

PUBLIC

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Detention without charge / Incommunicado detention /  
Possible prisoners of conscience

01 September 2003

RWANDA

Léonard Kavutse (m) former member of Parliament  
Grégoire Mbayingana (m) taxi driver, 58 years old  
Agnès Nyirantezirizaza (f)  
Gatete (m)  
Modeste Sindikubwabo (m), around 40 years old  
Bahizire (m)  
Jean Ahishakiye (m)  
Grégoire Mutessa (m)

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The eight people named above have been arrested because of their alleged support for the main challenger of President Paul Kagame in the 25 August 2003 presidential elections. They are being unlawfully detained and may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.

Léonard Kavutse is a former Member of Parliament for the *Mouvement Démocratique Républicain* (MDR), Democratic Republican Movement, which was banned in April 2003. He was held at Gikondo police station in the capital, Kigali from 19 August, until 28 August, when he was transferred to Kigali Central Prison. On 28 August, he was made to appear on television to "confess" that he had written a letter to presidential candidate Faustin Twagiramungu, accusing the ruling Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) of being a criminal organization. He reportedly added that the language used in the letter might incite the Rwandese public to violence. His televised confession appears to have been intended to discredit Faustin Twagiramungu, who himself had been accused by the authorities of encouraging racial divisions amongst Rwandans.

Léonard Kavutse is also a founding member of ADEP-Mizero, a political group that was denied legal status as a political party on the basis that it contravened the constitution and was receiving funding from abroad. Prior to his detention, Kavutse and several other ADEP-Mizero leaders, including Célestin Kabanda and Faustin Minani, had been ordered to report daily to a police station, where they were made to remain until late evening. Opposition supporters allege that the government used this tactic to prevent opposition leadership from campaigning for Faustin Twagiramungu.

Grégoire Mbayingana is being detained incommunicado at the Muhima police station in Kigali. He was arrested around 22 August and also accused of encouraging racial divisions amongst Rwandese. Jean Ahishakiye has reportedly been detained in Kigali Central Prison since 13 August, for being a supposed partisan of Faustin Twagiramungu.

A number of Faustin Twagiramungu's supporters have reportedly been detained without charge in his home province of Cyangugu. Agnès Nyirantezirizaza was reportedly detained at a polling station in Impala district in Cyangugu province around 25 August, when election officials allegedly tried to force her to vote for President Kagame. She refused vehemently, saying she preferred to be arrested. A man called Bahizire was reportedly detained following the elections, because he told people that he had voted for Twagiramungu. He is being held incommunicado at Kamembe district detention center, Cyangugu. Another man called Gatete is in incommunicado detention, without charge following his arrest around 22 August, in Impala or Nyamaseke districts in Cyangugu province. He is at least 30 years old and works for Cimerwa cement company in Bugarama. Modeste Sindikubwabo was detained on 29 August in Impala district, on suspicion of having campaigned for Faustin Twagiramungu, whilst Grégoire Mutessa was reportedly arrested on 23 August in Kirambo district, Cyangugu province.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Presidential elections were held in Rwanda on 25 August, the first time since the RPF came to power in 1994. Four candidates participated, though one dropped out in favour of the incumbent President on the eve of the elections. Faustin Twagiramungu ran as an independent candidate for president because his political party, the MDR, had been banned. His supporters and other high-level opposition figures were victims of threats and harassment throughout the campaign. Parliamentary elections are scheduled for 29 September 2003. There are fears that similar human rights violations and intimidation tactics against government opponents might characterise the campaigning period.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French, English or your own language:**

- expressing concern that Grégoire Mbayingana, Agnès Nyirantezirizaza, Gatete, Modeste Sindikubwabo, Bahizire, Jean Ahishakiye and Grégoire Mutessa may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs;
- asking the government to clarify why these individuals are being held, for them to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, or released immediately;
- urging the government to release all detainees held solely for their suspected or known peaceful support for opposition candidates;
- encouraging the newly elected President Paul Kagame to make the respect of human rights a priority of his administration;
- calling on the government not to harass or threaten members of the opposition political parties, and to allow them to fully participate in the country's political process;
- encouraging the government to respect the civil and political rights of all Rwandese people in the run-up to the parliamentary elections on 29 September.

## **APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Rwanda

President Paul Kagame

P.O. Box 15

Kigali

RWANDA

**Fax:** + 250 84390/84769

**E-mail:** [presirep@rwanda1.com](mailto:presirep@rwanda1.com)

**Salutation:** Dear President / Monsieur le Président de la République

## **COPIES TO:**

Commander of National Police Force

Colonel Frank Mugambage

Commander

National Police Force

Kigali, RWANDA

**Fax:** + 250 86602

**Salutation:** Dear Commander / Monsieur le Commandant

Prosecutor General

Gerald Gahima

P.O. Box 2886

Kigali RWANDA

**Salutation:** Dear Prosecutor General / Monsieur le Procureur Générale

President of National Human Rights Commission

Kayitesi Zainabu

President

National Human Rights Commission

P.O. Box 269

Kigali, RWANDA

**Fax: + 250 510393**

**Salutation: Dear President / Madame la Présidente**

and to diplomatic representatives of RWANDA accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 October 2003.