

# NEWS WRAP

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In 2006, a French judge had accused Rwanda's present president, Paul Kagame, who in 1994 was the leader of Tutsi rebels fighting the government led by the Hutus, of organizing the assassination of the then president, Juvenal Habyarimana, which had propelled the killings of the Tutsis. 1994 witnessed the genocide of thousands of Tutsis. Present Rwanda's Tutsi leadership has now released a two-year investigation report from an official commission that accuses the French forces in Rwanda of crimes against humanity. The report raises accusations on the former French president, Francois Mitterand, and more than thirty senior French officials of aiding and protecting the killers. A UN sanctioned haven for refugees was utilized to provide shelter to those responsible for the hundred days of mass slaughter, to escape from the clutches of justice. Later the Rwandan Patriotic Front had defeated the Hutu regime, responsible for the murder of Tutsis. The five-hundred-page report describes the French support to the Hutus as of "a political, military, diplomatic and logistical nature."

The Rwandan commission accuses thirteen French political leaders, including Mitterand (died in 1996), former prime ministers Edouard Balladur and Dominique de Villepin, and former foreign ministers Allain Juppe and Hubert Vedrine of arming Hutu extremists. Official papers abandoned by the Hutu regime indicate that France had made large arms shipments to the former Rwandan army, and provided training to *Interahamwemilitiamen*, who conducted the genocide. French soldiers commanded artillery and flew helicopter gunships against Tutsi forces. The French forces had assassinated Tutsis, and Hutus accused of hiding Tutsis. There are also accusations of several rapes on Tutsi survivors, by the French forces. The commission's report contains precise accounts with names, places and dates.

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The independence proclaimed by the breakaway republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, has been supported unanimously by Russian MPs. In violation of a ceasefire deal, Russian troops are firmly planted in Georgia. About 25 checkpoints have been erected in Georgia by Russian soldiers, including some outside the original conflict zone, and in areas adjacent to the borders of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia claims that its troops are peace keepers, and could keep soldiers on Georgian Territory, under the ceasefire deal.

Many countries that were former satellites of the Soviet Union, have tense relations with Russia. The Baltic states have vocal Russian minorities who claim discrimination, even though the Baltic states are protected by the NATO and the European Union. Russia has threatened to place nuclear weapons in its Baltic fleet, based in Russian enclave, surrounded by EU states. After Poland agreed to host US missile shield in August 08, Russia has stated that it would target Poland with nuclear weapons. NATO ships on exercise in the Black Sea have been under pressure to leave, under international rules. Similar to other countries competing for the Arctic region's rich natural resources, Russia has been asserting its territorial rights in the Arctic. In Moldova, the separatist region of Transdnistria is host to the Russian 14th army as 'peace keepers'. The large

Russian minority accounts for 26% of the population in Kazakhstan, which is one of the world's biggest oil producers. USA and Britain have growing interests in Kazakhstan. Concentration of a large ethnic Russian population in south and east of Ukraine, and a Russian naval base at Sebastapol in Crimea, makes Ukraine a volatile area. Russia has been supporting separatists fighting in Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region. USA is using air bases in Kyrgystan, for raids on Afghanistan, and this has annoyed Russia. The peripheral countries constituting Russia's "near abroad" do not have the protection of NATO, which regards an attack on a member nation, as an attack on the whole alliance.

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Barakhama and Brahmanigaon, in Kandhamal districts of Orissa, were epicentres of ethnic and communal clashes of December 07.

On 23 Aug 08, VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati and four of his disciples were killed at Jalespeta ashram. The police claimed that the VHP activists were gunned down by Maoists. The Sangh outfit has countered that their workers were murdered at the bequest of the Church. Suspected Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activists set on fire a missionary school hostel, in the western Orissa district of Bargarh, on 25 Aug 08. A Christian lady employee was charred to death. A missionary who runs the hostel suffered serious burn injuries, and required admission in hospital, at Padampur. On 26 Aug 08, four persons including a woman, were killed and twelve others injured, in group clashes between two warring communities of Barakhama, in the southern district of Kandhamal. Barakhama was a virtual war zone, with both sides firing at each other. There was tension in 25 villages of the strife-torn district, with mobs pelting stones, and attacking houses belonging to the christian community. The compromise of peaceful civilian co-existence, which led to arson on a christian orphanage, killing of a woman, and serious injuries to a priest, has been criticized by the Vatican.

Communal clashes erupted in Jeypore town of Koraput district on 30 Aug 08, following a fight between students of two communities, belonging to Vikram Dev College, who fought over a graffiti on the walls of the college. The week long clashes, highly communal in nature, have ebbed after the deployment of CRPF and armed police in Orissa towns. Thousands of Christians have fled their villages, and taken shelter in forests. About 5000 are living in seven relief camps. More than fifty people, mostly Christians, have been killed in the recent Orissa violence. □□□