

PUBLIC

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Further Information on UA 259/03(AFR 47/011/2003, 1 September 2003) Detention without charge / Incommunicado detention /Possible prisoners of conscience

RWANDA **Léonard Kavutse (m) former member of Parliament**
Gatete (m)
Jean Ahishakiye (m)

Released: **Grégoire Mbayingana (m) taxi driver, 58 years old**
Agnès Nyirantezirizaza (f)
Modeste Sindikubwabo (m), around 40 years old
Bahizire (m)
Grégoire Mutessa (m)

Five of the eight people arrested because of their alleged support for the main challenger of President Paul Kagame in the 25 August 2003 presidential elections have been released. They had been unlawfully detained and may have been held solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.

Grégoire Mbayingana was detained incommunicado at the Muhima police station in Kigali. He was arrested around 22 August and also accused of encouraging racial divisions amongst Rwandese. 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 was held incommunicado at Kamembe district detention center, in Cyangugu province. Grégoire Mutessa was reportedly arrested on 23 August in Kirambo district, Cyangugu province. Modeste Sindikubwabo was detained on 29 August in Impala district, on suspicion of having campaigned for Faustin Twagiramungu. According to the National Police Force, all of them have now been released, though Modeste Sindikubwabo allegedly still has to report to his local police station.

Léonard Kavutse, a man known as Gatete and another called Jean Ahishakiye remain in detention and are possible prisoners of conscience. Léonard Kavutse is a former member of Parliament, and 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. 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.

Gatete is in incommunicado detention, without charge following his arrest around 22 August, in Impala district in Cyangugu province. He is at least 30 years old and works for Cimerwa cement company in Bugarama. Ahihsakiye Jean has reportedly been detained in Kigali Central Prison since 13 August.

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. The Rwandese authorities have accused Twagiramungu of serious offences, including "divisionism" and posing a threat to public security. The government appears to be preparing public opinion for arresting him and his close supporters.

There have been reports from around the country of individuals being detained and occasionally beaten before and after the elections as a result of their alleged support for Faustin Twagiramungu. 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:

- welcoming the release of Modeste Sindikubwabo, Bahizire, Grégoire Mbayingana, Agnès, Nyirantezirizaza and Grégoire Mutessa, who were all detained for their alleged support for the main challenger of President Paul Kagame in the 25 August 2003 presidential elections;
- expressing concern that former member of Parliament, Léonard Kavutse, Gatete and Jean Ahishakiye 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

Salutation: Dear President / Monsieur le Président de la République

Prosecutor General

Gerald Gahima

P.O. Box 2886

Kigali RWANDA

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General / Monsieur le Procureur Générale

COPIES TO:

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 16 October 2003.