led by one or a small group of Member States (like the French operation in the zone Turquoise). Besides the above-mentioned tasks, their mandates would be:

The separation of the former political leaders, the military and militia from the refugees.

The Secretary General believes it necessary that this force would be able to use force, since the separation and movement of the leaders, military and militia could create insecurity.

From this it can be concluded that both options include tasks which MSF has recommended to be taken up by an international force as formulated in the report 'Breaking the cycle'. MSF should continue to advocate these measures, rather than promoting one specific option. It is also worth noting that the S. G. pointed out that the deployment of troops is futile if it is not carried out as the same time as national reconciliation in Rwanda and the creation of conditions allowing a safe return for the refugees.

In comparison with the MSF recommendations, the proposals of the S.G. to involve former Rwandese gendarmerie in the maintenance of law and order in the camps should be questioned. Another point, which is not included in the mandate, is the arrest of alleged perpetrators of the genocide. Furthermore, the force should assist in the registration of the refugees. The necessity of the deployment of troops in the camps in Tanzania should be assessed immediately.

In conclusion, MSF supports the report of the Secretary General and his proposals for an international force. As always, problems will arise over the willingness of the members States to implement a UN decision to deploy troops. Therefore, MSF should continue its advocacy and lobbying.



Minutes of the MSF France Board meeting, 25 November 1994 (in French). **D98**

Extract:

Dominique Martin commented on the press release on Rwanda following Boutros Boutros-Ghali's proposals.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali offered three options:

a) The dispatch of 5,000 blue helmets to Zaire under a UN mandate and charged with protecting expatriates and refugees, but without organising the leaders' physical separation from the rest of the refugees.

Creating safe zones with Zairean soldiers and Rwandan police (innocent of crimes?)

As the French will not be intervening, which French-speaking forces?

b) There will undoubtedly not be enough money for 5,000 blue helmets ...

The dispatch of 10,000-12,000 blue helmets under a UN mandate, organising the leaders' separation from the rest of the refugees.

Solution set aside as unrealistic, even if we at MSF think it is the correct one.

c) International force, outside a UN mandate.

MSF issued a press release denouncing the risks of half-measures. Sending weak forces means they will have to negotiate with the leaders in order to protect themselves. This would, obviously, be an unwelcome result (Bosnia all over again) and does not address the totalitarian structures in the camps and ignores Tanzania.

On Monday, MSF will send a letter to the Security Council members emphasising that the solution to the camps' situation is to be found in Rwanda. To put it simply, the refugees must be permitted to return home to Rwanda and their return must be organised.

At this time, the situation is worsening (racist Tutsi coming from Burundi) and society is fragmented. The international community expects results from a government that lacks the means. It would be necessary both to provide resources and establish some system of monitoring. MSF and Oxfam signed a statement denouncing the blockage of European Community and World Bank funds for Rwanda and demanding that these funds be released before the worst occurs.

On 24 November, the inter-section meeting scheduled during the Kigali meeting was held in Amsterdam. MSF France was unable to convince the other sections to stop their programs in the camps. MSF Holland declared that it was ready to take over the French section's programs in Lumasi, Tanzania.⁷



Minutes of the MSF France Board meeting, 25 November 1994 (in French). [D98](#)

Extract:

Brigitte Vasset reported on the 24 November 1994 inter-section meeting.

Summary: At the last board of directors meeting, MSF France decided to withdraw from the Rwandan refugee camps. Six weeks later, the MSF sections held another operations meeting (yesterday, in Amsterdam). The results are that:

After Bukavu, we will withdraw from Benaco.

Only MSF F will withdraw from the camps on that date.

For now, the question of MSF B and MSF H withdrawing is not on the table. The Dutch analysis is that the situation in Goma is not deteriorating and that there is less violence in the camps. They feel that there are no significant changes, for better or for worse, in Benaco. The Dutch program manager has said he is ready to help UNHCR make up for our withdrawal. The Spanish and the Swiss seem to be taking a close look at the issue of their withdrawal. The Spanish, Swiss and Belgians are clear that they will not take over our work in the camps.

In practical terms:

We will leave Benaco in two or three weeks, again clarifying the reasons for our withdrawal.

We will inform the other sections of our position.

The other sections have no veto power regarding communications on our withdrawal.

The Dutch section has requested that we meet in three weeks to discuss our differences again.

This morning, there was a serious incident in Katala. Six persons are said to have been killed and the NGOs are reported to have evacuated the camp. This information remains to be confirmed. During the operations meeting

in Amsterdam, a forceful speech about events in the camps led to an effort at reconciliation. We did everything we could to bring people together around our position by showing the isolation of the Dutch, but despite support from other sections, no one else joined us in our decision to withdraw. If other sections do not commit within a reasonable period of time and if the situation does not change, there will be real trouble at the international level.


One way to look the situation is to say that the Dutch are isolated. Another way is to note that in the field, people are following the Dutch position. Beyond the more general discussion about MSF's internationalisation, what we observe are the fundamental differences between the Dutch and us on the very question of MSF's identity. Yesterday we explained why we were withdrawing from the camps and all we heard back from them on their decision to stay was, "If there are needs, we're there." Yesterday the differences were finally brought into the open in front of all the sections. MSF F and MSF H have different cultures and notions about what humanitarianism means. The Dutch notion is based on the very Anglo-Saxon concept of individual aid to victims. The Dutch managers feel this is not the time for a fundamental debate. They're agreeing to things they do not believe in. So now we've gotten to the point of 'parliamentary' meetings where they're hiding their positions for tactical reasons! Cooperation under such conditions is difficult. We need to understand the MSF H decision-making structure.

Despite several attempts, MSF F's board of directors was unable to discuss this question with MSF H or participate in a board meeting or open debate ... It's not clear that MSF H has had a deep internal discussion. That's very serious in terms of organisational relationships. Let's not reinforce the "French-centric" reflex. If a proposal were made to break off from the Dutch tomorrow, it's quite possible that no one else would follow the French section. If there were support for the analysis that MSF cannot stay in the camps, the ideal would be for the other sections to withdraw at their own pace.




When I came back to Holland in the first week of November, we had a meeting in Amsterdam with all the sections — France, Belgian, Swiss, Spain, and Holland. We discussed leaving the camps. This meeting I will remember very well because everybody was very angry, upset, frustrated. It seemed that we couldn't pass the message why Paris felt so strongly about leaving the camps. I think that we weren't listening to one another. Everybody had his or her own opinions. After that meeting there was silence between the sections. There was little communication in 1995.

Wilna Van Aartsen, MSF Holland Emergency cell, then deputy programme manager (in English).

 It was an amazing meeting. What was most shocking was that MSF Holland offered to take over MSF France's programs in Lumasi camp. The team did not want to just walk out of the hospital so I had been discussing with Christian Outreach, a British NGO, to take over from us in the camp. But MSF Holland said they would take over! I was really angry. But Jean-Hervé [Bradol, MSF France programme manager] provocatively said: "For me it makes no difference if it is Christian Outreach or MSF Holland. They are the same"! I strongly disagreed, saying, "no way, you cannot take over. We already have a weak position with only one section leaving, but if another MSF section takes over, it will totally undermine our stance!" At least in the end they did not take over our programs.

Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania,
Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).

Those who supported staying on - primarily within the Belgian and Dutch sections - believed that in the first instance the threat to leave was sufficient denunciation of the violation of humanitarian principles. The more widely-held position, particularly among field teams, was that medical ethics do not permit the abandonment of patients who still need help. For others, to withdraw meant to sit in judgement and punish those who diverted aid.

 I was surprised and not happy when the decision was taken because we perceived it in the field as headquarters deciding that we, MSF, are going to leave the camps. And at that moment it was perceived as a completely strange decision because we were very busy trying to get everything under control, the trends were going in the right direction and we felt like we were abandoning the people. We felt that it was our duty to make sure that normal mortality rates and morbidity rates were being achieved. Then out of the blue there was this message that we are going to leave the camps because it housed perpetrators of the genocide. We knew that they were in the camps but there were a lot of discussions and a lot of anger about what to do. And in the end it did not happen. We actually left the camps in August 95, a year later.


If you have a kilo of food, you cannot say, "this kilo of food is only to be consumed by the good guys and not by the bad guys". First of all who are we to make judgements? We can have judgements but we cannot use our aid to punish the bad guys. That is not the role of a medical organisation. In the end it is up to a judge to decide who is to be punished. So yes, we recognised the problem but we are not going to be the court. We are not going to say "you are the bad guy, therefore you are not going to get food anymore". I

also think that using aid like that is politicizing it. It's what others are doing and we are against that and shouldn't do it. We can have an opinion about the camps but we cannot use the provision of aid to distinguish between a good and a bad guy. We can only advocate for what is wrong in the camp. We can say, "there is a military force in the camps". But we are not allowed to decide that therefore we are going to pick out the food and you are not going to get food anymore. Because then we would put ourselves in the chair of the judge and would also be implementing the punishment. That is not our role. We can advocate, and we can highlight a problem, but we should not use our relief - be it health care, be it food or be it water - to distinguish between good and bad.

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Coordinator in Tanzania,
July 1994 to March 1995 (in English).

Others within the Belgian section and Humanitarian Affairs Department of MSF Holland believed that by leaving, MSF was depriving itself of access to first-hand information on developments in the camps and, thus, of the opportunity to back up its charges with real-world experience. They advocated a strategy of 'humanitarian resistance' and 'fighting from within'; staying on to provide medical care while carrying out concrete acts of resistance in an effort to improve the situation.



Letter from the MSF Belgium Coordinator in Goma to MSF Belgium Board of Directors, 6 November 1994 (in French). [D88](#) 

Extract:

Withdrawal is a synonym for silence. It's more than giving up, it's abdicating responsibility! MSF's ability to be subversive comes from its presence on the ground. Its accusations are supported by day-to-day knowledge and experience... I am convinced that there is room to manoeuvre in the field. Certainly not for MSF all alone. We've got to break out of our isolation and not get bogged down in it, like MSF France. While MSF France was deciding on its scorched earth policy 14 NGOs, representing 60 percent of the aid provided in Goma, signed a statement threatening the world at large that we would withdraw... The UN is getting worked up and the refugees are frightened. Even the monster is worried and has requested a meeting with UNHCR for reassurance (in Kibumba). The breach has opened, now is the time to impose the census, fight the monster step-by-step in the field, impose our maison de la Femme and our surveys, maybe even an international force. And this is when MSF France is clearing out. We've got to follow through to the end of our operational resources. I am for humanitarian resistance in Goma, not for an acceptance of the current situation.

Those who supported withdrawal were primarily within the French section, but also included a minority in the other sections. They felt that humanitarian principles could not be pushed aside in the name of medical action. They were unwilling to continue supporting the perpetrators of genocide by remaining in the camps. To them, denouncing an intolerable situation without linking action with words was neither logical nor effective.



Everybody said publicly that control of the camps by the authors of the genocide was unacceptable. There were plenty of people ready to talk about it, Mrs Ogata of UNHCR the first. There was an important declaration by UNHCR before MSF's that pointed out the system in the camps. Of course, MSF Holland produced an excellent descriptive report about how the former government, Interahamwe and military apparatus controlled the camps, particularly in Zaire. In terms of describing what was happening in the camps, there was no problem. There was no problem of that nature with the other sections, everyone had the same diagnosis. But on the practical conclusion to draw from this, we could not agree at all.

Everyone should have left at the same time. Yet the other sections remained for another year. The leaders remained in the camps. MSF teams collaborated for a year against their will. They fought to reduce salaries, limit the theft of aid as much as possible, thinking that this benefited the genocidaires. They spoke of resisting from the inside. We felt that it was collaboration, but they have their point of view and we have ours. Of course it would have been better if everyone had left but it was sufficient to discuss with the others for 5 minutes to realise that they were not going to leave...

Dr. Jean-Hervé Bradol, MSF France Programme Manager (in French).

The international Press reported the different perspectives gathered from aid workers in the field, including MSF's.



*'A Tiny Bandaid on a Gaping Wound. Goma, Beneath the Volcano - Kahindo, Kibumba,' **Le Soir** (Belgium), 2 December 1994 (in French). [D99](#)*

Extract:

But what is most intolerable is the idea that they are witnessing, even participating in, preparations for a new bloodbath. In October, former Rwandan Prime Minister,

Jean Kambanda, also in exile, visited the Kibumba camp. He reportedly asked the fired-up crowd if its members would prefer to return to Rwanda peacefully or by violent means. According to a Dutch NGO's internal report, the refugees yelled out, "War!" "Humanitarian action is virtually useless. It's like sticking a bandaid on a gunshot wound," says a European volunteer. Others, sometimes within the same organisation, question that view. "If you want to earn the refugees' respect, you can't take a position," says a trainee psychiatric nurse who manages a nutrition centre in Kibumba. "The day I take a position, that's the day I leave this place. And the day my organisation decides to withdraw, I leave them on the spot." You don't have misgivings about the fact that you're also feeding people who carried out genocide? People who sometimes readily admit that they still have 'work to finish'? "Listen, on the one hand, my job is to treat malnourished children," she says. "They had nothing to do with the genocide. On the other, if you're really going to ask yourself those ethical questions, you shouldn't help anyone here anymore. Not even the kids. Because given the massacres they've seen and the hate they're bound to learn here from the violence, their only goal in life will be to return to Rwanda and kill there. If you start thinking like that, you say to yourself, "We're taking care of future murderers," and you never find a way out."

On 25 November, MSF International and OXFAM asked the European nations to release aid to Rwanda, which had been blocked at France's initiative.



*'Aid Agencies criticise France for blocking European Union Aid for Rwandan Reconstruction', MSF International and MSF UK **Press Release**, 25 November 1994 (in English). [D100](#)*

Extract:

The aid organisations OXFAM and Médecins Sans Frontières asked European Union development ministers gathered in Brussels on Friday, 25 November to provide Rwanda with immediate aid necessary to rebuild its ruined economy and social infrastructure... "We are saving the lives of thousands of refugees in neighbouring countries but this work will have been in vain if Rwanda cannot rebuild its ruined country," said Alain Destexhe, secretary-general of MSF International in Brussels. "Without appropriate reconstruction aid, we will only prolong the refugees' agony, condemning them to a life of misery in the camps, while the world turns away from their suffering."

In late November, MSF France mounted an information campaign to explain its withdrawal from the Rwandan camps to the Press and donors.



'The Massoud Strategy, or How to Leave While Getting People to Pay Attention to Your Ideas,' **Strategy paper** by the MSF France communications director, 29 November 1994 (in French). **D101**

Extract:

Context:

MSF is leaving all the Rwandan camps (at the Zairean and Tanzanian borders). It's a question of principle, ethics and morals(!). After fattening up the leaders and participating, de facto, in the failure to punish those who perpetrated genocide, humanitarian aid cannot be complicit in a second genocide. We are leaving to pressure the international community (UN, UNHCR, governments - especially the French - and Europe) and to advocate our position.

Communications/Context:

The idea that the leaders control the camps has appeared in the press and elsewhere. But there are obstacles:

The current context has 'cooled-off' (unlike the emergency situation around Rwanda/Goma, when we didn't have time to take stock of what was happening). Some politicians have also intentionally confused things (Mitterrand is talking about two genocides!). There's also a recurring notion that this has to do with 'black savagery' (certain killings committed by the RPF(!) are contributing to this impression). All this means that it will be more difficult to get MSF's message across.

Second obstacle: the victims ('you're abandoning people who need medical help!')

Final obstacle: giving the impression that we're not thinking straight and are blind to what's happening inside Rwanda.

All this requires us to:

- Make choices (about our communications) because it's difficult to try to say everything at the same time.
- Be very clear about our departure (including internal differences within MSF).
- Make specific demands: census, expulsion of leaders, refugee security, aid to Rwanda to guarantee repatriation, with observers, international tribunal, etc.

Message:

MSF is leaving all the camps in Zaire and Tanzania for reasons of principle. Medical needs are no longer what they were, etc.

COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR 1 DECEMBER – 25 JANUARY (POPULATIONS IN DANGER DAY)

Communication actions must alternate among substantive issues (discussion of ideas), factual information (departure from Benaco, report), media actions (to be defined) and lobbying. We must carry out our actions in France and

elsewhere (Nairobi, New York, Brussels, Tokyo, Sydney and London)

In France

Our message did, in part, get out during the departure from Bukavu and in various speeches (Rony, Alain, Dominique). It's hard to get it out faster without major events in the camps or in Rwanda.

Regarding the lobbying and media plan:

Look for external support on the issue to show that MSF is not isolated. Furthermore, why not contact other French NGOs to make them aware (even convince them) of our approach?

Recontact the politicians. To be defined. We can't go see them anymore just for informational purposes. We have to demand something.



'Philippe Biberson, 'The Camps of Hate', **Messages**, MSF France Internal publication, November 1994 (in French). **D102**

Extract:

Rwanda: We must leave the Rwandan refugee camps. They are perpetuating alienation and facilitating forced recruitment among the populations housed there. Aid provided to the Rwanda refugee camps helps deliver the refugees, bound hand and foot, to the leaders. Using murder and theft of civilian property, these leaders are determined to carry on the struggle to the bitter end. The camps offer no respite to the tens of thousands of families living there. Only by submitting to a camp administration wholly dedicated to control and manipulation can they be sure they will be safe. The organisation of humanitarian aid in these camps violates the international community's obligation to protect the refugees and find a lasting solution for them...

The dilemma is not so much whether to remain or to leave but how to leave in the most effective way possible, limiting the 'hostage' effect on the refugees and maximising the chances of being heard. Towards that end, we are undertaking a major consultative project with other NGOs, representatives of international organisations and their donors, as well as with governments. This departure is not an end in itself. It is an extreme position intended as much to safeguard our principles of action as to provoke a reaction.

It is always possible to work to change aid conditions in the camps. MSF supports UNHCR's initiatives toward that end. Even so, however clear and virtuous the initiatives may be, we do not have to support them if the means to carry them out are lacking. It's not a matter of gaining publicity or wanting to teach a lesson. Rather, the issue is making a statement: humanitarian aid is maintaining segregation camps where purges are taking place, forced

recruitment is carried out, an entire society is becoming increasingly dependent, and fear and hatred of the 'other' are nurtured.



'Why We are Leaving the Rwandan Refugee Camps,' materials written for donors, MSF France, December 1994 (in French). [D103](#)

Extract:

We had to leave the Zairean and Tanzanian camps because humanitarian aid is helping to restore those who perpetrated genocide and because the refugees' dignity and safety are not guaranteed.

What is the responsibility of the NGOs?

Non-governmental organisations like MSF do not have an international mandate. Their only obligation is to honour their founding principles: a certain notion of what it means to be human, which is certainly not the one prevailing in the Rwandan refugee camps. In the face of a situation in which women and men are manipulated by an authority capable of genocide - the worst crime against humanity - the primary responsibility of a humanitarian organisation is to refuse to support such authority in any way. At the very least, such an organisation must not participate in the evil!

Avoiding the Politics of Destruction.

We must not, of course, stop there. We must continue to denounce the international community's negligence and call for radical changes in the management of these refugee camps. We cannot accept that women and men are killed every day before us and we are unable to protect them. We cannot allow our assistance to be diverted to serve the politics of destruction. We must refuse to accept the unacceptable so that last summer's human disaster does not become a 'humanitarian disaster,' a trap for non-governmental organisations. This dilemma presents a painful choice: engage to help deprived populations or respect our principles which means we must leave. To leave is to avoid the worst.

The Humanitarian Response.

For nearly 10 months, genocide and, later, the population's massive exodus have been treated exclusively as humanitarian disasters. Aid teams were sent out but the massacres were not stopped in time. Nothing was done to make it possible to render justice. In the camps, only the humanitarian response still prevails. Demands for justice have been pushed aside. Such a context warps the meaning of humanitarian action. Without a functioning legal and political system, providing care for the executioners means supporting the system one is fighting against.

What is MSF requesting?

Médecins Sans Frontières asks the international community to guarantee the security and safety of Rwandan refugees by committing to: break up the camp organisation;

isolate leaders who incite others to violence and disrupt aid distributions to the refugees; disarm militias and soldiers; conduct population censuses to avoid aid diversion; support deployment of an international police force in the camps; arrest the perpetrators of genocide and bring them to trial; fight insecurity in Rwanda; and, create conditions favourable to return of refugees.



Dominique Martin, 'Rwanda: Aid Corrupted,' *Le Figaro* (France), 2 December 1994 (in French).

Extract:

The surge of Rwandan refugees towards Zaire in mid-July provoked one of the most tragic emergencies of recent years and provoked widespread international reaction. Five months later, the French section of Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) denounces the génocidaires' hold on the refugee camps, and has decided to leave the camps. This choice, an isolated one for now, raises the question of the goals of humanitarian action. Can we refuse to aid a population in distress in the name of moral principles? ... Non-governmental organisations like MSF do not have an international mandate. Their only obligation is to honour the principles on which they are based: a certain notion of what it means to be human, which is certainly not the one prevailing in the Rwandan refugee camps. In the face of a situation in which women and men are manipulated by an authority capable of genocide - the worst of crimes against humanity - the primary responsibility of a humanitarian organization is to refuse to support such authority in any way. At the very least, such an organisation must not participate in the evil!

We must refuse to accept the unacceptable so that last summer's human disaster does not become a 'humanitarian disaster, a trap for non-governmental organisations. This dilemma presents a painful choice: to engage in helping deprived populations or respect our principles and leave. Leaving means avoiding the worst. On 30 November 1994, the UN Security Council postponed indefinitely Boutros-Ghali's proposal to create a special international force charged with restoring camp security.

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'Refugee Camps: UN Postpones Possibility of Deploying Blue Helmets Until Next Year,' **Agence France Presse (AFP)**, 1 December 1994 (in French).

Extract:

On Wednesday, the Council asked Mr. Boutros-Ghali to first consult with "the countries that might provide contingents" to see if they would be ready to participate in the operation he is recommending. Mr. Boutros-Ghali is to present a new report "as soon as possible" (not before next January, according to diplomats) presenting "a detailed description of the objectives, rules of engagement and the cost of such an operation." In the interim, the Security Council suggested a preliminary intervention "whose purpose would be to provide immediate assistance to Zairean security forces to protect humanitarian operations in the camps." The Council also raised the possibility of deploying "security specialists, dispatched by UN member States or recruited under contract, to instruct and supervise local security forces."

The Council emphasised that after the events that shook Rwanda this year, the new Kigali government needs "immediate and considerable financial aid," specifically to restore security inside the country, ensure that order is maintained and allow the economy to recover. Further, on Wednesday the Security Council adopted a resolution to extend the mandate of the UN Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), which includes 5,500 blue helmets, by six months to 9 June 1995. The Council noted that UNAMIR shall "contribute to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees and civilians in danger, notably via the creation and maintenance, where possible, of protected zones for humanitarian purposes." UNAMIR must also guarantee security and support for aid distribution and humanitarian aid operations, help guarantee the safety of the staff of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, and help to establish and train a new integrated police force.

On 7 December, the MSF Belgium Board affirmed that the section's strategy was to continue working in the camps, monitor the situation, and Press for improvements.



Minutes of the MSF Belgium Board meeting, 7 December 1994 (in French). **D104**

Extract:

Board of directors visit to the camps and MSF-B's position: W. Van Damme
The mission's report and conclusions are attached as appendices.

- E. Goemaere emphasised that the political situation in the camps is not improving and that the issue of withdrawal is still alive.

- W. Van Damme noted that compared to Liberia and Somalia, this situation remains manageable.

- The Rwandan context cannot be compared to those situations.

- The 24 November 1994 Amsterdam meeting raised the following dilemma:

1. If we stay, the mood will be still tense.

2. If we leave, people in the camps will be at great risk.

- The current strategy is to stay where we are and press for improvements in the camps, refugees' freedom and security, and ethically and technically acceptable working conditions for NGOs.

Perhaps we should reverse our reasoning: leave and then announce that we will return when these conditions are met.

The executive asks that the board of directors take a position.

Conclusion:

There is no basis for taking a position.

The board supports the operations to date and how they are being managed. It emphasises that the discussion over leaving or staying should continue, that the camp situation be monitored closely and that any 'slippage' noted continues to be met with strong measures (as in the case of diversions in KO).

On 16 December, the MSF France Board held a discussion about the Rwandan refugees. Both the executive directors of MSF Belgium and MSF Holland attended.



Minutes of the MSF France Board meeting, 16 December 1994 (in French). **D105**

Extract:

Discussion with MSF B and MSF H regarding their position on the Rwandan refugee camps.

Eric Goemaere (MSF B) and Jacques de Milliano (MSF H)

Eric Goemaere:

When it was established that the camp leaders had also led the genocide and their role was condemned, the NGOs, certain agencies, and the international community took action.

Since then, little has happened and MSF B is trying to take a proactive position. We still believe we will have to leave the camps, but to do so today would violate our principles. There is interest in cutting back assistance. We reduced staff, salaries and medical facilities in the camps. We will not play 'hot potato' and pass the job off to others.

We are trying to encourage the refugees to support the

repatriation solution (without becoming involved in security) by promoting safety corridors and transit camps inside Rwanda (under protection of the international community while waiting for a solution).

There are huge property ownership issues because the Tutsi living in the Diaspora have returned and have occupied lands.

We share MSF France's analysis, but we are trying to develop a series of alternatives that will change the balance of power (rescue the people held hostage in the camps) and we ask you to involve us in that.

Serge said that our notion of humanitarianism is the same as the ICRC's. So let's talk about identity. Strategies may differ (and one may be better?) but they're not necessarily contradictory.

Jacques de Milliano:

Should we withdraw or maintain the ability to testify and push the international community to leave the camps? Who's right?

No one knows what MSF Holland did in the Netherlands. We spoke out and got things moving. I'm going to have the interviews translated so that you can read them.

Regarding the issue of Dutch soldiers in Goma, MSF International observed that the NGOs did not have the means to deal with the flow of people crossing the border.

1. We agreed with MSF International to request the soldiers to come
2. We pressured governments in an attempt to influence them
3. I lobbied the Dutch government and Dutch soldiers went to Rwanda
4. Then there was that damned idiocy of incorporating a few military medical specialists who hadn't been requested, and authorising them, out of uniform, to enter our facility. We were the ones who 'demilitarised' them, but it didn't work out because the cultures were too different.

Let's not engage in distortion. Undoubtedly, more interference is needed in our facilities, but not through MSF International. Something isn't working in MSF International and some sections have more 'activist' positions than others. We're not naïve, we are speaking out and it's not impossible that we will withdraw from the camps.

Discussion:

- The problem is not with MSFers. The people in the camps are being led by their own executioners. It's a question of human dignity (Marcel).
- Has MSF B set a deadline for leaving? And didn't MSF F's departure radicalise the position of the remaining organisations? Response: No, MSF F's departure had no effect, or maybe a marginal one. It was the diagnosis that got things moving.
- Philippe agrees that leaving is not the only option but wonders about the question of MSF's identity. In the camps, some organisations could not leave. MSF was, undoubtedly, the only one that could pursue that option profitably. It's too bad we didn't agree on that common

identity because a joint departure would have had a much greater impact.

- Brigitte noted the different points of view and emphasised that there are many missions where people do not reach agreement. If we need to debate MSF's identity, we should do it from top to bottom in the organisation. When program managers say, 'I'm in operations, not policy,' that has got to be part of the discussion.
- We cannot hide the fact that it is not working. There is a crisis of confidence in relation to MSF Holland. We don't feel like we're on the same team and there are significant concerns (Renaud).
- Jean-François thinks that Jacques de Mililani is using his very seductive way of speaking to try to find consensus. But he doesn't seem to be doing the same thing as the MSF Holland communications staff. That's not to say the French are better, but there's no basis for a shared discussion. Getting back to Rwanda, let's say the leaders controlling the camps are going to attack Rwanda tomorrow. What would we do? What would we say? What kind of tremendous responsibility would we have? This isn't a minor difference. It affects humanitarian ethics and it's a very significant break.
- Jean-Luc would like MSF H to attend the board of directors' discussions more regularly. Two years ago, there was a split between MSF F and MSF H and it's possible that we'll end up separating. Maybe there is a basic difference in our nature and in the way we think... Could a discussion like the one we're having here tonight take place at MSF H? It's the organisational structure that's being questioned. Response: A foundation in Holland is different to one in France.

For Eric, we've always been different and that's fine, but it seems there's a gulf between us that today has led to operational contradictions. We created the problem by failing to establish a bylaws provision that would allow the International office to handle this. The meetings were all very polite and everyone went back home with his or her own account of what happened... It was like watching the Soviet empire collapse. We're not listening to each other the way we used to, we don't respect each other any more - and it's getting worse. Without taking a nostalgic, backwards-looking approach, we've got to find a way to mediate this. Either we succeed in managing the future or the structure explodes. We in Belgium are aware of the depth of the crisis. It can't be addressed with half-measures.

A proposal was made to hold a board of directors meeting with MSF France and MSF Holland to address all these questions.

On 20 December, MSF France held a Press conference in Nairobi to announce that it would leave the Tanzania camps around Christmas. The journalists who attended were tired of hearing about those 'genocidal refugees.' They thought they'd already covered the issue a month ago when MSF withdrew from the Zaire camps. The New

York office distributed a Press release. The MSF France coordinator in Tanzania drafted a statement for use by the sections to help them respond more fully to journalists on MSF's dilemma.



“MSF withdraws teams from Rwandan Refugee Camps in Tanzania” MSF USA **Press release**, New York, 20 December 1994 (in English). **D106** [↗](#)

Extract:

Since May this year when the Rwandan refugees fled to Tanzania, Medecins sans Frontieres/Doctors without borders (MSF) has been running basic health programs for 75% of all refugees in the Tanzanian camps. There are 400,000 Rwandan refugees in Tanzanian.

This weekend Medecins sans Frontieres France withdrew its teams and ceased all operations in the Rwandan refugee camps of Tanzania, to protest against the abuse of humanitarian assistance in the camps.

“It is unacceptable that the international community allows humanitarian aid to so openly strengthen and legitimise the power of leaders of a regime which organized and perpetrated a genocide,” said Fiona Terry, Medecins sans frontieres/Doctors Without Borders field coordinator. Those leaders in the camps of Tanzania are the official and paid mediators between the aid agencies and the refugees. The leaders even select the candidates for the refugee police force or “guardians”, thus institutionalising their power.

Military training of refugees is openly conducted near the camps and the Rwandan leaders in the camps speak openly of retaking Rwanda by force.

Refugees in the camps are not free to choose whether to return or not. Killings and intimidation in the camps happen on a daily basis.

MSF France has ceased all operations in Lumasi camp (pop.100,000) and had pulled out last month, in protest too, from the Bukavu refugee camps in Zaire. MSF Holland, Spain and Switzerland continue to run basic health programs in the other camps of Tanzania and Goma, but are cosignatories of the November 25 statement threatening to leave the camps if the international community does not address the problem.

The abuse of humanitarian aid is unacceptable to all the MSF teams in the field. More teams will be forced to withdraw unless the international community addresses the security threats to refugees and humanitarian aid misuse in the camps.



“MSF France Withdrawal from the Rwandese Refugee camps in Tanzania” annex to MSF USA **Press release**, 20 December 1994 (in English). **D107** [↗](#)

Extract:

MSF was one of the first agencies to react to the Rwandese refugee crisis in May when thousands of refugees fled from Rwanda into Tanzania. The largest refugee camp in the world was created at Benaco, and international agencies flocked to the scene to avert a catastrophe. The obvious catastrophe was averted but, in its place, a more fundamental crisis has been created which challenges the very notion on which humanitarian actions are based. 7 months later, MSF France has decided to withdraw from the camps in Tanzania, having already left those of Zaire...

Moral dilemma

Is it acceptable for the international community to not only ignore the reality existing in the camps, but to directly contribute to the coercion and manipulation of a population by giving legitimacy and means to a leadership accused of perpetrating genocide? Is it acceptable to continue to support a “sanctuary” from which a military force can launch an attack on Rwanda, and perhaps finish the genocide that they commenced in April?

Many organizations recognize the dilemma with which they are faced, but, in the name of the innocence of the vulnerable, are resigned to accept it. This is understandable; MSF often finds itself operating in circumstances in which it is necessary to deal with the bad to access the innocent and vulnerable. But this situation is more extreme than others.

NGOs do not have a mandate to work in every situation where there are humanitarian needs; they make a choice for every situation they react to and for every one they ignore. NGOs have no other obligation than to respect the principles or charter on which they were founded; concepts of human dignity and basic freedoms are clearly being flouted in the Rwandese refugee camps. The difference between most situations and the one which we are currently faced is genocide, the worst of the crimes against humanity.

Moreover, it is the aid itself, which permits this structure to exist. To remain silent on this issue is to be an accomplice to this system of manipulation and control.

MSF raised this issue in May and June and again more strongly in October. The lack of a significant international response to this crisis and any improvement in the protection of refugees in the camps has made the situation unacceptable for MSF France and the organization will complete its withdrawal from Tanzania in mid-December. MSF will continue to lobby for an improvement in the situation and insists that the international community has an obligation to undertake the following:

1. In the wake of the commitment to the establishment of an international tribunal, concrete measures to activate this body must be undertaken as soon as possible.

2. An international police force must be deployed to the camps of Zaire and Tanzania to increase the individual protection of refugees, take the law enforcement out of the hands of the refugee leaders, and enable the investigation and arrest of those suspected of genocide in the camps.
 3. UNHCR must receive more support in terms of staff and authority in order to fully undertake its protection mandate thereby avoiding the necessity of guaranteeing peace in the camps through cooperation with the leaders.
 4. Following reports of Hutu extremists and Rwandese citizens implicated in the genocide seeking asylum in European Countries, we strongly request that asylum is refused and that these people be expelled from Europe.
- The withdrawal of MSF France from the Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire was an extremely difficult decision to take. It evokes the question: can we cease to aid a population in need in the name of moral principles? If we do not continually address the fundamental questions of the role, utilization, and objectives of humanitarian aid during each operation undertaken, how can we profess to represent or respect the fundamental principles on which the initial humanitarian actions were based? It is not always possible to achieve what is just, but at least we should not participate in that which is so obviously unjust.



'After Zaire, MSF Leaves Rwandan Refugee Camps in Tanzania,' **Agence France Presse (AFP)**, 20 December 1994 (in French).

Extract:

On Tuesday, the humanitarian organisation Médecins sans Frontières-France (MSF-France) announced in Nairobi that it would end its operations in the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire to protest against abuse of humanitarian aid by those responsible for genocide.

Those same reasons already prompted MSF-France to leave the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire. At that time, the organisation called for deployment of an international police force in the camps. It renewed that request on Tuesday, using its withdrawal from Tanzania as a new way to bring pressure on the international community.

During a press conference, Fiona Terry, MSF France's Tanzania coordinator asked, 'Is it acceptable to continue to obtain assistance for a 'sanctuary' from which a military force might launch an attack on Rwanda and, perhaps, finish off the genocide begun in April?' According to Terry, the camps are organised according to the Rwandan administrative structures that existed prior to the killings and are run by the same people who planned and conducted the genocide of the Tutsi (ethnic minority) and moderate Hutu.

She said that some of the 'leaders' are recruited by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and others are paid by UNHCR.



The press conference should have been better organised. There was only Samantha [Bolton, MSF International press officer] and I, we should have been more. We should have centralised more. There was a document produced by Paris and the French press were much better informed. But in the field we were more reticent to go far in our denunciation of the genocidaires' control of the camps because we feared putting the remaining MSF teams in danger. So that limited our possibilities of speaking out... Christmas is a very bad period for that type of thing. But I don't think that should have influenced the timing of our withdrawal at all.

Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania, Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).

An anecdote regarding the improper use of peanut butter donations weakened the force of the message about the situation in the camps.



We did the press conference in Nairobi. Philippe Biberson was supposed to come but he couldn't make it and so I was asked to do it. So I did it with Samantha. When I had written my paper and was planning to lobby the different embassies in Dar es Salaam I had asked Samantha to come with me because she was the press officer in Nairobi at the time. She came with me and of course when we were talking about the context with the ambassadors, who knew Tanzania quite well, we spoke about things that went beyond the reasons why MSF France was leaving the camps - we also talked about the camps in general. One of the problems that occurred in the camps was that there were donations coming from all over the world of different sorts of food and a lot of money. The level of care in the camps was very much higher than for the Tanzanian populations living around the camps. So this was a side issue we discussed. And the more funny side was that big donations of peanut butter had come from Argentina, and big donations of chilli con carne from Mexico. We didn't know what to do with this peanut butter so we had been mixing it with Unimix in feeding centres and we had been using the chilli con carne mixed with beans for the mothers' lunches. But the adverse effect was that some women seemed to be keeping their children malnourished so that they could stay in the feeding centre and eat this tastier lunch than they received from the normal rations. So this was one perverse effect of the high level of donations. Then we left Tanzania and were planning the press conference, Samantha found it very difficult to get journalists to come to the conference because a) it was close to Christmas, and b) they were sick of the whole story of the genocide - they were very cynical. They were also anti-NGO at that stage. So Samantha decided

to tell them about the peanut butter and the chilli con carne - she tried to attract them with these sorts of stories. I had no idea that she had done that. This was my first press conference. There were quite a good number of journalists. And so I started. I gave my speech about why we were leaving, and I didn't say anything else except all the reasons we had for leaving. And then questions came from the journalists. One of them was about the peanut butter and the chilli con carne. And being inexperienced with this sort of thing, I answered his question about the high level of aid and blah blah. The story that made the press the next day - all the way even to the *Bangkok Times* - was that MSF was leaving because there was peanut butter in the Unimix and chilli con carne in the beans. Our message was completely screwed up and I was absolutely devastated...

Very little from that press conference was published about why we were leaving the camps and the dilemma of the camps... It was the peanut butter story that came out. The journalists were just fed up with the story. It was the peanut butter story or nothing. There would have been no coverage. But it would have been better to have nothing than having the peanut butter story.

Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania, Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).

During a BBC debate between the MSF-France coordinator in Tanzania and the UNHCR spokesperson, the latter accused MSF teams of leaving the camps to spend the Christmas holidays at home. In a response published in *The Guardian*, MSF-UK's director commented that the statement reflected the inability of UN leaders to confront the political and moral problems posed by the camps.



Anne-Marie Huby, 'Moral Dilemmas of Aid to Rwanda', *The Guardian* (UK,) 24 December 1994 (in English). [D108](#)

Extract:

The comments by Chris Bowers, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Rwanda, about the pull out of the French branch of Médecins Sans Frontières from Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania (UN scoffs at aid agency pullout, *Guardian* December 22), reflect the inability of some UN officials to face up to the political and moral problems encountered by humanitarian aid agencies in the field.

MSF decided to partially withdraw from Rwandese refugee camps, first in Goma in November, and now in Benaco, Tanzania, to protest against the gross misappropriation of aid by the former Rwandese government. Before the eyes of relief workers, aid is being siphoned off by the militia and the former Rwandese army to support their current

military efforts. Aid is indeed served to them on a silver plate, as international agencies had no other choice at the start of the emergency but to hire the former killers as the aid organisers. This has all been seen before, in the Cambodian refugee camps in the 1970s, where aid boosted the Khmer Rouge's prestige and power over the refugees and allowed them to restore their military might.

The MSF decision is also a technical one: the flood of aid into the Rwandese refugee camps has become excessive. Chilli con carne has appeared on the refugee's feeding programme and peanut butter had been added to children's ready-to-eat rations to make them taste better. All these measures are hardly incentives to return home.

Instead of accusing MSF volunteer workers of wishing to go back home early for Christmas, Mr Bowers would have been well advised to wonder why huge amounts of Western aid keep flowing into refugee camps while reconstruction aid and support to human rights is still so slow in arriving in Rwanda itself. Privately, all aid officials deplore the West's 'humanitarian only' response to the Rwanda crisis, where the bulk of international resources is spent on refugee care, and nothing is done to prevent genocide or try its perpetrators. It is time we all joined forces to demand that the balance is redressed.



And then what made the whole thing much worse was that UNHCR was really pissed off with the move we were making and they decided to retaliate. They were very pissed off that we also complained about the high level of aid in the camps. They said that MSF had been a big part of establishing guidelines for aid in refugee camps and should not now criticise them... So there was a big fight with UNHCR at every level from headquarters right down to the field. The press officer of UNHCR [in Kigali], his name was Chris Bowers, attacked MSF on BBC saying that we were leaving because we want to spend Christmas in Europe and that our departure had nothing to do with any other issue. So the BBC phoned me for a response and we had this live debate on BBC between Chris Bowers and me. I'll never forget being interrupted in the middle of most of my sentences. He was really angry. And people in Geneva were very angry too about what was happening. It was a fight that lasted many years. But of course the peanut butter story was only the catalyst. The more important issue for UNHCR was that they felt they could never trust MSF again. If you can just pull out of a context like this, they asked, why should we trust you as a partner again?

Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania, Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).

The MSF France Tanzania coordinator spent January and February 1995 in the US to inform the media and national and international organisations about the

Rwandan refugees' situation and MSF France's decision to withdraw. She also called for an intervention to dismantle the camps' totalitarian structure.



Fiona Terry, USA-Australia **trip report**, 15 January - 15 February 1995, 15 February 1995 (in English). [D109](#)

Extract:

The talk given at the State Department was surprisingly well received and many pertinent questions were raised. The officials were particularly shocked to know the extent of the control of the camps and the direct assistance US money is giving to the leaders responsible for genocide. I was told that MSF France is well respected for its commitment to principles. Moreover, one official said that the concerns raised by MSF France would always be taken more seriously than those of other NGOs in light of our recent withdrawals.



MSF sent me around the US for a month after leaving the camps. I spoke at many universities and with the media. Alain Destexhe [MSF International Secretary General] did a lot of lobbying too and wrote articles. The work we did was more in-depth, explaining why we left in detail rather than with splash coverage, which in many ways I think is better, because it is not an easy message to pass to the general public: that you are leaving a refugee camp. But some academics and analysts did mention in articles why MSF was leaving. And then for the next two years, every time a story came out about the camps, it always mentioned that MSF had left the camps. So that was good.

Fiona Terry, MSF France coordinator in Tanzania, Sept to Dec 1994 (in English).

On 24 January 1995, at the launch of the book, Populations in Danger, MSF France and MSF International denounced the impunity enjoyed by people who committed genocide against the Rwandan Tutsi, specifically those living in the Zaire camps.



Press release and Publication advance notice of 'Populations in Danger 1995 - A Médecins Sans Frontières Report,' 25 January 1995 (in English). [D110](#)

Extract:

MSF denounces continued impunity for perpetrators of Rwandese genocide - New report highlights dangers of

Western inaction over genocide prosecution and shortcomings of 'aid-only' response to world crisis.

The lack of international resolve to bring the perpetrators of the Rwandese genocide to justice and disband their power base in refugee camps poses an increasing threat to Rwanda's survival. In *Populations in Danger*, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) denounces Western governments' slow legal response to the genocide despite a wealth of well-documented evidence.

Efforts to encourage more than one million refugees to return home from neighbouring countries and promote national reconciliation will end in failure unless justice is seen to be done. Not to judge the perpetrators and instigators of the genocide would not only be a terrible injustice, but a grave political error. Only political action and the punishment of mass murderers will offer any hope of making leaders think twice before playing the ethnic card to tighten their slackening grip on power.

International inaction over the Rwandese genocide continues to this day.

In contradiction to both 1948 Convention on Genocide and the 1949 Geneva Conventions, legal action taken in France and Belgium by survivors of the genocide and families of the victims against Rwandese former officials has been consistently delayed since the summer of 1994.

(...) Western governments have been paying lip service to the United Nations Tribunal for Rwanda, which was created last November. The Tribunal has hardly received any funding: only Switzerland has committed 100,000 Swiss Francs to the international Trust Fund for the Tribunal. The UN Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has its own acute funding problems. Only a quarter of its \$28 million budget for 1995 has been found so far. This contrasts with peacekeeping costs of over one billion US dollars a year for the former Yugoslavia. MSF calls on governments to make funds available urgently for the United Nations tribunals as a key gesture of support for international efforts towards peace and reconciliation.

Population in Danger also looks at the lack of international support for justice in Rwanda as a by-product of the narrowly 'humanitarian' policy of Western countries in the region. Refugee camps outside Rwanda remain the main beneficiaries of Western relief aid, which helps the former government tighten its grip over the refugees and boosts its military capability.

According to the introduction, "...all over the world, there is unprecedented enthusiasm for humanitarian work. It is far from certain that this is always in the victims' best interests. In dealing with countries in ongoing wars of a local nature, humanitarian aid has acquired a near-monopoly of morality and international action. It is this monopoly that we seek to denounce. Humanitarian action is noble when coupled with political action and justice. Without them, it is doomed to failure and, especially in the major media crises, becomes little more than a plaything of international politics, a conscience-saving gimmick."

Médecins sans Frontières remains the only foreign aid agency to have partially withdrawn from refugee camps in

eastern Zaire and Tanzania in protest against the misappropriation of aid by the former administration of Rwanda now running the camps.

For several months, the MSF Belgium section had been implementing its 'humanitarian resistance' strategy. Its objective was to try to limit the leaders' control and violence in the camps. Along with other organisations, MSF Belgium pressured UNHCR to conduct a population count in all the camps, even offering to provide vehicles and staff. The census enabled MSF to show that the Kahindo camp population was inflated by 30 percent. MSF Belgium also reduced the salaries of local staff to limit the quantity of tax imposed by the génocidaires, and salaries were paid in Zairian currency instead of US dollars. Those affected by these unpopular measures became hostile towards MSF volunteers.



Minutes of the MSF Belgium Board meeting, 11 January 1995 (in French). **D111**

Extract:

There has been little or no change in the situation since mid-December, although the UN has passed some not-very-operational resolutions (no functioning tribunal, no separation of refugees and militias, etc.)

However, we must note that:

- There has been little diversion of aid,
- There is a sense that security has 'improved' (refugees are now willing to talk about repatriation and it appears that the leaders have less control over them),
- We feel strongly that repatriation can be accelerated under these conditions.

MSF Conclusions:

- Refugee health indicators are quite good and there is even a tendency to do too much for them.
- If we withdraw, we will be leaving the job to NGOs that are less particular about humanitarian principles.
- The proposal is to remain in exchange for certain program adjustments:
 - Reduce assistance to a minimum,
 - Reduce salaries considerably,
 - Continue to lobby to win other NGO support for the same strategy,
 - Increase campaigns to inform refugees and provide medical aid for repatriation,
 - Ongoing monitoring at security and repatriation.

This must be monitored closely and reviewed during an upcoming board meeting.



'Goma: Humanitarian Resistance or Withdrawal?'
Editorial written by the MSF Belgium coordinator in Goma, 23 January 1995 (in French).
D112

Extract:

And then there is humanitarian aid, which is undoubtedly keeping a monster alive via food aid diversion, 'taxes' on our employees' salaries and thefts. And this monster is preparing its armed return by using the population as shields and hostages. What if working in the camps means that we are the génocidaires' accomplices? That is a dilemma. We had to respond to that deadlock. We had to respond to that dilemma ...

To respond to the dilemma we faced in Goma (stay and risk becoming complicit versus leave and risk abandoning our medical mandate and vulnerable populations held hostage), we had to do more. We had to be advocates, of course, but we also had to be active in the field, fight aid diversion, the leaders' grip over the camp and their propaganda, and become involved in protecting refugees. Above all else, we had to take an activist role with respect to the international community by denouncing the political status quo and UNHCR's evasiveness.

Conditional Presence for MSF

So are we complicit? My answer is a definite 'no.' Collaborating with key NGOs, MSF has room to manoeuvre to influence the situation. We've got to follow through with all our operational resources.

However, the day that space disappears (problems of insecurity, lack of real impact), then the conditions for our presence in Goma will no longer be met and then we will have to withdraw. Our activities will be taken up by other, purely charitable organisations that are not involved in human rights. MSF will be able to redirect its resources towards Rwanda and other populations in danger.

I would like to clarify further that the position of humanitarian resistance is an initiative promoted from the field. The teams have discussed it very openly and often. We have not reached unanimity but there is a solid consensus and headquarters has given its complete support.

In the meantime, the Goma field teams are laying-off staff, closing programs, restructuring, and exposing themselves daily to resentment from employees and the population. They need a lot of courage, moral strength and unwavering solidarity. And they need a strong sense of humour... Having shared so much with them over three months, I offer them a heartfelt salute and my respect.



I had a heated debate with the UNHCR over this coalition. It was in public, in front of sixty people. They knew they had a gun at their heads and we couldn't let them start with their moral discourse again.

The second confrontation took place with the leaders of the

genocide. I found myself face to face with the 200 leaders of Kibumba in the big tent where the UNHCR negotiated food distribution every week. I told the leaders, "MSF will leave unless you meet these conditions... It's up to you." A chill fell across the room and they were very aggressive towards us. I had the support of the Red Cross Federation and some from the UNHCR, but essentially it was a head-on debate between MSF and the genocide leaders. I told them, "You are responsible for what happens to the humanitarian assistance; you divert it, you threaten patients, and you steal things." I went on, "The feeding centre has been pillaged so we've had to close it. Too bad for your wives and children! This is your responsibility and next time, we'll close the entire camp." I left the meeting and went to the feeding centre where we had begun packing up and loading everything into a big lorry. 3,000 men with machetes had surrounded the four expatriates and a dozen Congolese loading the lorry. I tried to push back the men holding the machetes and knives, telling them, "Don't touch the equipment. It doesn't belong to you. I've just been speaking to your leaders in the tent," and gave them the names of their leaders. We put all the essential equipment into the lorry, and all that was left were a few semi-permanent materials, the planks, a pipe for the kitchen in the feeding centre, and three posts. Suddenly the 3,000 men rushed forward and there was nothing left. While we were there physically trying to stop these people, the UNHCR representative was watching us through binoculars from the top of a hill. We got a bit scared. We didn't feel good about the situation. I think the fact that we were white, that we were expatriates, protected us somehow. They wouldn't dare touch us. That's Rwanda for you. The Japanese troops came down from the hill in four vehicles. We said to ourselves, "they're coming to help us". We watched the military lorries drive down the track in front of the camp, waving the victory sign to us as they went past. They had better things to do elsewhere rather than stop and bring back order, which was in fact their mandate. It was hilarious. I was one of those four expatriates and I came away from it with an extraordinary memory.

Alex Parisel, MSF Belgium Coordinator in Goma,
October 1994 to March 1995 (in French).

Headquarters and field teams of the Dutch section differed over distribution of the report, 'Breaking the Cycle.' Headquarters continued to distribute it but the teams felt it endangered their safety. They asked that the possibility of withdrawing from the camps no longer be discussed publicly.



"Report on my visit to Zaire (Goma) and Rwanda (Kigali) - 3-11 January 1995" by Hanna Nolan, from MSF Holland Humanitarian Affair Department - 12 January 1995 (in English).
D113

Extract:

On several occasions great concern was expressed once more about the communication process surrounding the report "Breaking the cycle". Team members were worried about not having been aware that Amsterdam was preparing a report, about their fears for the security of the team, which had not been taken seriously by Amsterdam, and about some of the recommendations, although the content of the report was not really the issue. Miscommunication between HQ and field was identified as one of the main causes of the above concerns.

Advocacy should be done in the field. The field felt overruled in the final decision to publish despite their concerns and concluded that the project manager should have the final say in such matters.(...)

- There is improvement on a number of MSF indicators. Team wants to stop talking about withdrawal. This should be clearly discussed and established in a strategic meeting at HQ level. It is the team's view that lobbying should continue, but not with such public tools as the report "Breaking the Cycle". We should focus more on the situation in Rwanda.

- Field and HQ are on different tracks regarding advocacy. This needs to be resolved internally first in MSF-H before we can tackle it in inter-section context. There is an urgent need for discussion between field and HQ or else we risk that the gap will become wider and wider. We need to identify fora in which this can be discussed. (Emergency teams weekly meeting on advocacy, coordinators days, invitation to participate in working groups at HQ and in field, discussion in 'In and Outs'). Especially the question of whether advocacy should be a separate core activity needs to be resolved.

- Also more emphasis on informing new volunteers about advocacy HEP/LTC and more attention to this topic by project managers. But even at the interview stage HRM should make time to talk for 10 minutes about the fact that when you join MSF you join not only a humanitarian relief organization but also an organization, which speaks out about the fate of the victims it works for.

We should know more about the conditions inside Rwanda in terms of safety of returnees. As long as we do advocacy on the refugee camps we need to maintain the post of legal officer. I propose that the legal officer currently based in Goma continues her work until June and that she spends one month in Rwanda to make an assessment on whether a separate post is needed there.

On 1 February, the General Secretary of MSF International said in a letter to the section presidents that the MSF movement must again seriously consider withdrawing from the camps.



Message from Alain Destexhe, Secretary General of MSF International, to the presidents of the MSF sections, 1 february 1995 (in French). **D114**

Extract:

Update on the camps

Please find attached the very interesting report by Alex Parisel, MSF Belgium's coordinator in Goma. As I already told him, I find the conclusion completely contradicts the analysis made.

Almost seven months have passed (more in Benaco). We have long been aware of the dilemma caused by our presence in the camps. At the international meeting in Kigali, and in the discussions, which followed (see Dominique Martin's report [summary report] and pages 12-13 of 'Breaking the cycle' by MSF Holland), we considered leaving the camps without coming to any firm decision, with the following points in mind:

Humanitarian needs

Breaking the cycle of impunity

The deployment of an international force

Census taking

1.Humanitarian needs

At the Kigali meeting in November, some people felt we should stay because malnutrition was still a problem and some groups remained in a vulnerable situation. Thanks to the international community's generosity, the refugees are now well fed and are better off than the people in Rwanda and Zaire (the rate of malnutrition in the camps is now 2%, whereas in Kinshasa city, the rate is 9%).

2.The fight against impunity

In the spirit of the Kigali meeting, this struggle requires a practical approach: identifying the main instigators and their leaving the camps. The international community has done nothing and an international Tribunal that exists only in theory will not change the situation in the camps in a practical manner.

3.The deployment of an international police force

Boutros was clear when he said, 'there will not be an international police force'. The Zairian alternative is not a possibility, as it cannot break the leaders' control in the camps. I have often heard at MSF that 'our lobbying works' and that 'it was the best we have ever done', because Boutros finally gave in (after the Kigali meeting). But results alone are what count. There will not be an international force, and therefore there is no way of breaking the so-called authorities' control over the people.

4.Census taking

This last point is not the most important one because, as it was pointed out, the situation was similar in Benaco where the census was carried out. The census is finally

being made in Goma, after six months during which 'the leaders' have been able to steal or sell whatever they wanted. Distribution is carried out in a more visible manner, but this changes nothing as it is still done through the authorities. Clearly the authorities have changed tactics but not strategy. Now that the individual declarations recognising the massacres have finished, the war effort has been hidden. To international organisations, we provide a suitable front. I feel this is mainly a public relations strategy, and has an air of déjà vu (don't you think, Eric?). We should be under no illusion about this.

Obviously MSF France has not played by the rules (six weeks of observation and lobbying) before deciding to leave. This is what some call 'French arrogance'. Meanwhile, MSF Spain is also leaving Benaco. Since then, I have seen no positive developments regarding the criteria we set ourselves. I also feel that the entire organisation should seriously reconsider leaving the refugee camps.

On 7 February, MSF Belgium teams ceased their activities in the Kibumba camp after receiving death threats.



Letter from the Director of Operations, MSF Belgium to the Africa Director, UNHCR, 6 February 1995 (in French). **D115**

Extract:

It seems clear that the violence and terror in the Kibumba camps and the efforts to divert humanitarian aid remain the work of organised militias, controlled by leaders whom the humanitarian organisations considered as representatives. Further, we greatly hoped that the census would allow us to resolve any ambiguity about the volume of aid required as well as about its fair distribution. That hope has been dashed. Finally, by trying to address the refugee representatives' expropriation of aid, our teams appear to have exposed themselves to serious and permanent danger. That is why we have decided to cease aid activities on behalf of refugees in the Kibumba camp. We would like to make clear that this decision does not affect our activities in Kahindo, where it appears that the census took place under different conditions. This weekend we notified your representative in Goma of our decision and reviewed the withdrawal process with him. We would also like to express our appreciation to UNHCR for having offered us the fullest support and understanding throughout these events.



'Violence, Threats and Fraud During Rwandan Refugee Census: MSF Withdraws from the Kibumba Camp,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 7 February 1995 (in French). **D116** [↗](#)

Extract:

Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium has decided to end its humanitarian aid activities on behalf of Rwandan refugees in Kibumba, north of Goma, in the next 48 hours. This decision was taken following the population census, a process marked by many overt incidents. UNHCR had assigned MSF Belgium to supervise the count in the Kibumba and Kahindo camps.

It quickly became apparent that certain camp leaders were organising massive fraud, particularly via force and intimidation of refugees under their control. This fraud may have exaggerated population statistics considerably and resulted in diversion of humanitarian aid to the benefit of certain militia or political leaders. MSF asked that the count be interrupted so that security could be strengthened. The request was granted.

Our teams then received threats to their safety. The population census resumed Thursday and ended on Sunday, following procedures approved by MSF and UNHCR and under our teams' supervision. Given the extent of the fraud committed previously, we question the reliability of this registration procedure.

Given what has happened, it seems clear that certain leaders, who the humanitarian organisations considered to be the refugees' representatives, continue to commit violence and terror in the Kibumba camp and to divert humanitarian aid. Further, MSF greatly hoped that the census would allow it to resolve any ambiguity about the volume of aid required as well as about its fair distribution. That hope has been dashed. Finally, by trying to address the refugee representatives' expropriation of aid, our teams appear to have exposed themselves to serious and permanent danger.

That is why, with UNHCR's agreement, we decided to end our aid activities on behalf of refugees in the Kibumba camp. We want to make clear that this decision does not affect MSF's activities in Kahindo, Katale and Kituko, where the population census took place under different conditions. We appreciate UNHCR's efforts and its active support throughout these events.



'Draft 'position paper' for Branch offices, MSF Holland, 7 February 1995 (in English). **D117** [↗](#)

Extract:

MSF Belgium has withdrawn from Kibumba today and there is a visit of Ogata to Goma next weekend. This could lead to questions on: how is the situation in the camps where MSF Holland is working? Has the situation improved?...

Generally speaking the team has seen considerable improvement since the end of November. But the situation will

be closely monitored to see if the decision to stay can be maintained...

The following indicators are being used by MSF to monitor the situation:

- Security/protection of refugees (including freedom to return to Rwanda safely, if they so choose)

Conclusion: On this point, there is some improvement in the situation. However the trend is still unclear. More UNHCR-protection officers are needed in Rwanda.

- Access of refugees to humanitarian aid (including access to MSF programs, food distribution, i.e. issue of diversion) and ability of NGOs to reach their target populations.

Conclusion: Food distribution has improved over the last month. Also because of the registration (point 4) the problem of unequal distribution seems to be resolved. (However in Kibumba camp there are irregularities in registration. Guarantee for equal distribution is therefore not possible.)

- The ability to carry out MSF programs as they see fit.

Conclusion: MSF H in Katale feels that they are able to carry out relief programs as we see fit, not all problems are being solved.

- Registration

Facts: UNHCR has carried out registration as planned at the end of January. Among other things, this will allow for food to be distributed at the family level. The registration went fairly well in Katale camp. Proof for this is not only that no serious problems during the registration occurred, but also because the estimated number of people in Katale equals the number in the registration.

Conclusion: Important progress on this point.

- Leaders' control over refugees

Conclusion: It is not clear what the role of the new leaders will be.

- Militarization (since MSF views as unacceptable supplying aid to camps where the possibility of launching renewed military action exists.)

Conclusion: Some improvement in the camps, but military is still present in the area and thus the threat of a military invasion continues to exist.

On 9 February, in an article published in the New York Times and reprinted in the European daily International Herald Tribune, Alain Destexhe, signing as Secretary General of MSF International, presented MSF Belgium's withdrawal from the Kibumba camp as the first step in MSF's general withdrawal from all camps in Zaire and Tanzania.



Alain Destexhe 'A border without doctors', **New York Times** (USA), 9 February 1994 (in English). **D118** [↗](#)



Alain Destexhe, 'So Doctors Without Borders is leaving the Rwanda Refugee Camps', **International Herald Tribune** (Europe), 10 February 1994 (in English).

Extract:

How can physicians continue to assist Rwandan refugees when by doing so they are also supporting killers? This is the ethical dilemma that has forced Médecins sans Frontières, or Doctors without Borders, to decide to withdraw from all camps in Zaire and Tanzania, starting with yesterday's retreat from the one at Kibumba, Zaire.

The Rwandan refugees, most of whom are ethnic Hutu, have not fled from persecution or famine. They were terrorised into the exodus by their Hutu-led Government last summer after its military defeat. Disease came only after they were in the camps; an international relief effort saved tens of thousands of lives during a cholera epidemic in Goma, Zaire.

The camps have turned into prisons. The Hutu who led the genocidal campaign against Tutsi civilians last spring are now holding hundreds hostage while they plot their counterattack against the new government in Rwanda. They have created a miniature Rwanda in the camps – refugees are organised in groups according to the regions and villages they come from. Any dissident voices are quickly silenced; our volunteers have stood by helplessly as refugees were kidnapped or even hacked to death.

Why are the Hutu leaders doing this? International aid is the key to their efforts to restart the war. Food represents power, and the camp leaders, who control its distribution, have diverted considerable quantities toward war preparations. They also skim off a percentage of the wages earned by the thousands of refugees employed by relief agencies. Thus over the last seven months international aid has allowed the militias to reorganise, stockpile food and recruit and train new members. Not until this month did the refugee leaders realise that they needed to improve their public image; they allowed the United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees to establish a registration program to make sure that food supplies match the real needs. Some aid agencies claimed this as a major victory, but it does little good as long as the murderers remain in control. The only hope of breaking their grip is an international force to police the camps, as many aid organisations have requested. But Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the UN Secretary General, says Western countries have refused to provide troops.

More than 500,000 people, mostly Tutsi, were slaughtered in less than two months last year, and if Rwanda is ever to return to stability it will need a contemporary version of the Nuremberg trials. Yet the United Nations has offered

only a slow-moving international tribunal. Legal proceedings against some of those who ordered the massacres have been initiated in France and Belgium, but all are being blocked or delayed.

The humanitarian crisis in the camps has been over for some time. Despite the diversion of food by the militias, Rwandan refugees are better fed in the camps than most Africans, though they are completely dependent on foreign aid. Thus agencies like ours are caught in a lose-lose situation: either continue being reluctant accomplices of genocidal warmongers or withdraw from the camps, leaving the refugee population to the mercy of their jailers.



Alain Destexhe had a hard time presenting the information in our terms. He said that MSF was withdrawing from the camps. He did not put it in terms of the beginning of a withdrawal process. That quickly created a huge tension with MSF Belgium, who wanted to call the New York Times to say that Alain Destexhe did not represent MSF. We had to deal with it in a slightly technically manner - as 'damage control' - which was absolutely not what we wanted to do. Indeed, we weren't even able to get a little distance to be able to take a position... Everyone was so polarised.

Joëlle Tanguy, MSF USA Executive Director
(in French).

During a regional meeting on 3 and 4 March 1995, the various sections' coordinators in the Great Lakes reviewed the humanitarian issues and the future of MSF programs in the camps.



Minutes of the regional MSF inter-section meeting in Kigali, 3 and 4 March 1995, written by the MSF France coordinator in Rwanda. **D119** [↗](#)

Extract:

Context of Intervention – recent developments:
Tanzania: steady flow of Rwandan and Burundian refugees: 450,000 to Ngara, 180,000 to Karagwe... no repatriation towards Rwanda: 200 from Ngara, 0 from Karagwe.
Zaire: UNHCR census not yet complete... 15,000 arrived last week in Uvira from Gikongoro! 600 Zairian soldiers deployed in northern Kivu, mandated to protect refugees, UNHCR and NGOs and the repatriation...
Goma: UNHCR repatriated 8,000 refugees in January and February from all camps to Gisenyi, Ruhengeri and Kigali prefectures. 40,000 spontaneous repatriations. No repatriation from Bukavu...

b) Food

The World Food Programme (WFP) announced significant cutbacks in food provisions throughout the region because of inadequate contributions. Only 30 percent of 1995 needs will be met... If this is confirmed, it could lead to a massive population movement towards Rwanda...

MSF involvement: MSF Holland proposes issuing a press release to bring attention to this issue and to request contributions to WFP. The other sections think that a press release dealing only with food shortages would be a mistake because that issue should only be one of several aspects of international action. No consensus, no press release.

c) Repatriation...

MSF involvement: consensus-there is no opposition to the current spontaneous repatriation. Beyond that, differences emerge: MSF Belgium in Goma wants to take part in the 'objective information' campaign in the camps. MSF Spain is focusing its programs on encouraging repatriation by closing Benaco and opening Kibungo. MSF Holland thinks it's necessary to commit firmly to the camps as long as the Rwanda situation does not favour repatriation.

MSF Programs:

Total confusion and reasoning that pushes the envelope of logical thinking.

MSF Holland Zaire/Tanzania:

- wants to continue working in the camps at all cost as long as the Rwanda situation is not conducive to repatriation
- invokes its responsibility for the camps' population
- well-developed programs for 'typical refugee camps' EPI, family planning, mental health, slaughterhouse construction
- Activities and number of expatriates reduced for practical and operational reasons
- Very irritated by the other MSF sections' continuing uncertainty over 'withdrawal — yes or no.' Thinks that if MSF Belgium withdrew from Goma, the pressure on MSF Holland would become intolerable and Amsterdam would choose to sacrifice its Tanzania/Zaire programs rather than risk MSF's break-up.

MSF Belgium-Zaire:

- It's too late to withdraw for ethical reasons; would have had to happen after the cholera epidemic
- Now it's 'humanitarian resistance:' action plan goals - reduce salaries paid in Goma, participate in repatriation and testify
- Kibumba withdrawal was a denunciation of the leaders' actions. They cheated on the census and threatened the MSF Belgium staff. The Kahindo census went smoothly so there's no reason to leave
- Fed up with attitude of MSF Holland in Goma. They refuse to address ethical problems and their advocacy work is inadequate (Eleanor's reports: for internal use only)

MSF Spain in Tanzania:

- Are withdrawing in two to three months because the situation is ethically intolerable. Nothing has changed so we have to leave; the situation is unchanged from November, when we decided to stay
- Increasing programs in Kibungo and Rwanda to encour-

rage people to repatriate. If they don't go back, it's because services have not been re-established in Rwanda...

- Comments: it appears that the field staff is completely disoriented and is paying the price of headquarters' procrastination. Under pressure from the board of directors, headquarters recently changed its position.

MSF Switzerland in Tanzania:

- the camps are different: smaller (50,000) and not as harsh as Ngara
- holds same position as MSF Holland

On 23 March, MSF joined a group of 18 NGOs intervening in the camps to sound the alarm about lack of refugee food supplies.



Message from MSF international (in English) to the sections, and press release from the 18 NGOs, 23 March 1995, (in French). **D120** [↗](#)

Extract:

Dear All,

Tomorrow morning, the 18 NGOs in Goma will distribute the attached statement to the press. Although the MSF Holland team in the field signed the statement, the MSF Belgium team did not. MSF International will not publish this statement under MSF's name and will not conduct active communication on this issue. However, we expect questions from journalists and will try to respond as coherently as possible. If you have concerns, please contact our office. Unfortunately, I have only the French version for now, but as soon as we receive the official English text we will send it to those of you who work in English.

Press release (in French)

Goma: 23 March 1995


There is an urgent need for food in Rwanda and Burundi and among refugees in bordering countries. International and national organisations working in the refugee camps near Goma, Zaire and Ngara, Tanzania are alarmed by the lack of food supplies provided to the refugees and ask the international community to respond as generously as it did in 1994.

In recent weeks, food rations for the 750,000 refugees in the Goma camps fell to half the minimum recommended by the World Food Programme (WFP). Given the lack of available food and funds, these rations will probably fall further. UNHCR and WFP emphasise that although rations have been reduced, stocks of foodstuffs will not last more than two months. The general situation has reached a critical point.


Eliminating food aid will not encourage refugees to return to Rwanda nor render even-handed justice. On the contrary, it will increase the host country's burden, with the risk of heightened violence in the region. The NGOs urge

the international community to provide for the refugees' basic needs. Food must be made available throughout the region where needs are the greatest.

In late April 1995, the situation had not improved. Jacques de Milliano, General director MSF Holland, and Wilna Van Aartsen, deputy programme manager for the Great Lakes, went to the Katala camp in Zaire to begin talking with the team about possible withdrawal. The team was opposed to the idea.

 *The Katala team [of MSF Holland] was very much against leaving the camps. They felt that they were needed. We had taken on a very big role there providing health services in this camp of 200,000 people. They felt that if we left it would have an impact on the population. We were starting a Post Traumatic Disorder program, which we felt was an important project. It had been very difficult to get off the ground because the leaders saw it as a threat to their control of the population. We had focus groups, discussion groups, etc. and the leaders were fearful that we would undermine their authority in the camps. So we felt that we were doing something to assist the population and also to find out what the people were thinking of the leaders controlling the camps. The team felt that it [the withdrawal] was very much a discussion of principles, it was not so much about practice and reality on the ground.*

Wilna Van Aartsen, MSF Holland Emergency cell, then deputy programme manager (in English).

 *I was the coordinator for MSF Holland at the time these discussions were held with the team by Jacques de Milliano and Wilna van Aartsen. In Amsterdam the general idea on advocacy was pulled in a human rights direction by the newly formed HAD department led by human rights people, Ed Schenkenberg and Hanna Nolan. This resulted in a general policy of 'staying, documenting in detail, and issuing extensive reports'. The team was actually not in favour of this approach, and the 'information officer' based in Goma to perform this task (Eleanor Bedford) received very little cooperation from the team as a result.*

The discussion was mainly focussed on the 'too late' factor: in principle they agreed that leaving the camps was an option to advocate MSF's strong objections to the abuse of aid by the leaders for the continuation of or finishing off a genocide. It was felt MSF Holland and MSF Belgium should have left together with MSF France to make any impact. Since that did not happen, the idea of a gradual

withdrawal as a means of advocacy was rejected. According to the team, handing over all the activities over a prolonged period of time, was not an act of advocacy but a pragmatic operational act. The mental health program was not a strong issue at the time at all. Consequently the operational hand-over (mainly to Care Australia) was agreed on an operational argument that the emergency was over, and was achieved gradually between February and July 1995. Mental health was not handed over officially because there was no suitable partner.

The teams still present for the last remaining parts of the program in August (which was just a fraction of what was running in February) were therefore highly annoyed when the Board in Amsterdam suddenly 'announced' the decision, as an act of advocacy, to close the programs, as it did not reflect the reality in the field. HQ Amsterdam and the teams in Zaire were living in two parallel universes during this period.

Michiel Hofman, MSF Holland Coordinator in Goma (in English).

On 17 May, during an international programme managers' meeting, MSF Belgium confirmed that it did not anticipate withdrawing from the camps in the near future and that it wished to redefine its goals.



Minutes of the international meeting of Rwanda programme managers, Paris, 17 May 1995 (in English). [D121](#)

Extract:

MSF France asked MSF Holland and MSF Belgium why they stayed in the refugee camps if their 'humanitarian resistance' had had no significant effect. If their own criteria (defined last winter) had not been met, then why did they not withdraw? MSF Belgium said that it would not be pulling out in the near future. It is to redefine its objectives.

On 22 June, the operations' directors of the relevant MSF Rwanda programme managers discussed the possibility of leaving the Zaire camps. MSF Belgium presented an evaluation it conducted in late 1994. Based on the study's indicators, the report concluded that MSF should remain in the camps so that it could speak out about what was happening there. No consensus was reached, so the group decided that each section would make its own decision internally.



Minutes of the international meeting of Directors of Operations and the Rwanda programme manager in Brussels, 22 June 1995 (in French). [D122](#)

Extract:

1. MSF PRESENCE IN THE CAMPS:

MSF Belgium presented various indicators: impunity, control of the camps, targeted humanitarian aid, refugee safety, aid diversion, access to the population, team safety, the press, politics, coalitions, level of aid. MSF Belgium observed that these indicators had improved from November to February, but the problems had not been solved. They named their two main priorities: firstly, reduce the amount of aid (by reducing the local people's salaries, dispensing with unnecessary staff, stopping the feeding centres, etc.) and secondly repatriation (which has been suspended since March 1995). No major changes have been observed since April. MSF will remain in the camps in order to continue providing basic aid for the refugees.

Should we consider leaving, and if so, how?

MSF Holland has discussed internally the possibility of leaving, but so far has come up with no definite answer. We need to make a distinction between the medical situation, which is currently good, and 'assistance', which should stay in operation.

The current situation in Goma is different from Burundi where extremist Hutu are present but less implicated in the genocide. MSF France considers that there are certain negative effects associated with leaving Goma. Six months after leaving, MSF France can weigh up the positive and negative aspects. Leaving will also have repercussions in the media, rekindling the debate.

MSF Holland wonders what effect MSF has had on the camps. Could other organisations have achieved what MSF has done? The indicators date from November and should be adapted to the current situation. We should use what has been presented to us, to take decisions by consensus. MSF France fears that the horror of the genocide will be forgotten and the leaders will be encouraged by MSF presence to commit the same atrocities. The situation is becoming normalised and legitimised by MSF presence. They feel the camps have become miniature states, and that MSF has become a kind of Ministry of Health.

MSF Holland and MSF Belgium completely disagree with each other: there is very little collusion in the field and the only ones speaking to each other are the refugees and the local staff.

MSF Belgium points out that the leaders dislike MSF presence. If we left, the leaders would be pleased because MSF would be replaced by other NGOs. If we decide to leave, Eric feels we should have good reason to do so. Moreover, staying would allow us to participate actively in the various institutions' meetings; MSF France is no longer in the camps and has no say on the problem of the camps, even on an international level.

With regards to leaving, MSF Holland feels that if nothing changes, we will have to take a decision. They suggest making a list of what we hope to achieve before leaving. MSF Belgium (Eric) emphasises the responsibility we have; if we left without trying any other solutions, knowing that another genocide is near, MSF could no longer speak about 'responsibility', either for themselves or for the international community.

MSF France feels they have acted responsibly and according to their own ethics.

MSF Spain would like us to take a clear position on repatriation if MSF decides to leave.

MSF Belgium believes we should press UNHCR to repatriate the refugees. For them this is the only real option. Kigali should do all it can to make the repatriation possible.

MSF Spain feels we have reached the point where we are not getting what we are asking for (tribunals, observers). 'We need to be more creative!'

MSF Holland suggests we take the 'initiative' ourselves rather than be creative in order to combat the 'system' that has developed in the camps. One suggestion would be to press for repatriation and to heighten media awareness. MSF France does not see why MSF should take initiatives. Why not place pressure on the governments helping Mobutu?

Conclusion:

The situation is at an impasse, with no consensus.

For MSF Spain: leaving would enable us to take a different course of action, e.g. lobbying for repatriation.

For MSF Holland: MSF should take the initiative, e.g. repatriation + media.

MSF Belgium remains divided between the current impasse in terms of policy, and the question of MSF's longstanding responsibility.

MSF Switzerland would like to re-examine the situation in the Tanzanian camps before deciding.

All sections will take their decisions after internal discussion.



'Evaluation of MSF Belgium's Presence in the Camps,' MSF Belgium, May 1995 (according to the table of indicators) (in French). [D123](#)

Extract:

In conclusion: MSF Belgium will soon have completed one year in Goma. The humanitarian dilemma has led us all to reflect on the scope of our actions, whether in the Rwandan context or elsewhere around the world. Have we created a monster? The answer is, probably, yes. It would be useless to close our eyes. We have provided treatment - but not at any price. We have imposed conditions, refusing to treat soldiers and militiamen identified as such and trying as best we could to protect or preserve that portion of the population victimised twice by the former regime. They were firstly victims of those who led the country into disaster and secondly, of hostage taking - both physical and psychological - as they were harassed by the camp leaders' hateful propaganda.

Indicators	November 1994	December 1994	May 1995
1. Impunity Decision and establishment of an international tribunal	Decision + Establishment —	Decision + Establishment —	Decision + Establishment —
2. Camp control Separation of political leaders Separation of militia and former FAR Training in the camps	Decision — Decision — Activities in the camps	Agreed in principle + Reality — Agreed in principle + Reality — Former FAR leave	Agreed in principle + Reality — Agreed in principle + Reality — Activities outside camps
3. Food aid targeting: Population census Group distribution Family distribution	- Decision + - Reality: —	Decision + Reality —	Decision + Reality + (Feb 95) In part
4. Refugee security International intervention CSZC	Decision —	Decision — Letter of intention +	Decision — Creation and Reality + Mixed results
5. Diversion Registration and pressure	Situation — Thefts nutr centre	Situation — Looting nutr centre	Situation +
6. Direct access populations Human rights sector protection agents	Situation — Reality —	Situation — Reality —	Situation — human rights position created + (Jan 1995)
7. team security General situation (including problems linked to FAZ)	Not targeted Situation + —	not targeted Situation + —	Kibumba targeted Situation + -
8. Press "Go public"	Done	Maintained	Maintained but showing wear
9. Policy Security Council, European Union, States	Done	Maintained	Maintained
10. Coalition : Statement Activities Recognition	Done Under study No	Discussions No	Done Activities but slowed Yes
11. Level of assistance Staff + salaries	Not considered	Discussion of reduction	Staff reduction

Do we make the following claim: everyone is guilty and everyone is responsible? The over-simplification of ethnic-based thinking in Rwanda cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi. Right now, it is important to identify, condemn and punish those guilty of and responsible for genocide. We must recognise those Rwandans who rejected genocide and massacres and who, through simple and heroic actions, helped to save their neighbours and brothers and sisters. We must call attention to the fact that the mechanisms that led to the tragedy are being rebuilt in the camps while trying, as best we can, to separate those who wish to return to their country. Condemning and speaking out in the very heart of the camps... that challenge is already underway.

In the short term, donor fatigue and disengagement from Rwanda threatens to leave the camps below the threshold of minimum level of aid. That, in turn, threatens to increase humanitarian risks in the region. Our presence is a guarantee that this minimum threshold will be respected.

The same day MSF Belgium discussed leaving the Zaire camps in coordination with MSF Holland and UNHCR during another international meeting of directors of operations.



Minutes of the international meeting of directors of operations, 22 June 1995 (in French). **D124**

Extract:
GOMA

A recent MSF B project committee concluded that we were open to withdrawing from Goma: medical needs are covered. With respect to the political situation, the leaders' influence remains too strong and there has been no further progress on meeting MSF's goals regarding impunity, camp control and separation of soldiers and civilians. MSF H agrees that the medical emergency ended three months ago and that the impunity issue remains unresolved. The debate has been extended to the Amsterdam headquarters: to leave or not?

MSF F: Regarding protection, UNHCR is not encouraging repatriation because it lacks the means to protect refugees on their return. Every voluntary returnee risks reprisals at Goma; no protection provided at these camps.

Further, everyone is convinced the ex-FAR is going to attack Rwanda again. Organising a massive repatriation will mean carnage. Most of the refugees do not want to return to Rwanda. They know about the situation in the prisons. Although daily rations have been reduced, no malnutrition has been reported in the camps. The economy is operating well, primarily through payment of salaries (NB: these salaries have been reduced).

MSF H and MSF Switzerland confirm that the mood is very

different in the Tanzanian refugee camps. MSF has more room to manoeuvre there. But training is conducted there, too, and Bukavu and Ngara leaders are in contact.

MSF B: If MSF leaves Goma, the NGO charities will remain and be strengthened or will leave the job to African NGOs, whose goals do not include 'protection.'

Conclusion:

Given that 'political' efforts have stalled and that the medical situation is under control, MSF B is considering leaving Goma on a symbolic date (for example, the 14 July anniversary), in coordination with MSF H and with prior notice given to UNHCR.

On 5 July 1994, the MSF Belgium Board of Directors concluded that it would decide whether to accept the project committee's decision after analysing the alternatives to withdrawing from the camps.



Minutes of the MSF Belgium Board meeting, 5 July 1995 (in French). **D125**

Extract:

It's time to come to a conclusion: MSF France, MSF Belgium, MSF Holland and MSF Spain are considering withdrawing from the Goma camps on a symbolic date (ex: 14 July), with prior notification to UNHCR. MSF France strongly supports this move, MSF Holland is unsure. MSF Belgium will hold a project committee meeting on this subject on 18 July 1995 to decide internally.

Dominique Boutriau presented a brief history of the situation:

October 1994: the camps' medical situation was under control and the question of whether to stay or leave arose. MSF France supported leaving. MSF Belgium decided to remain, but based on the following indicators: impunity (decision to create and establish an international tribunal), control of the camps (separation of politicians, separation of militiamen and ex-FAR, training in the camps), targeting of food aid (census, group distribution, family distribution), refugee security (international intervention), aid diversion (census and pressure), direct access to populations (human rights sector, protection staff), team security, media (information distribution), politics (Security Council, Council of Europe, states), coalition (statement, activities, reconnaissance) and level of assistance (staff and salaries).

January 1995: the camps' nutritional situation was satisfactory - MSF Belgium decided to reduce its humanitarian assistance and encourage repatriation.

March 1995: reduction in repatriation.

May 1995: local staff salaries reduced, everyone knows rearming is occurring in the camps.

June/July 1995: what to do? Stay or leave?

To stay would be to support the former Rwandan government (FAR), which could return to Rwanda and resume

its genocide. But we have credibility at the international level. By staying, we can continue to deliver the message about the situation.

Leaving would not change much in medical terms because others will take on our work when we leave. It would make life easier for the former Rwandan government (FAR) members because by reducing salaries and other actions, MSF indirectly counteracts rearmament inside the camps.

On the international level:

MSF France supports leaving, MSF Holland and MSF Switzerland don't know, MSF Spain wants a radical position on repatriation. MSF Belgium wants to mark its departure with a symbolic action (to be thrown out, organise a march in Gisenyi, or...?)

Board of Directors' Reactions:

Marleen read a message from Karim, who was absent this evening: MSF France - some people at headquarters consider this a test of the international movement. There is no diktat or ultimatum at MSF Belgium.

Wim thinks we must be clear among ourselves that choosing to withdraw means accepting defeat.

These populations are in a state of extreme distress (principally in terms of morale). We must do something more innovative or creative. Set them up somewhere else?

Pascal asks: if we leave in a blaze of publicity, will MSF be able to return if major problems arise?

D. Boutriau response: Yes, absolutely. Don't forget, we have a terrific UNHCR coordinator.

JBB asked why we're staying if the situation would remain the same with or without MSF?

Response from D. Boutriau and Mario: to be able to lobby effectively. With respect to the indicators on the chart, MSF is the only organisation that can address five of them.

JBB says that in that case, if we want to be more original, there are other routes. For example, MSF Belgium released 150 million/year for operations over three years, with preference for the Great Lakes region. We know that the international tribunal's formation is late, for lack of funds, so let's allocate 20 million to help set it up. Our withdrawal would at least have stronger symbolic value. Roelf and Wim approve of this idea and think that if operations choose to withdraw, they should consider all possibilities. Withdrawal will have to be put to discussion - the decision's pros and cons will have to be presented to the board of directors.

Conclusion:

The board of directors asks that operations conduct an in-depth study of the alternatives and communicate the project committee's decision to the board, which will decide whether to support it.

The MSF Belgium project committee held discussions with representatives from the different sections. Following those discussions, on 18 July the committee noted that the situation in Goma was blocked and asked the board of directors to approve the withdrawal of MSF Belgium teams from the Kahindo camp.



Minutes of the MSF Belgium project committee meeting, 18 July 1995 (in French). **D126**

Extract:

The project committee's work was conducted in two phases.

The first included public sessions, which the French, Swiss and Dutch MSF sections attended.

The second part involved internal decision-making.

In attendance: MSF Switzerland, MSF France, Operations, Logistics, Medical, Communications. Absent: Finance.

1. GOMA

Tandem desk/Goma: Dominique Boutriau, Thierry Coppens
Head of Goma mission: Nicolas Cantau

As part of the project committee's preparations, Thierry went to Goma from 12 - 16 July.

The presentation was made jointly with the desk and the head of mission, who returned to headquarters on that occasion to represent the Goma team.

Issue

The discussion focused on two major themes linked to MSF Belgium's medical operationality and the historic context of genocide. Medically and nutritionally, is MSF Belgium's presence required? The unanimous response was no.

Is MSF Belgium's presence required to lobby on issues related to the context of genocide?

The Goma team emphasised the need to keep Goma refugees separate from active ex-FAR and militiamen. Some in and around the camps urge that the leaders who are slowing repatriation be arrested.

Given the current quagmire in Goma, the project committee:

1. requests that the board of directors approve the withdrawal of MSF Belgium teams from the Kahindo camps.
2. requests that planning begin for our teams' operational withdrawal from the Goma camps by 31 August 1995 at the latest.
3. requests that an expatriate international human rights monitor be placed in Goma. The monitor's primary goals would be to observe the situation in the camps, raise awareness of the genocidal context and supervise repatriation.
4. Request that our departure from Goma be announced in the media.

On 27 July 1995, MSF Holland published a second report on the situation in the camps, 'Deadlock in the Rwandan Crisis' which stated that in 8 months nothing had changed in the camps.



MSF Holland **Report**, 'Deadlock in the Rwandan crisis', July 1995 (in English). [D127](#)

Extract:

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3.6 The Extension of UNAMIR's Mandate

V. The Moral Dilemma

Conclusions

Annexes: MSF Sections and Regional Map

INTRODUCTION

In November 1994, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) published its report *Breaking the Cycle*. In the report, MSF documented and analysed the situation in the Rwandan refugee camps and called upon the international community to undertake clear political measures in order to ensure the rights of refugees and to bring those who instigated and perpetrated the genocide to justice. Eight months later, a deadlock in the Rwandan refugee crisis has emerged.

This report looks at factors from both inside and outside Rwanda, which have led to this deadlock and caused a virtual standstill on repatriation. One year after the mass exodus from Rwanda there are still no lasting solutions for the regional refugee crisis. This report addresses the issue of impunity, as MSF has always maintained that it should be a priority that those responsible for the genocide be brought to justice without delay, and the refugee camps in which MSF provides humanitarian relief should not be given the de facto status of safe havens for those who committed crimes against humanity. Furthermore, this report reflects the moral dilemma faced by MSF and many other aid agencies working in camps in which killers walk freely and where preparations are made for a military intervention into Rwanda aimed at further massacres of the Tutsi population.

The humanitarian catastrophe that took place in the Rwandan region tested MSF's capacity to its very limits. Feelings of outrage over the countless murders and continued impunity overshadowed the humanitarian relief efforts of MSF. This report is another outcry of MSF's relief workers to the international community and the public of their feelings. MSF believes that humanitarian aid has to be accompanied by political measures and justice. Otherwise, relief workers find themselves confronted with an unacceptable situation.



'MSF Publishes a Report on the Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis: Growing Influence of Extremists Hinders Repatriation,' MSF Belgium **Press release**, 27 July 1995 (in French). [D128](#)

Extract:

The growing influence of extremists in the Rwandan refugee camps, as well as within Rwanda itself, is feeding the spiral of violence in the Great Lakes region. In a report published today, 'Deadlock in the Rwandan Refugee Crisis,' the international humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) examines internal and external factors in Rwanda. The report concludes that the Rwandan

refugee crisis has reached a total impasse and that repatriation is virtually at a standstill. MSF believes that if stability and harmony are to be restored in Rwanda, the 2 million refugees currently in Zaire, Tanzania and Burundi must be able to return home permanently and safely. However, repatriation has practically ceased because requisite conditions have not been met. From December 1994 to July 1995, fewer than 10,000 Rwandans were repatriated.

We released that report before the decision to withdraw was made - the two were not connected. We did not write the report in order to justify our withdrawal. That was not the reason. We wrote the report because we had committed ourselves to monitoring the indicators I mentioned earlier, and then, when we had done so, we issued the report. Then, I think a month later, the board took the decision to withdraw. The purpose of the documentation was to speak out publicly, to witness, to say what was going on in the camps to the international community - to use it as a document to lobby and to have some proof. You cannot lobby internationally unless you have solid documentation. So it was a document that was very useful in the lobbying that we did. We distributed it very widely within the UN, to governments, to donors and to other organisations who were concerned — both humanitarian and human rights organisations. We did a wide distribution and in addition we did targeted lobbying. The Dutch officials, for example, were very instrumental in the whole discussion about sending a police force to the camps, so we talked to the Dutch government many times.

Hanna Nolan, Humanitarian Affairs Department, MSF Holland (in English).

Then the second report appeared ...many of us wondered: 'Why do we have to say it again?'

Dr. [...] MSF Belgium Programme manager then Director of Operations (in French).

On 2 August 1995, noting that the situation had not improved enough to justify its continued presence in the camps, the MSF Belgium board of directors voted to withdraw. The board gave the teams four months to transfer their work to other organisations.



Letter from MSF Belgium to MSF Holland announcing the MSF Belgium Board decision of 2 August 1995 concerning the camps in Zaire, 3 August 1995 (in Flemish). **D129**

Extract:

- 1.The MSF Belgium Board accepts the closure of the medical program in the Kahindo camp, the details to be determined by the operations department.
- 2.The Board feels MSF Belgium should continue to take action on the Rwandan refugee problem. Therefore the Board is asking the operations department to explore actively and from now on, other ways of meeting the humanitarian needs of the Rwandan refugees in Goma.



Letter from the General Director, MSF Belgium to the Director of Africa bureau, UNHCR, 7 August 1995 (in French). **D130**

Extract:

You are aware that our organisation considers the context of Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania as extremely important. You are also aware that we have always wanted the presence of many of the 1994 genocide's participants and leaders there to be considered.

The impunity that those leaders still enjoy today, the nearby presence of forces that contributed to the genocide, their likely rearming and their control over the refugees were determining factors in our decision last year to initially limit our medical assistance to emergency care, out of respect for basic humanitarian principles.

Today, according to epidemiological indicators monitored by our teams, it appears that the medical and nutritional emergency has been addressed, prompting us to question, once again, the assistance Médecins Sans Frontières is providing in the camps.

For that reason, the MSF Belgium board of directors last week voted to suspend its assistance programs, clarifying that this should occur along with efforts to develop new initiatives focused principally on repatriation and cross-border dialogue. We also expect to carry out information campaigns to emphasise that justice for the killers is an absolute prerequisite.



We took a decision in June or August. I can't remember exactly when. Anyway for me, it was already too late. We should have taken a decision earlier to be more effective and to give it more weight. We all should have left the camps together. I think it was a historic

moment when the movement lost its unity and I think we are suffering as a result. The measures taken did not convince us things were better. But the reasons given for leaving – the massive registration fraud – I'll be honest, were not valid reasons. Anyone who has worked in the camps knows very well in all refugee camps there is at least 5-10 % double-registration. In those camps it was less than that. Obviously fraud was a problem, and of course some food was diverted. I don't know of any camps where people don't have to pay for a ration. I'm not saying that I agree with this practice, but it wasn't a good reason to leave. We should have emphasised more than we did, that all those camps were in fact bases, and that the refugees were hostages. We didn't emphasise this enough. I wasn't very happy about that. We left but the problem was, it was too late.

Dr. [...], MSF Belgium Programme manager then Director of Operations (in French).

On 9 August 1995, the MSF Holland board of directors decided to withdraw from all Zaire and Tanzania camps except from those near Uvira, where the medical and health situation remained unstable. An investigation was launched to determine whether the mental health program had improved the situation.



'Decision of the board of MSF Holland with respect to presence in the camps in Tanzania and Zaire', 8 August 1994 (in English). [D131](#)

Extract:

The board of MSF-Holland decided, on the basis of the underlying philosophy of the organisation, to stop medical activities in the camps around Goma and Ngara, taking into consideration that:

- a) on the basis of medical data it can be concluded that the emergency phase has ended
- b) humanitarian aid at large has the negative impact that it increasingly consolidates the current situation – the power structures which provided the basis for the genocide – in the camps
- c) over the last months, advocacy activities have not brought about any visible changes in this situation.

Additionally, the board decided that it would be investigated whether the mental health program should be exempt from this decision, if it were clear that this program could substantially contribute to a break-through of the deadlock. Furthermore, the board is of the opinion that other initiatives, which could improve the situation, deserve full support of the organisation.

On 28 August, after the news was leaked to and published by a Dutch journalist in Nairobi, MSF Holland made public its decision to withdraw from the camps.



'Dutch relief workers to quit Rwandan refugee camps', **Reuters** (UK), 28 August 1995 (in English).

Extract:

The Dutch arm of the aid group Médecins Sans Frontières said Monday it would pull workers out of two camps for Rwandan refugees because it believes they are sheltering perpetrators of genocide. Jacques de Mililani, director of the Dutch section of MSF (Doctors without Borders), said nine MSF members would be withdrawn from Katale camp near Goma in Zaire, while 13 would be pulled out from Ngara in Tanzania. A total of 1,500 local MSF workers in the camps would cease operations.

'We know there are many people with blood on their hands in those camps,' said de Milliano. 'In refugee camps there are killers walking around making plans for new attacks. We don't want to be part of that system.'

The director of the Dutch MSF section added that eight expatriate members of the Belgian MSF would also move out of the camp in Goma. De Milliano said it would take some time, possibly months, for a controlled withdrawal and handover of responsibility to UN refugee authorities. 'We're at the moment negotiating with UNHCR (the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) about a proper handover. We think this could be done in around six to eight weeks. If we want to give UNHCR a chance to follow up in an acceptable way it will take time to do that', said De Milliano. He said MSF had had misgivings about events in the camps for some time, compiling a report in November called 'Breaking the Cycle' pointing to continued violence in the camps. De Milliano said that in over a year not a single case of genocide had been brought before the International Court of Justice in the Hague. A special United Nations tribunal to investigate the matter has been minimally funded.

'MSF feels that humanitarian action in this genocide context should be backed up by political and judicial actions,' he said. 'The population (in the camps) has become a kind of prisoner of its own leaders and humanitarian aid is fuelling these systems of impunity. MSF does not want to be responsible for that any more.'



Message from MSF Holland Communication Director and Programme manager to MSF sections, 28 August 1994 (in English). [D132](#)

Extract:

MSF WITHDRAWAL FROM RWANDESE REFUGEE CAMPS

Dear all,

As some of you will have heard, the news that MSF has decided to leave the camps was leaked somehow to a

Dutch journalist in Nairobi. Meanwhile, through AFP it will probably reach you on this afternoon. Of course, we are not happy at all with news at this moment, but there is of course always a risk of a leak.

Herewith you will find a briefing paper with the MSF Holland opinions, facts and figures. This we prepared this morning. We will use it for the Dutch press. Since time is pressing, and we do not have all facts and figures from other sections, this is not a complete international paper. In Holland, through an interview with the (only) Dutch press agency, the message went across quite well. Therefore we will not make an additional press release. MSF Belgium – at least this morning – did not feel the need either to be active in Holland on this point at this moment. We will only send this briefing paper to the important national newspaper.

As far as we are concerned, each section can decide for itself if additional press releases are necessary. Because the MSF sections by now share a common position on this matter, each section has the freedom to draw this up without consulting other sections. And MSF International Brussels/Nairobi can determine whether an international press release is necessary.

Regards,

Hans Joosten, PR dept

Wilna van Aartsen, Desk manager


ADDITIONAL INFO ON MSF HOLLAND WILL LEAVE THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN ZAIRE AND TANZANIA

MSF has made this decision of leaving the camps based on the following reasons:

- Medical humanitarian relief consolidates the situation in the camps. Those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda are still controlling the refugee population in the camps. Secondly, impunity still reigns: hardly any people have been arrested yet. No people have been brought to justice yet. And finally the militarization in the region has continued. The setting is now still a launching pad for future military action.

- The medical emergency is over: the number of ill people, and the number of people dying has been reduced to acceptable levels in refugee situations.

The result of these factors is that the negative effects of the relief activities are outnumbering the positive effects. Because of the fact that the medical-humanitarian situation in the camps near Uvira (Zaire) is still very unstable, MSF will continue its activities here. The camps near Uvira house 150,000 Rwandese as well as Burundi's refugees.

 Concerning the media, the board took a decision and said we should keep quiet for a short while so that the teams can at least withdraw 80% and then to bring them out. But two days later, at seven o'clock in the morning, I got a phone call from a journalist in Nairobi. He said: "I just spoke with some of your people in the field and they said you have decided to withdraw. Can you explain?" Of course I confirmed and then it was a huge media thing here, on the withdrawal. We explained. We took a very


strong position externally. In Nairobi we got international media. We got criticism from everybody. All the NGOs, even Amnesty International, did not agree with us because they more or less said that NGOs should keep out of the political context. From the Red Cross in general, we know it, that is understandable from their point of view, they have a clear position. But from the other NGOs ...

Amnesty International even wrote a whole issue on the withdrawal and MSF Holland position in the Rwandan refugee camps. They took the African Rights: "Humanitarian NGOs have to deal with humanitarian work and human rights NGOs with human rights. You should not have a multi mandate. The multi mandate organisations are not very effective."

In the press there were two lines. The more popular press was accepting the critics. They didn't take a stand. It was more: "How can MSF criticise the victims?" But the more intellectual press and the international press were supporting us.

There were quite a lot of editorials saying: "At the end you have an organisation willing to take its responsibilities in such a disastrous situation." Even if the press was not very much in our favour, it did not harm us.

Dr. Jacques de Milliano, MSF Holland General Director
(in English).

 *It was a very strong signal to the whole relief community, to the UN and to the Rwandan government. Of course there were not headlines in all the papers but people do know it. An MSF Holland head of mission, who previously worked with Care or Concern told me: 'I was very happy that there was one organisation which did take that responsibility and that's why I wanted to work for MSF.' ...*

All the time in Ngara, when we were getting visits from the headquarters, we said: 'We have to stay in Ngara, and we have to talk with other organisations, with UNHCR and try to get more police.' What we did was also form a coalition of NGOs outside of UNHCR, trying to politicise the other organisations. We were maybe not successful in the sense that we didn't find the solution but we definitely created awareness amongst all the NGOs. I think it was also an extremely important action in terms of practical advocacy. Making all the organisations realize that it is not only about food, not only about water, but that there was a political dimension to the camps.

Wouter Kok, MSF Holland Coordinator in Tanzania,
July 1994 to March 1995 (in English).

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS 1994-1995

The main purpose of this chronology is to help the reader by reconstructing MSF's actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period. It is intended as a tool for this specific document, and not as an academic reference.

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p>1994</p> <p>18 June France announces it will go to the United Nations Security Council to call for “humanitarian military intervention in Rwanda, to be called “Opération Turquoise” with or without the support of other countries”.</p> <p>22 June Security Council Resolution 929 authorises «Operation Turquoise» under chapter 7 of the UN Charter: “protection of civilian populations and humanitarian aid.”</p> <p>3 July UN authorises France to create “safe humanitarian zone” called the “zone Turquoise” in the south-west of Rwanda (Cyangugu, Gikongoro, Kibuye).</p>	<p>From 6 April Rwanda: Genocide of Rwandan Tutsi and massacre of Rwandan Hutu opposed to the genocide.</p> <p>29 April Tanzania: 170,000 Rwandans fleeing their country arrive in Tanzania and settle at the Benaco site.</p> <p>9 June Tanzania: Manhunt openly witnessed by MSF staff at the Benaco camp.</p> <p>15 June Tanzania: Refugee protest to stop the expulsion of Jean-Baptiste Gatete, known as one of the organisers of the genocide. UNHCR staff taken hostage – Humanitarian staff leave the camp.</p> <p>4 July Rwanda : The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) seizes control of Kigali and Butare – mass exodus of Hutu to the north-west (Ruhengeri, Gysenyi) where an interim government is situated.</p>	<p>17 June MSF France Press conference in Paris: “you can’t stop genocide with doctors”. The Benaco refugee camp described as a “humanitarian façade” and a “sanctuary for genocide.”</p> <p>Early July Resignation of MSF Holland’s emergency pool coordinator in Tanzania, Arjo Berkhout.</p> <p>4-10 July: Exploratory mission led by MSF Belgium, MSF France, and MSF Holland in the Zone Turquoise, surrounding Gikongoro: joint MSF France/MSF Holland programme planned; MSF Holland later withdraws.</p>

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p>1994</p> <p>20 July The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announces the arrival of 500,000 refugees at border posts in Bukavu and Kamanyola (south Kivu). Airlift set up near Goma.</p> <p>22 July American president Bill Clinton declares it the «worst humanitarian crisis for a generation” and announces a “concrete plan of action.”</p>	<p>6 July Rwanda: Government of national union created.</p> <p>13 July Zaire: Thousands of refugees arrive in Goma.</p> <p>14 July Rwanda: RPF seize control Ruhengeri - Rwandan intermediary government flee to zone Turquoise.</p> <p>14 - 17 July Zaire: Between 500,000 and 800,000 Rwandans settle in and around Goma.</p> <p>16 July Zaire: Withdrawal of Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) to Goma.</p> <p>19 July Zaire: First cases of cholera reported in Goma.</p> <p>22 July Rwanda: the government calls for the return of the refugees: «those who didn't take part in the massacres have nothing to fear.”</p> <p>24 July Zaire: 80,000 refugees arrive in Bukavu,</p>	<p>15 July MSF Holland and MSF Belgium agree on a joint intervention in Goma - MSF France chooses to remain on standby for Bukavu.</p> <p>18 July MSF Holland's humanitarian affairs department (HAD) sends message to the teams: “We should continue our activities in the camp but at the same time we should continue to press publicly for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.”</p> <p>19 July MSF Belgium Press conference: Call for the refugees to return to Rwanda - MSF Holland takes the same position.</p> <p>22 July MSF Holland announces 10,000 cases of cholera and 800 deaths in Goma – medical needs are covered.</p> <p>24 July Part of the MSF France team based in</p>

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p>1994</p> <p>21 August The last French soldiers leave Zone turquoise.</p> <p>25 August UNHCR declares the camps in Zaire to be in a «virtual state of war» as a result of militia and FAR violence against the population, and threats against NGOs. UNHCR no longer supports voluntary repatriation to Rwanda from Goma.</p> <p>6 September RPF begin deploying 2,000 combatants in the towns of Gikongoro, Kibuye and Cyangugu.</p> <p>7 September Human Rights Watch report on Human rights abuses committed by RPF troops in June and July.</p> <p>16-17 September UNAMIR declares more than two million people are displaced within Rwanda.</p>	<p>22 August Tanzania: group of refugees attacked in Benako who were candidates to return to Rwanda.</p> <p>23 August Zaire: Militiamen attack 200 refugees from the Kibumba camp as they prepared to return.</p> <p>2 September Zaire: Zairian authorities declare they no longer support the ex-Rwandan authorities, and that Rwandan refugees in Zaire have to leave by 30 September. Riots break out in several camps in Zaire.</p>	<p>release: “Rwanda: 3rd exodus confirmed.”</p> <p>19 August MSF Belgium and MSF France Press release: “French troops withdraw from Rwanda leaving chaos behind them.”</p> <p>Early September Desk managers visiting the field confirmed that MSF France wanted to limit operations to emergency refugee care - MSF France and UNHCR sign a memorandum of understanding until 31 October.</p> <p>Mid-September MSF France starts running the Kamanyola camp (Zaire- Burundi border) but later evacuates it for security reasons.</p>

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p>1994</p> <p>19 September UNHCR declares there are 2.1 million Rwandan refugees abroad: 270,000 in Burundi, 500,000 in Tanzania, 1.33 million in Zaire (850,000 in the region of Goma, 450,000 in the region of Bukavu, 30,000 in the region of Uvira).</p> <p>23 September UNHCR states it does not encourage Rwandan refugees to return home “based on the reports of violence there” (Gersony report, unreleased) – the United Nations Secretary-General calls for a further enquiry.</p> <p>24 September UNAMIR denies having information on the RPF massacres.</p> <p>27 September the United Nations Secretary-General demands a halt on all communications on the risks faced by refugees returning to Rwanda.</p> <p>29 September UNHCR and the United Nations call for Zairian authorities to restore order in Rwandan refugee camps.</p>	<p>24 September Operation “Homeward” to repatriate displaced people in Gikongoro, overseen by UNAMIR.</p>	<p>23 et 24 September The various MSF section coordinators meet in Kigali to analyse the situation in the camps and review MSF’s position.</p> <p>Late September MSF France starts running the Kabira (Bukavu) camp - MSF France coordinator in Goma call to headquarters: the team was disgusted with the situation in the camps.</p> <p>30 September Katale (Goma) camp: scouts assassinated by militiamen – threats against expatriate staff and evacuation of aid organisations (including MSF Holland) at the request of UNHCR - President of MSF France declares at Board meeting “we are going to have to take a position on our presence in the Goma camps.”</p>

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p>1994</p> <p>3 October United Nations Security Council adopts the UN experts Commission, which established that a genocide was committed against Rwandan Tutsi.</p> <p>21 October In a Press release UNHCR speaks of its concerns regarding the deteriorating security conditions in refugee camps and denounces the FAR's threatening presence, the leaders grip on the population and the terror inflicted upon refugees preparing to repatriate.</p> <p>24 October Three-way agreement signed by UNHCR, Zaire, and Rwanda on the repatriation of refugees.</p>	<p>6 October Rwanda: Rwandan authorities seize total control of former safe humanitarian zone in south-west Rwanda.</p>	<p>5 October The MSF operations directors decide to send a three-person team, <i>'the Troika'</i>, to evaluate the situation in Rwanda, Zaire and Tanzania.</p> <p>7 - 16 October <i>The Troika</i> from MSF's International council visits the field.</p> <p>11 October MSF Holland's Humanitarian Affairs department sends a memo to the teams: arguments in favour of continuing operations; should MSF publish a report?</p> <p>14 October <i>The Troika</i> and field coordinators meet and decide to reassess the situation in six weeks time, after continued lobbying in the international community.</p> <p>28 October MSF France Board votes for the withdrawal of the French section from all refugee camps in Rwanda, Zaire and Tanzania, within one month.</p>

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p data-bbox="148 293 209 327">1994</p> <p data-bbox="244 1447 400 1473">30 November</p> <p data-bbox="244 1480 638 1888">UNHCR announces a flood of several thousand refugees in the region of Bukavu, fleeing RPF soldiers emptying the camps in the former safe humanitarian zones (prefectures of Kibuye and Cyangugu) – The United Nations Security Council condemns the military and militia action in the Zaire refugee camps; UNAMIR mandate is extended for 6 months and postpones indefinitely the Secretary-General’s proposal to create an international force in the camps.</p>	<p data-bbox="675 327 831 353">15 November</p> <p data-bbox="675 360 1066 450">14 people killed by RPF soldiers during refugee camp closure in the former safe humanitarian zone.</p>	<p data-bbox="1099 488 1256 515">16 November</p> <p data-bbox="1099 521 1493 611">In <i>Le Soir</i> MSF Belgium’s operations director supports MSF France’s decision to leave the Bukavu camps.</p> <p data-bbox="1099 647 1256 674">18 November</p> <p data-bbox="1099 680 1493 741">Effective withdrawal of MSF France from the Bukavu camps.</p> <p data-bbox="1099 777 1256 804">24 November</p> <p data-bbox="1099 810 1493 1093">Inter-section meeting in Amsterdam on Kigali: MSF Belgium and MSF Holland decide to stay in the camps; MSF Holland willing to take up MSF France programmes in Tanzania - MSF Belgium Press release: “Médecins Sans Frontières questions Boutros Ghazi’s proposals”; MSF France: “Médecins Sans Frontières critics Boutros Ghali’s proposals.”</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1128 1256 1155">25 November</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1162 1493 1413">MSF Belgium Press release reports violent incidents in the Goma camps and calls for an international force to guarantee refugee safety - MSF international and Oxfam Press release: “Aid agencies criticise France for blocking aid from the European’ Union for Rwandan Reconstruction.’</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1449 1278 1476">Late November</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1482 1493 1603">MSF France mounts an information campaign to explain its withdrawal from the Zaire and Tanzania camps to the press and donors.</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1924 1240 1951">7 December</p> <p data-bbox="1099 1957 1493 2078">MSF Belgium Board affirms that the section’s strategy was to continue working in the camps, monitoring the situation and press for improvements.</p>

International	The Great Lakes	MSF
<p>1994</p>	<p>17 December Paul Kagame, Rwandan Defence Minister, calls for the peacekeepers to be sent to the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire.</p>	<p>First 2 weeks of December MSF France prepares to leave camps in Tanzania -16 cases of cholera in the Benaco camp.</p> <p>20 December MSF Press conference in Nairobi announcing the withdrawal of MSF France from the camps in Tanzania.</p> <p>22 December On the <i>BBC</i> and in <i>The Guardian</i>, a UNHCR spokesman accuses MSF of leaving camps to spend the Christmas holidays at home.</p> <p>31 December Effective withdrawal of MSF France from the Rwandan refugee camps in Tanzania.</p>
<p>1995</p>	<p>18 - 25 April At least 4,000 displaced people massacred in Kibeho, south-west Rwanda by RPF soldiers.</p>	<p>24 January In conjunction with the publication of "Populations en danger", MSF denounces the impunity enjoyed by those who committed genocide against the Rwandan Tutsi.</p> <p>7 February MSF Belgium announces its withdrawal from the camp in Kibumba for security reasons, threats to expatriates and fraud during Rwandan refugee census - MSF Holland affirms general improvement in camps where their teams are working.</p> <p>9 February MSF International's Secretary-General publishes article in New York Times: "Médecins Sans Frontières is leaving Rwandan refugee camps."</p> <p>3 - 4 March MSF regional inter-sections meeting in Kigali on the different positions held by MSF regarding refugee repatriation.</p> <p>23 March Common Press release by 18 NGOs, including MSF, announcing the urgent need for food in refugee camps in Zaire.</p> <p>Late April MSF Holland programme manager visits teams in Zaire camps, opposed to the withdrawal</p>

International**The Great Lakes****MSF****1995****17 May**

At an International Great Lakes programme manager meeting, MSF Belgium confirms it did not anticipate withdrawing from the camps in the near future.

22 June

The operations directors and the MSF Great Lakes programme managers discussed the possibility of leaving the camps. They concluded that each section should make its own decision - The MSF Belgium Board discusses a possible withdrawal from the camps.

5 July

MSF Belgium Board would leave the decision to withdraw from the camps up to the Project Committee.

18 July

The MSF Belgium project committee asks the Board for approval to leave the camp in Kahindo.

27 July

MSF Holland publishes the report "Deadlock in the Rwandan refugee crisis" on the situation in the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania.

2 August

MSF Belgium Board decides to withdraw the Belgian section from the camp in Kahindo in four months.

9 August

MSF Holland Board votes for the withdrawal of MSF Holland from the camps in Tanzania and Zaire (except for Uvira).

28 August

MSF Holland's departure announced after the news was leaked by a journalist in Nairobi.

December

MSF Holland withdraws from the Katala camp in Zaire and Ngara in Tanzania, and MSF Belgium withdraws from the Kahindo camp in Zaire.