

Rwandan envoy dismisses refugee report

By Patrick Jaramogi

RWANDA'S High Commissioner to Uganda Maj. Gen. Frank Mugambagye has dismissed as superficial a report released by a local human rights organisation, saying Rwandan refugees living in Uganda are not willing to return home because they believe that their home government is "repressive".

The report titled 'A Dangerous Impasse', carried out by the International Refugee Rights Initiative and the Social Science Research, was released at Hotel Africana in Kampala yesterday by the Refugee Law Project, an organisation under the Makerere

University's law faculty.

The organisation said the findings were based on interviews conducted in Nakivale refugee settlement. It said the refugees consider their lives in danger once they return to Rwanda.

Lucy Hovil from the International Refugee Rights Initiative said most refugees were unwilling to return to Rwanda.

The Rwanda High Commissioner, however, rubbished the findings.

"Research is about fact-finding and reaching out to all parties but the way the conclusion is reached is very alarming," Mugambagye said.

He said the Rwandan government promotes the

rights and freedoms of its citizens.

"Our first policy is truth and reconciliation, and our government gives hope to all citizens but to go and talk to

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a few refugees and tell the whole world lies is nothing but a connivance," he said.

He urged the researchers to repeat the project and

incorporate other stakeholders.

"Did you consider the fact that some refugees are running away from accountability? Do you know that Rwanda is the only country in the world where most of its refugees have returned home?" he asked.

The report pointed out that Rwanda is not only preventing refugees from returning home, but is also generating new ones.

The Rwandan refugees have been given up to December 31 to return home voluntarily or face forceful repatriation.

According to statistics from the UNHCR, Uganda currently hosts over 12,000 Rwandan refugees.