

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E–5, Part 1, Documents on Sub-Saharan Africa, 1969–1972

227. Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, October 3, 1972 [1](#) [2](#)

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Washington, October 3, 1972

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 3, 1972

ACTION

MEMORANDUM

- FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM

- HENRY A. KISSINGER

SUBJECT

- The US Response to the Burundi Tragedy; Ambassador Recalled on Consultations

My earlier memoranda for you on Burundi provided background on the tribal slaughter which took place there and Belgium's reaction. On my September 29 memorandum, you asked what we have done (Tab 2).

State has now recalled Ambassador Robert Yost for consultations and will be reviewing our future policy with him.

State also outlined their response to the Burundi tragedy in the paper at Tab 1. In summary:

State notes that between April 29 and the end of July, the United States "made strong efforts to awaken African and international concern and to encourage relief to those affected."

—The US participated in an appeal to the President of Burundi by Western ambassadors [France abstained] for national reconciliation;

—The US appealed to Zaire, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, and the OAU to urge the Burundians to end the killings. [Except for Zaire, the Africans were reluctant to get involved.];

—At our urging, Belgium stopped the shipment of arms to Burundi, a former colony;

—We stimulated the UN to establish a presence in Burundi;

—The first week of fighting we made \$100,000 available for humanitarian relief to the Burundi Government;

—We contributed \$50,000 for the care of refugees in neighboring countries.

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“In summation, “ State’s paper says, “The US role was one of active quiet leadership of an international effort, handicapped by our history of difficulties with Burundi [where two of our ambassadors had previously been expelled], African attitudes, and the reluctance of most European governments to get out in front.”

Future Policy

At this point, I would not propose altering our minimal relationship with Burundi. However, I think that we should inform State and our Ambassador to Burundi that so long as the present Burundi Government remains in power, we wish our relationship to remain minimal; i.e., no bilateral aid, no self-help funds, no cultural exchange programs. This would not preclude our giving humanitarian assistance, assuming it could reach all segments of Burundi’s population.

RECOMMENDATION

That I be authorized to inform the Department of State and Ambassador Yost that as long as the present Burundi Government remains in power, we expect our official relations with that state to be minimal. This would not preclude international humanitarian assistance providing it reaches all segments of the population but it would preclude bilateral aid, cultural exchange funds, self-help funds and similar programs.

Agree_____ [checkmark here] Disagree_____

1. Source: National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 735, Country Files, Africa, Burundi, Vol. I. Confidential. Sent for action. The President initialed “Agree” and wrote below: “K also see the Burundi Ambassador.” Tab 1 is . Tab 2 is [↩](#)
2. Kissinger responded to Nixon’s question regarding what the United States had done in reaction to the situation in Burundi. After outlining several measures, he recommended that the Department of State and Ambassador Yost be informed that while the present Burundi Government remained in power official relations were expected to be minimal.