

PUBLIC

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Prisoners of conscience/
Detention without charge

3 October 2002

DEMOCRATIC Safari Ntanama (m), agency chief of Uvira Local Radio
REPUBLIC OF Bugumba Tanganika (m), journalist
CONGO (DRC)

Journalists Safari Ntanama and Bugumba Tanganika are being held without charge in the Bureau II military detention centre in the town of Uvira, South Kivu province, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), following their arrest on 26 September. They may be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for their legitimate professional activities.

The men are detained by the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma* (RCD-Goma), Congolese Rally for Democracy, a Rwandese-backed armed political group and the *de facto* political authority in much of the South Kivu province. They were arrested at around 7am at their homes by RCD-Goma officials, reportedly on the order of Tommy Tambwe Rudima, the vice-governor of South Kivu province. Two days after their arrest, they were questioned by the RCD-Goma authorities.

Safari Ntanama is agency chief of Uvira Local Radio (*Radio locale de Uvira*) and Bugumba Tanganika is a journalist for the same radio station. The two journalists produce a radio debate called "*Hodi Hodi Mitahani*", during which members of the population can comment on the current social, political and economic situation in South Kivu. On 25 September, the show focussed on the withdrawal of Rwandese troops from eastern DRC, and people on the show expressed their fear about the resulting heightened tension in the region. The following day, both journalists were arrested and reportedly accused of having used the show to broadcast information considered tendentious and hostile by the RCD-Goma authorities.

Though Safari Ntanama and Bugumba Tanganika have not been ill-treated in detention, and have had access to human rights activists and to their families, Amnesty International fears that the men may be transferred to another detention site elsewhere in eastern DRC. This would make it more difficult for family and human rights organizations to trace them, and would also increase the possibility that they could be transported across the DRC's border to Rwanda.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Large areas of eastern DRC are controlled by the RCD-Goma, which has its headquarters in Goma and is supported by Rwanda.

Following Rwanda's announcement that its troops will be withdrawn from South Kivu Province, tension in the region is rising. A sizeable proportion of Rwandese government forces has since reportedly left eastern DRC. While the withdrawal of foreign forces from DRC is largely welcomed by the Congolese civilian population, there are widespread fears that instability and violence may escalate in the areas vacated by these forces. Journalists and human rights activists throughout the region have been increasingly menaced by the authorities in recent weeks. A number of people have been arrested and detained in Uvira, Goma and Bukavu, based on the accusation of having criticized the RCD-Goma authorities. They are in danger of being transported to different places of detention in eastern DRC. Amnesty International has received information on several cases in the past where the transport of prisoners to Rwanda has led to their "disappearance".

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

- expressing concern at the arrest and detention without charge of Safari Ntanama and Bugumba Tanganika;
- expressing your fear that they are prisoners of conscience, detained without charge on account of their professional activities, and urging that they be immediately and unconditionally released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling for an end to the persistent harassment of journalists and human rights defenders throughout the DRC.

APPEALS TO: (Fax numbers may be difficult to get through to, but please keep trying)

President of Rwanda

President Paul KAGAME

Office of the President

PO Box 15, Kigali, Rwanda

Fax: + 250 84390

e-mail: presirep@rwanda1.com

Salutation: Your Excellency

RCD-Goma Head of Justice and Human Rights

Maître Moise NYARUGABO

Chef du Département de Justice, Droits Humains et Règlement de Conflits

Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie - (RCD-Goma)

RCD-Goma Headquarters/Etat-majeur Goma

Democratic Republic of Congo/ Republique democratique du Congo

Fax: + 250 54 06 96

Salutation: Dear Chef du Département

RCD-Goma Head of Interior

Dr Bizima KARAHA

Chef du Département de l'Intérieur

Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie - (RCD-Goma)

RCD-Goma Headquarters/Etat-majeur

Goma

Democratic Republic of Congo/ Republique democratique du Congo

Fax: + 250 54 06 96

e-mail: deskinfordc@yahoo.fr

Salutation: Dear Chef du Département

COPIES 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 14 November 2002.