

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 68/97

Fear of refoulement / Fear for safety

13 May 1997

TANZANIA/ZAIRESanganira Lugi
Katembo Amri Kisasa
and about 100 other Zairian nationals in Tanzania

The regional authorities in the town of Kigoma, western Tanzania, have ordered some 100 Zairian nationals to return to Zaire. Some individuals in the group, including Sanganira Lugi and Katembo Amri, are prominent members of President Mobutu's political party, the *Mouvement populaire de la république* (MPR), Popular Movement of the Republic, or are known to be political opponents or critics of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, the armed group now controlling most of Zaire. In view of alarming reports of large-scale human rights abuses by the AFDL, Amnesty International fears that many of the 100 may face torture, "disappearance" or death if returned to Zaire.

The Zairians are currently being held by the Tanzanian immigration service in the town of Kigoma. They have been told by the authorities to leave, under their own means, by 14 May 1997. It is believed that the majority fled from Zaire following the outbreak of armed conflict there in October 1996. Some of them had been recognised as refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but do not currently have UNHCR protection because they are not living in areas designated for refugees by the Tanzanian government. Others in the group had been living in Tanzania with visitors visas which have since expired.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since armed conflict began in eastern Zaire in October 1996, Amnesty International has been documenting massive human rights abuses perpetrated by members of the AFDL as well as by other armed groups and by the Zairian security forces. Abuses by the AFDL include deliberate killings of Rwandese and Burundian refugees, particularly in the North and South Kivu regions of Zaire, as well as of known and suspected allies of President Mobutu, local government officials and members of the armed forces. A number of "disappearances" have also been reported after arrests have been made by members of the AFDL.

Many members of the Zairian Armed Forces and local government officials have fled the AFDL advances in Zaire. Some of them crossed into neighbouring countries, while others headed for government-held parts of Zaire. Many of those who were not able to flee are now in AFDL detention, and are known to be subjected to beatings and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

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

- reminding the authorities of their obligations under the principle of non-refoulement as set out in the 1951 refugee convention, the Organization of African Unity 1969 Refugee Convention, and other human rights treaties;
- highlighting the grave human rights situation in Zaire and stating that Amnesty International considers that many of the 100 Zairian nationals in Kigoma may be at risk of serious human rights abuses, such as killings, torture or "disappearance" if returned to Zaire;

- urging that no-one who could face serious human rights abuses in Zaire be sent back there.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Ndugu Benjamin William MKAPA
Office of the President
State House
PO Box 9120
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Fax: + 255 51 469 13
Telegrams: President, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Salutation: Dear President

The Hon. Ndudgu Ali Amer MOHAMMED
Minister of Home Affairs
PO Box 9000
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Telex: 41231
Telegrams: Home Affairs Minister, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon. Ndugu Jakaya KIKWETE
Minister of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 9000
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Fax: + 255 51 467 48
Telegrams: Foreign Minister, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Tanzania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 June 1997.