

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 16/31/97

EXTRA 109/97 "Disappearance" / Fear of extrajudicial execution 6 August 1997

BURUNDI Paul Sirahenda, member of parliament, member of FRODEBU
Hamissi Ndimurukundo, driver

On 3 August 1997, the burnt out car of member of parliament Paul Sirahenda and driver Hamissi Ndimurukundo was found in Makamba province near the border with Tanzania. Neither man has been seen since and Amnesty International fears that they have been "disappeared" by members of the Burundi security forces.

Paul Sirahenda, a member of parliament and member of the *Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU), Front for Democracy in Burundi, a former ruling party and the party of assassinated president Melchior Ndadaye, left the capital, Bujumbura, on 1 August and travelled south towards the Tanzania, where he was going to visit his family. He had the necessary papers to leave the country and reportedly arrived at the border post at 11pm and obtained a visa. He is reported to have stayed the night in the area before leaving for Tanzania the next day.

According to unconfirmed reports from Burundi, Paul Sirahenda was arrested at Mutobo, Makamba province, close to the border, as he was preparing to leave. He was driven away in a military jeep to an unknown destination, possibly to a nearby military camp in Mabanda. Hamissi Ndimurukundo is reported to have been directed to a military post in Musongati. He has not been seen since although the burnt out car was found abandoned in the area.

Although no bodies have been found, state radio is reported to have announced that two men were killed by criminals. It is not known what basis this statement was made and no investigation is known to have been carried out.

Amnesty International fears that Paul Sirahenda may have been targeted because of his political opposition to the government and membership of the FRODEBU party. A pattern of human rights violations - killings, arrest and harassment of FRODEBU officials has developed. Twenty-two senior FRODEBU officials have been killed since 1993. Recent attacks on senior FRODEBU representatives in exile Tanzania have been reported.

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.

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.

Please note: there is no post (except courier mail) currently getting through to Burundi.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/courier mail in French or your own language:

- expressing concern at the "disappearance" of Paul Sirahenda and Hamissi Ndimurukundo and grave fear for their safety;
- calling for an immediate investigation to establish their whereabouts and the circumstances of their "disappearance"
- 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;

if possible, also:

- express concern at a pattern of human rights violations, including extrajudicial execution, against members of FRODEBU.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Terence SINUNGURUZA
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 21 61 02 (Via the Minister for Human Rights. Please ask for your fax to be forwarded to the Minister of Justice.)

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre

President

Major Pierre Buyoya
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 22 7490

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-Col. Firmin SINZOYIHEBA
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense
Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 22 56 86

Telegrams: Ministre Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Minister for Internal Affairs and Public Security

Lt-Col. Epitace BAYAGANAKANDI
Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 21 19 82 / 21 78 18

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, Social and Women's Affairs

Madame Christine RUHAZA

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

Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 21 61 02

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 18 September 1997.