

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 16/34/97

UA 290/97 Fear of Torture/Possible prisoner of conscience 3 September 1997

**BURUNDI** Doctor Sylvère SAKUBU

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Dr Sylvère Sakubu was arrested by soldiers at his home on 29 August 1997. The motive for his arrest and his place of detention are as yet unconfirmed, although he has reportedly been taken to Socarti detention centre. Amnesty International fears that he could be tortured in detention.

Socarti is a military camp with an unofficial detention centre in the Kamenge district of Bujumbura where detainees have been tortured and ill-treated in the past. In May 1997, three detainees reportedly died there as a result of torture.

Dr Sylvère Sakubu is a member of the *Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU), Front for Democracy in Burundi, the former ruling party and the party of former President Melchior Ndadaye who was assassinated in a coup attempt in October 1993. Before his arrest on 29 August, he was due to travel to China, via Rwanda, to continue his studies.

Amnesty International fears that Dr Sakubu may have been arrested because of his membership of FRODEBU, and to prevent him from travelling abroad. A pattern of human rights violations against FRODEBU members has developed since 1993, including the killing of 22 of its senior officials and the arrest and harassment of other members.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Although President 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 since that date. 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.

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

- seeking assurances that Dr Sylvère Sakubu's physical integrity will be safeguarded and that he will not be tortured or ill-treated in detention;
- asking that the motive for his arrest and place of his detention be made public immediately;
- urging that he be allowed immediate and continued access to his family and to medical care and legal counsel, during his detention;
- urging that he be immediately and unconditionally released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards of fairness.

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

**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.)**

**Telegram: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi**

**Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister**

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/Dear Minister**

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**

**COPIES TO:**

President

Major Pierre Buyoya

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

**Fax: 257 22 7490**

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 15 October 1997.