

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 94/94 Extrajudicial executions / fear of further killings 8 March 1994

BURUNDI: More than 200 unarmed civilians killed in the capital, Bujumbura

More than 200 unarmed civilians are reported to have been massacred during a night-time raid on 6 March 1994 in the Kamenge zone of the capital, Bujumbura.

Amnesty International is concerned that further killings are likely, unless immediate steps are taken to prevent their recurrence and the military authorities allow and cooperate with an independent investigation into these killings.

Virtually all the victims of the massacre, who include women and children, are said to be members of the majority Hutu ethnic group. Government and other sources in Bujumbura have accused the army, which is dominated by members of the Tutsi ethnic group, of responsibility for the massacres. They point to the use of bayonets and the swiftness and skill with which the killings were perpetrated as evidence. Military commanders are reported to have denied that the security forces were involved in the killings.

On 7 March government ministers and foreign diplomats visited Kamenge, as bodies were being collected from homes and roadsides. One government minister has told Amnesty International that on arrival in Kamenge they first saw only bodies of men, but houses were empty. Later, they established that many bodies of women and children had been transported in military trucks and dumped by soldiers along rivers Ntahangwa and Rusizi in Bujumbura. Neither the military nor government authorities are known to have initiated any formal investigation into the killings.

The killings appear to be a show of strength orchestrated by the army following the refusal by some Hutu civilians in Kamenge to be disarmed by the gendarmes.

Hutu are reported to have refused to be disarmed because Hutu civilians in other parts of Bujumbura have been killed by armed Tutsi civilians. The attack also appears to have been a reprisal for the reported killing some days earlier of several gendarmes during a shoot-out with some armed civilians. Army commanders are reported to have subsequently announced that they would use the army to disarm the civilians responsible. However, army activity resulted in further violence. Army commanders are reported to have ignored pleas by government ministers on 5 March for the security forces to leave the area and stop attacks on civilians. The army activity culminated in the 6 March massacre.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The latest killings are a continuation of the violence and instability which racked Burundi when the army executed Burundi's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, elected in June 1993, and other senior government and National Assembly officials during a coup attempt on 21 October 1993. Between October and December 1993 as many as 100,000 or more civilians were killed, many of them Hutu executed extrajudicially by the security forces. A commission of inquiry set up by the government in December 1993 has failed to begin investigations into the coup attempt and the killings.

Since late 1993 there have been sporadic killings, mainly in Bujumbura. Many of the victims appear to be Hutu killed by Tutsi civilians aided or protected by members of the security forces. More than 50 civilians were killed at the end of January and at the start of February 1994 when opposition leaders from

the Tutsi ethnic group called on their supporters to take action to force the government to reverse its decision to dissolve the Constitutional Court. Their supporters set up barricades and used violence to stop members of the public from going to work. The violence later degenerated when Tutsi attacked and killed Hutu from which the government draws most of its support, simply on account of their ethnic origin or political affiliation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in French or in your own language:

- expressing deep concern at the killing of more than 200 unarmed civilians in Kamenge Zone on the night of 6 March 1994;
- expressing concern that the authorities, particularly the military, have taken virtually no measures to prevent the violence and that the perpetrators remain unpunished, thus leading others to believe that they can carry out further killings with impunity;
- urging the authorities to promptly set up an independent and impartial public inquiry into these killings with a view to identifying and bringing the perpetrators to justice;
- calling on commanders of the security forces to publicly condemn these killings and issue clear instructions to the security forces that the killing of innocent civilians is a criminal offence and that anyone found responsible will be brought to justice;
- calling on the Burundi government and commanders of the security forces to ensure that the armed forces are prevented from carrying out reprisal or other attacks on innocent civilians and that the latter are effectively protected by the security forces.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Son Excellence

le Président Cyprien NTARYAMIRA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

BP 1870, Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: President Ntaryamira, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5036 PRESIBU BDI

Faxes: 257 22 6424

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République/Dear President

2) Minister of Defence:

Col. Gédéon FYIROKO

Ministre de la Défense Nationale

Ministère de la Défense

BP 1870, Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Fyikoro, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: 257 22 21 48

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

3) Army Chief of Staff:

Lt-Col Jean BIKOMAGU

Chef d'Etat-major général des Forces armées

Etat-major général des Forces armées

Ministère de la Défense nationale

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: CEMG Bikomagu, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: 257 22 21 48

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-major/ Dear Chief of Staff

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Interior and Public Security

Monsieur Léonard NYANGOMA

Ministre d'Etat chargé de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité publique

Ministère de l'Intérieur, Bujumbura, République du Burundi

2) Gendarmerie Chief of Staff

Major Epitaphe BAYAGANAKANDI Gendarmerie Chief of Staff

Chef de l'Etat-major général de la gendarmerie

Etat-major général de la gendarmerie

Ministère de la Défense nationale

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

3) Minister for Human Rights and Refugees:

Monsieur Issa NGENDAKUMANA

Ministre des droits de l'homme et des Réfugiés

Ministère des droits de l'homme

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

and to diplomatic representatives of Burundi accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office if sending appeals after 19 April 1994.