

UA 34/98

Detention/Fear for safety

2 February 1998

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Désiré Rugemaninzi, chief of Kabare
Espoir Ruhigita Bulangalire, university lecturer
Masu Ga Rugamika, university rector
Augustin Babunga, university lecturer
Engineer Mushegera, employee of GTZ
Cubaka, former manager of Riviera hotel

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the six people named above. The circumstances surrounding their arrest suggest that they may be prisoners of conscience.

They and several other prominent people were arrested between 27 and 29 January 1998 in Bukavu, the capital of South-Kivu province, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Désiré Rugemaninzi, Engineer Mushegera and Cubaka are being held by the *Agence nationale de renseignements* (ANR), National Intelligence Agency, security service in Bukavu. Espoir Ruhigita Bulangalire, Augustin Babunga and Masu Ga Rugamika were transferred to the capital, Kinshasa. They are thought to be held by the ANR but the authorities have not revealed their whereabouts. Pierre Ndatabaya, chief of Ngweshe, and Kamola Muderhwa are reported to have been released in unclear circumstances a few days after their arrest.

The ANR is notorious for ill-treating detainees, including subjecting people to electric shock. Those who have been transferred to Kinshasa will be effectively denied access to their relatives. Detainees in the DRC usually depend on their relatives for food.

The detainees were reportedly arrested after a meeting in Bukavu with President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. President Kabila and several government officials were returning from a visit to neighbouring Uganda. Those arrested are reported to have expressed concern to President Kabila about human rights violations and destruction of private property by government forces in the context of operations against armed government opponents. They appear to have been targeted because they were prominent members of the society in South-Kivu.

Désiré Rugemaninzi is a traditional chief of Kabare *chefferie*, while Masu Ga Rugamika is rector of the *Université libre des pays des Grands lacs* (ULPGL), Free University of the Great Lakes Countries, in Goma. Espoir Ruhigita Bulangalire and Augustin Babunga are lecturers at the *Université évangélique en Afrique* (UEA), Evangelical University in Africa. Engineer Mushegera works for a German government-funded development organization known as *Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit* (GTZ), Society for Technical Cooperation. Cubaka was until recently manager of Riviera hotel in Bukavu which belongs to former Prime Minister Faustin Birindwa. The authorities reportedly ordered their arrest after accusing them of supporting armed government opponents locally known as *Mayi-Mayi*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since it came to power in May 1997, the AFDL government has committed numerous human rights abuses against critics of the government and representatives of civil society, including church leaders. Hundreds of people are reported to have been arrested. Furthermore, dozens of people have "disappeared" or have been extrajudicially executed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, English, Kiswahili or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that the six men were arrested solely because they expressed their views, including about human rights violations by government forces;
- seeking assurances that the detainees are protected from any form of ill-treatment and that they are allowed regular access to their relatives, legal counsel and independent medical care;
- calling for their immediate release unless they have been charged with a recognizable criminal offence and given an opportunity to challenge the basis for their arrest before a competent, independent and impartial judicial official.

APPEALS TO:

President

Son Excellence Laurent-Désiré KABILA
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: President Kabila, Kinshasa DR Congo

Fax: + 243 88 02120 (the fax may be temporarily out of service - you might have to try several times)

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République

Minister of Justice

M. Mwenze KONGOLO
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
BP 3137, Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Minister of State for Internal Affairs

Gatean KAKUDJI
Ministre d'Etat à l'Intérieur
Hôtel du Conseil exécutif
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Deputy Gouverneur of South-Kivu Province

Benjamin SERUKIZA
Vice-Gouverneur
Province du Sud-Kivu
Hôtel de ville
Bukavu
Democratic Republic of Congo

and to diplomatic representatives of Democratic Republic of Congo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 March 1998.