

## Rwanda: 'The Israel of Africa'

By Mark Doyle  
World Affairs Correspondent, BBC News

**The United Nations says some 2,000 Rwandan troops have entered the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where rebels opposed to the Rwandan government have been based for many years.**

A UN spokesman said the Rwandan move was part of a peace plan agreed with the Congolese government.

However, the presence of Rwandan troops inside Congo is bound to spark controversy and could have a powerful impact across central Africa.

Rwanda has been described by some as the Israel of Africa.

The ethnic Tutsis of Rwanda experienced their genocide in 1994 but a Tutsi-dominated government then came to power and has ruled ever since.

Like the Israelis, the Tutsis have enemies on their borders, and now they have sent in their powerful army to deal with the ones who have bases in neighbouring DR Congo.

### **Thousands displaced**

The parallels with Israel are not exact, of course. Rwanda and Congo have been fighting what amounts to a proxy war: Rwanda accuses Congo of harbouring ethnic Hutu militias who took part in the 1994 genocide and Congo accuses Rwanda of backing a Congolese Tutsi separatist movement.

The two countries recently agreed to work together militarily to deal with the Hutu side of this equation, and the march of the Rwandan army into eastern Congo can be seen in this context.

So there is the potential for this military move to be a step towards peace. But its fraught with danger.

Recent fighting in eastern Congo, between Congolese, left a quarter of a million people displaced.

Most of them will be terrified of the Rwandan presence and a new humanitarian disaster is possible.

And of course the Rwandan Hutu militias, a well-drilled military machine, are unlikely to give up to the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan army without a fight.

So there is also a very real possibility of Rwandans fighting Rwandans on Congolese soil.

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