

Worldwide Appeals January 2007
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Burundi

Detained for criticizing the government

Gabriel Rufyiri was arrested in September 2006 for alleging that members of the Burundian government have been embezzling money. He is currently detained in Mpimba Prison in the capital, Bujumbura, on a charge of “defamation”. AI considers him a prisoner of conscience, held solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Gabriel Rufyiri is president of the non-governmental anti-corruption organization, the Observatory for the Struggle against Corruption and Economic Embezzlement (OLUCOME), which has regularly criticized the government over its failure to arrest those responsible for embezzling public funds. OLUCOME recently criticized the authorities over the sale of a presidential plane, complaining that the government did not accept the highest bid and consequently lost US\$2 million.

OLUCOME has been repeatedly subject to harassment. Some members have received phone calls threatening them and their families on account of their work for the organization. On one occasion, OLUCOME’s office was reportedly occupied by a gang of around 30 men who forced staff out of the building, padlocking the doors so they could not return to work. On another occasion, a public event was broken up by a large group of men, reportedly led by a man who had been incriminated by OLUCOME in allegations of corruption.

Please write, urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release prisoner of conscience Gabriel Rufyiri who is detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression. Call on the authorities to carry out a full and prompt independent investigation into the allegations of harassment and intimidation of OLUCOME’s staff, and to bring those responsible to justice.

Send appeals to: Président Pierre Nkurunziza, Président de la République, Boulevard de l’Uprona, Rohero I, BP 1870, Bujumbura, Burundi. Fax: +257 22 74 90 Salutation: Dear Mr President

Belarus

Imprisoned for being an activist

Zmitser Dashkevich, a leader of the youth opposition movement Young Front, was summoned to the Prosecutor’s office on 15 September and charged with “organizing or participating in an activity of an unregistered non-governmental organization.”

Following a trial, held behind closed doors, Zmitser Dashkevich was sentenced on 1 November to one and a half years’ imprisonment in a minimum security prison.

Hundreds of people, including opposition politicians, writers, diplomats and civil society activists demonstrated outside the court in Minsk, calling for his immediate release. AI believes he is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for exercising his rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

He was charged under an Article which was added to the Belarus Criminal Code in December 2005 as part of a series of amendments that introduced penalties for civil society organizations and other outspoken critics of the government, in the lead-up to the presidential elections in March 2006.

Zmitser Dashkevich was previously arrested with four others in April 2006 during a peaceful demonstration to mark the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. All five men were released in May.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Zmitser Dashkevich.

Send appeals to: President Alyaksandr G. Lukashenka, ul. Karla Marxa 38, 220016 Minsk, Belarus. Fax: +375 172 26 06 10 or 172 22 38 72 Salutation: Dear President Lukashenka

Egypt
Freedom of expression denied

Tal'at Sadat, was sentenced by a military court to one year's imprisonment with labour on 31 October for "defaming the armed forces and spreading false rumours". Nephew of the assassinated former Egyptian President Mohamed Anwar Sadat and a member of parliament for the small opposition Al-Ahrar Party, he was stripped of his parliamentary immunity during the investigation. AI considers him a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

On the 25th anniversary of the former President's assassination, Tal'at Sadat gave a series of media interviews in which he accused the armed forces and senior officials of the Republican Guards of involvement in the plot to kill his uncle, which was carried out during a military parade held on 6 October 1981. In the interviews he suggested that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak – then Vice-President – might also have been involved. The gunman who assassinated President Sadat was tried and executed in April 1982.

Tal'at Sadat was denied full rights to legal defence and, although a civilian, was tried before a military court, from which there is no right of appeal to a higher court. After his trial, several Egyptian human rights groups expressed concern about the case and condemned his imprisonment.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of prisoner of conscience Tal'at Sadat imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Send appeals to: General Habib Ibrahim El Adly, Minister of the Interior, Ministry of the Interior, 25 Al-Sheikh Rihan Street, Bab al-Louk, Cairo, Egypt. Fax: +20 2 579 2031
Email: moi@idsc.gov.eg or moi2@idsc.gov.eg or moi1 @idsc.gov.eg Salutation: Dear Minister