

Top General Says Burundi President Overthrown



Bujumbura, May 13 (RHC)-- Amid escalating tensions in the African state of Burundi, a top general has announced the overthrow of President Pierre Nkurunziza. The announcement, which was made during a radio broadcast by Major General Godefroid Niyombare on Wednesday, followed weeks of violent protests against the head of state's bid to stand for a third term.

It also came hours after Nkurunziza arrived in neighboring Tanzania for talks to end the crisis. Niyombare, who had been sacked from his position as the country's powerful chief of intelligence in February, said top officers were "dismissing" Nkurunziza and that a national salvation committee had been set up to run the country.

Also on Wednesday, demonstrations against the president's bid for a third term heated up, with troops surrounding the national radio station and a police officer opening fire at protesters in the country's capital Bujumbura.

The demonstrators, who reportedly numbered in the thousands, say Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in June elections is illegal.

Police also fired tear gas and water cannons to force back the protesters trying to enter the city's central business district. A group of female protesters, however, broke the police cordon and entered the district.

At least 15 people have been killed and more than 220 injured in the protests against Nkurunziza.

Nkurunziza has joined other East African Community leaders from Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in the Tanzanian city of Dar es Salaam for a special meeting to discuss the turmoil.

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