

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 16/19/98

21 August 1998

Further information on UA 223/98 (AFR 16/18/98, 18 August 1998) - Fear for safety / Fear of torture and ill-treatment

BURUNDI Gabriel Ntahondi

Gabriel Ntahondi is now known to be illegally held in the offices of the *Groupement d'intervention* military unit in Bujumbura, and not the military camp of the *3e groupement d'intervention* as previously stated.

Although he has reportedly not been tortured, concerns for his safety remain as he is held in an illegal place of detention where there are no safeguards against torture or ill-treatment.

A trader who has been travelling from southern Burundi to Bujumbura, Gabriel Ntahondi was arrested on 14 August in Bujumbura and accused of smuggling arms in his produce, although none were reportedly found during a search at the time of his arrest. The fact that he recently bought a plot of land in a Bujumbura district has apparently drawn attention to his wealth.

Reliable sources in Bujumbura claim that Gabriel Ntahondi's arrest is primarily motivated by corruption in the military. Gabriel Ntahondi was reportedly told by *Groupement d'intervention* officials that he could be released by paying 1 million Burundian francs, subsequently lowered to 500,000 Burundian francs after negotiation.

The *Groupement d'intervention* is responsible for the activities of the three *bataillons d'intervention* (intervention squads) in Bujumbura.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes in French or in your own language:

- calling on Gabriel Ntahondi to be immediately and unconditionally released unless he is to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, and there is substantive evidence to support the accusation against him;
- expressing concern that he is being held in an illegal place of detention and calling for an investigation into the use of the offices of the *Groupement d'intervention* as a place of detention.
- calling for any detainees found in the *Groupement d'intervention* offices to be immediately transferred to official places of detention;
- seeking guarantees that his physical integrity will be protected;
- calling for an investigation into the circumstances of his arrest and for any official who is found to have acted illegally to be brought to justice;
- reminding the Burundi authorities of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notably Article 9: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

APPEALS TO: (Please note that there is still no postal service to Burundi and that faxes can be difficult to get through. Please keep trying.)

President

Major Pierre Buyoya

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 74 90

Telex: 5036PRESIBU

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Terence SINUNGURUZA
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 21 48

Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-Col. Alfred NKURUNZIZA
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense Nationale

Telegrams: Lieutenant-Col. Nkurunziza, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: 257 22 39 59 / 21 75 05

Telex: 5146MDMBDI / 5049MDNBDI

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Commander of the Groupement d'intervention

Major Edouard NIBIGIRA

Commandant

Groupement d'intervention

Telegrams: Commandant Nibigira, Groupement d'intervention, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Dear Major

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, Institutional Reform and Relations with the National Assembly

Eugène NINDORERA

Ministre des droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes institutionnelles,
et des relations avec l'Assemblée nationale

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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 8 October 1998.

***"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary
arrest, detention or exile."***

Article 9, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>