

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 62/22/99

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 20 per section.

EXTRA 123/99

Fear for safety / Arbitrary arrests

3 September

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Théophile Mbuyi] journalists  
Philippe Bilisi]

Members of the human rights organizations *Groupe Lotus* and *Justice et Libération*

Amnesty International is extremely concerned by recent arrests, threats and intimidation of human rights activists and journalists by members of the armed opposition group *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy.

The organization is concerned for the safety of *Radio Liberté* journalists Théophile Mbuyi and Philippe Bilisi whose whereabouts are still not known following their arrests, on or around 27 August 1999 and 30 August respectively, in the northern town of Kisangani.

The organization is also concerned for the safety of members of the Kisangani-based human rights groups *Groupe Lotus* and *Justice et Libération*. Members of *Groupe Lotus* have been harassed and threatened by members of the RCD in the last few days who have accused them of passing information to Western organizations. Their president, Dismas Kitenge, has been summoned to go to the security services in Kisangani but was not detained.

On 25 August, Pasteur Claude Olenga and Koseke, both members of the human rights organization *Justice et Libération*, Justice and Liberation, were arrested and detained for six days by the *Département de sécurité et de renseignements* (DSR), Department of Security and Intelligence, in Kisangani. They were released on 1 September after a meeting was held between representatives of civil society and the Vice-Governor of Kisangani on 31 August. They have however been told to report to the authorities every day for the next ten days. They were reportedly accused by the RCD faction supported by Rwanda of having contacts with the faction supported by Uganda but are not known to have been charged with any criminal offence.

Kisangani is currently under the control of the RCD, but has been the scene of recent fighting between the RCD's two factions, supported respectively by Uganda and by Rwanda. Tensions between the two factions remain high.

On 27 August, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action on behalf of independent journalists Mushizi Nfundiko Kizito and Omba Kamengele who had been arrested two days earlier by RCD soldiers, in Bukavu, South Kivu province (see EXTRA 119/99, AFR 62/20/99). On 27 August Raphael Wakenge, a leading member of the human rights organization *Héritiers de la Justice* was arrested in Bukavu, South Kivu province. He is apparently accused of helping the two journalists to obtain sensitive military information. All three remain in detention in Bukavu Central Prison. Amnesty International suspects the arrests of all three are politically motivated. The RCD faction supported by Rwanda currently controls most of North and South Kivu provinces in eastern DRC.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The current armed conflict in the DRC began in August 1998 when the RCD, supported by Rwanda and Uganda, launched a rebellion against the government of Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The right to freedom of expression has been blatantly

violated in both RCD-controlled and government-controlled areas. Human rights activists and other representatives of civil society have faced harassment, arrest, "disappearance" and death throughout the country.

On 6 August 1998, Jacques Semurongo, a leading member of the human rights organization *Héritiers de la Justice*, was reportedly shot dead by RCD members. Dozens of human rights defenders have been forced to flee the country. Members of the human rights organizations *Héritiers de Justice* and *Groupe Jérémie* have been threatened with violence and detention.

On 15 June, RCD combatants broke into the office of *Groupe Jérémie*, took away documents and sealed the office. The following day the RCD issued a statement, which was read on the official radio, accusing *Groupe Jérémie* and others of publishing anti-RCD tracts.

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

- expressing concern about cases of arbitrary arrests of human rights activists and journalists over the last few days;
- expressing concern for the safety of journalists Théophile Mbuyi and Philippe Bilisi of *Radio Liberté*, arrested in Kisangani at the end of August 1999;
- asking for assurances that they will not be ill-treated and that they are allowed access to their family, doctors and lawyers of their choice;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release, unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- expressing concern for the safety of human rights activists, in particular members of the organizations *Groupe Lotus* and *Justice et Libération* in Kisangani after they were threatened and following the recent arrest of Pasteur Olonga and Koseke of *Justice et Libération* (now released);
- expressing concern that all the above arrests might be politically motivated because of the work of these individuals as journalists or human rights activists;
- calling on the RCD to respect the right to freedom of expression and to ensure that human rights activists and journalists can carry out their work without fear of human rights abuses.

**APPEALS TO:**

Emile Ilunga  
Président  
Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)  
Goma  
République démocratique du Congo  
**Fax: 871 761 850 629**  
**Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President**

Maître Jean-Marie Emungu  
Directeur du Département de la justice et des droits de l'homme  
Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)  
Goma  
République démocratique du Congo  
**Faxes:+ 871 761 850 629**  
**Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur / Dear Director**

**Note:** the above fax number is a satellite number and it may be difficult to get through. Please also send appeals to the Rwandese government - the main

political and military ally of the RCD - asking them to use their influence with the RCD and raising the points listed above.

President Pasteur Bizimungu  
Office of the President  
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda  
**Telegrams:President, Kigali, Rwanda**  
**Faxes:+ 250 84390**  
**Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President**

Major General Paul Kagame  
Vice-President and Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
BP 23, Kigali, Rwanda  
**Telegrams:Major General Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda**  
**Faxes:+ 250 76969 / 72431**  
**Salutation:Monsieur le Vice-Président / Dear Vice-President**

Colonel Kayumba Nyamwasa  
Chief of Staff of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA)  
Ministry of Defence  
KIGALI, Rwanda  
**Telegrams:RPA Chief of Staff, Kigali, Rwanda**  
**Faxes:+ 250 76969 / 72431**  
**Salutation:Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-Major / Dear Chief of Staff**

**COPIES TO** diplomatic representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo accredited to your country and to the embassy of Rwanda, if there is one.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 October 1999.