

8 September 2000

UA 273/00

Fear of "disappearance" / Fear of ill-treatment and torture / Possible prisoners of conscience

DRC/RWANDA

Gervais Chirhalwira Nkunzimana, lecturer  
Paulin Bapolisi, lecturer  
Aloys Muzalia Wakyebwa, lecturer  
Régine Mutijima(f), former school director  
Lusambo wa Karume, lawyer  
Safari wa Karume, medical doctor  
Bonheur Badesire Isungu, civil servant

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An armed opposition group are believed to be unlawfully holding seven people, some of whom have not been seen since they were detained with the aid of Rwandese security forces. Amnesty International fears for their safety and is concerned that they may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

The *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie - Goma* (RCD-Goma), Congolese Rally for Democracy, an armed opposition group known to have tortured and ill-treated detainees previously, are thought to be holding the seven named above, who were arrested in cooperation with members of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA), the Rwandese security forces.

Gervais Chirhalwira Nkunzimana, Paulin Bapolisi, Aloys Muzalia Wakyebwa and Régine Mutijima were arrested on 29 August in Bukavu, the capital of South-Kivu province in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which is occupied by Rwandese forces. The RCD-Goma leadership have refused to reveal their whereabouts. There are reports that they may have been ill-treated, and that they are detained on a river island near the northeastern town of Kisangani. They appear to have been arrested for their opposition to the rebellion and the occupation of DRC territory by Rwanda, and for their recent appointment as members of the DRC Transitional National Assembly.

Dr Safari wa Karume and his brother, Lusambo wa Karume, who is diabetic, were arrested on 3 August in the Rwandese town of Gikongoro. They were on their way to Nairobi, Kenya, where Safari wa Karume was due to have a medical check-up. The two brothers were detained in the Rwandese capital, Kigali, and on 19 August they were transferred to Bukavu. Their health has since deteriorated and both are hospitalized at Bukavu general hospital under police guard.

Bonheur Badesire Isungu was arrested by a group of RCD-Goma and RPA soldiers on 5 June 2000. He was reportedly severely ill-treated while in custody, before being transferred to the southeastern town of Kalemie on 12 August. He is apparently accused of having links with local armed groups known as *Mayi-Mayi*, which oppose the RPA and RCD-Goma. Sources in Bukavu say he was arrested because he previously worked for former governor Charles Magabe, who defected from the RCD.

All these arrests have involved members of the Rwandese security forces, RPA, and Amnesty International believes that the Rwandese authorities have sufficient influence with RCD-Goma to effect the release of the detainees.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The current armed conflict in the DRC began in August 1998 when the RCD, supported by Rwandese and Ugandan forces, launched a rebellion against Laurent Désiré Kabila's newly established government. In May 1999, the RCD itself split into two factions, RCD-Goma (allied to Rwanda) and RCD-Kisangani (allied to Uganda) that are now fighting each other as well as the DRC government. The DRC is effectively split three ways between the government, RCD-Goma and RCD-Kisangani. Both factions of the RCD and their allies are also fighting against several *Mayi-Mayi* armed groups, who oppose to all foreign troops.

The RCD and their allies have failed to secure popular support, in part because they have carried out widespread unlawful killings and other human rights abuses against unarmed civilians suspected of supporting the DRC Government and local armed groups. Rwandese political, military and economic control over RCD-Goma has remained a source of discord within the armed opposition group.

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

- expressing concern that the detainees (naming them) are being unlawfully held, some of them as prisoners of conscience held solely for their non-violent political views or because they do not support the rebellion against the DRC Government;
- stating that Amnesty International considers the Rwandese authorities be responsible for their detention and alleged ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to inform their relatives and human rights organizations of where they are, and to promptly return them to Bakavu where they can be visited by their relatives, doctors, lawyers and human rights or humanitarian organizations;
- urging the authorities to guarantee their safety and ensure they are protected from ill-treatment;
- calling for the Rwandese authorities and RCD-Goma to order their immediate and unconditional release, unless they have been charged with a recognizably criminal offence.

**APPEALS TO:**

President

Major General Paul KAGAME  
Président  
Présidence de la République  
BP 15, KIGALI  
Rwanda

**Telegrams: President, Kigali, Rwanda**  
**Fax: + 250 84769 or + 250 84390**  
**Salutation: Dear President / Monsieur le Président**

Minister of Justice and Institutional Relations

Monsieur Jean de Dieu MUCYO  
Ministre de la Justice et des Relations institutionnelles  
Ministère de la Justice  
BP 160 KIGALI  
Rwanda

**Fax: + 250 87 051**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister / Monsieur le Ministre**  
**Telegram: Ministre Justice, Kigali, Rwanda**

President, RCD - Goma

Maître Ilunga  
Président du Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie - Goma  
Democratic Republic of Congo

**Fax: + 871 761850629 (please note, you may have difficulty getting through on this number)**  
**Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President**

**COPIES TO:**

Gasana Ndobu  
President of the National Human Rights Commission  
BP 269, KIGALI  
Rwanda

**Fax: + 250 82702**

and to diplomatic representatives of the DRC and Rwanda accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 October 2000.