

EXTRA 98/97 Extrajudicial executions / Fear for safety 11 July 1997

BURUNDI Constance, aged 25 (f)
Nkiobanynka, aged 65, (f)
Serge Ntibazahoruri, aged 30
Jeanette, aged 4, (f)
Seraphine Nyandwi, aged 23, (f)
Izidoni Ntakhomvkiyi, aged 2
Ancilla, aged one month, (f)
Vénérande Zigirabarya, aged 28, (f)
Rose Bucumi, aged 15, (f)
Butoyi, aged 4
Ciza, aged 12
Innocent Havyarimana, aged 6

At least 12 people, including seven children, are reported to have been extrajudicially executed by members of the Burundi armed forces between 7 and 9 July 1997 in the Karunga district (*secteur*) of Isale commune, Bujumbura Rural province. The killings may have been in reprisal against the civilian population after a mine explosion in Karunga district on 6 July hit a military lorry containing beer, injuring two soldiers. Amnesty International fears further reprisals against civilians in the area.

On 7 July, soldiers from Rushubi, Bujumbura Rural, are reported to have extrajudicially executed at least 12 people (named above) in the Karunga district, including five children under the age of 10, and two others aged 12 and 15. The soldiers are reported to have visited the district twice on that day, and reportedly shot or bayoneted the victims to death. At least four other people including two children sustained serious wounds during the attacks.

Reprisals are reported to have continued over a period of two days; Amnesty International is investigating reports that further extrajudicial executions may have occurred. Many houses are reported to have been burnt, displacing hundreds of people.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Tutsi-dominated Burundi security forces have a 30-year history of carrying out human rights violations, often against the civilian population. In the current civil war, attacks against Hutu members of the civilian population are often carried out as reprisal for activities by Hutu-dominated armed groups, who are also responsible for human rights abuses including killings of civilians.

In addition, during counter-insurgency operations, little or no effort is made by the armed forces to distinguish between non-combatants and combatants. Scores of children who could not possibly be suspected of being members of armed groups are reported to have been killed in massacres. Moreover, the majority of killings of civilians during such operations appear to have been deliberate and targeted killings, sometimes in reprisal for attacks by armed groups.

Although Major Pierre Buyoya promised to end human rights violations when he came to power after a coup d'état in July 1996, Amnesty International has documented thousands of cases of extrajudicial execution, "disappearance",

arbitrary arrest and torture. Critics and opponents of the government have also been harassed, arrested and tortured in a pattern of attacks on political opponents of the current government, aiming to eliminate effective political opposition. More than 6,500 civilians, mostly Hutu, including at least 2,600 accused of involvement in massacres in Burundi, are held in various prisons and detention centres around the country. The majority are held without charge. Torture is reported to be carried out systematically, and with impunity, in detention centres belonging to the security forces. Deaths in custody are often reported.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Burundi authorities to investigate human rights violations, including extrajudicial execution, "disappearance", torture and ill-treatment and arbitrary arrest, committed by members of the Burundi security forces who continue to act with complete impunity.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes (currently no mail to Burundi) in French or your own language:

- expressing deep concern at the apparent extrajudicial execution of the 12 people named above, including seven children, in Karunga, Bujumbura Rural, on 7 July 1997;
- urging that these reports be urgently investigated and if confirmed, those responsible be brought to justice in accordance with international standards of fairness;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate practical steps to prevent further human rights violations by members of the armed forces, including those routinely carried out during counter-insurgency operations;
- calling on the authorities to bring to justice in accordance with international standards of fairness officials who are found to have carried out or condoned human rights violations;

APPEALS TO:

Note: Fax numbers are working intermittently. If unable to obtain a fax tone, please try again later.

President

Major Pierre Buyoya,
Président de la République,
Présidence de la République
Telegrams: President, Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: 257 22 7490
Salutation: Monsieur le Président

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-Col. Firmin SINZOYIHEBA
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense Nationale
Fax: 257 22 56 86
Telegrams: Ministre Défense, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Chief of Defence Staff

Lt-Col Vincent NIYUNGEKO
Chef de l'Etat-major général des Forces armées
Etat-major général des Forces armées

Ministère de la Défense nationale

Fax: 257 22 56 86

Telegram: Lt-Col Niyungeko, Ministère Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation : Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-major

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, Social and Womens Affairs

Madame Christine RUHAZA

Ministre des Droits de la Personne humaine, de l'Action sociale et de la
Promotion de la femme

Fax: 257 21 61 02

Minister of Justice and Keeper of Seals

Monsieur Gervais RUBASHAMUHETO

Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

**Fax: 257 21 61 02 (Via Minister for Human Rights Ask for your fax to be forwarded
to Minister of Justice)**

and to diplomatic representatives of BURUNDI accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 27 August 1997.