

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO/RWANDA Between 5-10,000 mainly Rwandese refugees
in eastern Congo

A unit of around 300 soldiers of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, have arrived in Shabunda Zone, South-Kivu region, in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), allegedly to oversee and protect refugees who are being repatriated to Rwanda. Sources in the area fear these military units may have arrived to carry out killings of refugees, rather than for the stated aim of protecting them. Amnesty International has grave fears for the safety of these refugees, many of whom are extremely weak and severely malnourished and is concerned that they are at risk of of extrajudicial execution by AFDL soldiers. If forcibly repatriated to Rwanda, they would also face the risk of extrajudicial execution and other human rights violations by the Rwandese army.

The United Nations, Amnesty International and many other governmental and non-governmental observers have reported large-scale massacres of refugees in eastern DRC perpetrated by members of the AFDL and their allies since the beginning of armed conflict in October 1996. It is believed that tens of thousands of unarmed refugees have been killed in the forests of eastern DRC. Aid workers fear that they have been used by soldiers on many occasions to locate refugees in order to kill them. This has been especially typical of massacres in South-Kivu.

These refugees, who have fled attacks by the AFDL on camps in South-Kivu since October 1996, have been living in the forests in this remote area of eastern DRC and attending feeding centres set up by aid workers. In the last few weeks the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has organized flights back to Rwanda and has so far repatriated around 185 refugees from Shabunda. Assistance to refugees has been by non-governmental or international organizations and has been largely unsupervised by local or national authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Congolese government has recently refused access to a UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of massacres in eastern DRC, fuelling speculation that massacres are continuing in the area and that evidence is being destroyed.

Recent public statements made by the Rwandese Vice-President and Minister of Defence, Major-General Paul Kagame, suggest that Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) officers and men have been fighting alongside AFDL troops. Sources in eastern Zaire have repeatedly claimed that Rwandese officers and their troops also played a role in massacres.

Amnesty International has received reports of thousands of killings in Rwanda since the beginning of 1997, when refugees returned *en masse* from large camps in eastern Zaire and western Tanzania. Sources in Rwanda estimate that returnees

constitute a significant proportion of the victims of massacres perpetrated by the RPA and other armed groups in Rwanda.

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

To the authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo

- expressing deep concern for the safety of Rwandese and other refugees in Shabunda and elsewhere in DRC, in light of consistent reports of massacres and killings by AFDL forces;
- seeking assurances that refugees, in particular this group of around 10,000 in Shabunda, will be protected from human rights violations in DRC;
- seeking assurances that refugees are allowed to seek asylum in the DRC or a third country, if they request it, and are not forcibly returned to Rwanda where their lives may also be at risk.

To the authorities in Rwanda

- expressing concern about reports that around 300 AFDL soldiers have entered the zone of Shabunda where several thousand Rwandese refugees have gathered;
- stating your fear of further massacres in eastern DRC by AFDL troops and possibly also by Rwandese troops in the area given the recent public statements made by Major-General Kagame confirming continuing Rwandan military presence in the area;
- expressing your concern about the current insecurity in Rwanda facing returnees, and the large numbers of victims of killings by the RPA and other armed groups, particularly in western Rwanda;
- pointing out that returning refugees appear to be especially at risk of extrajudicial execution and other human rights violations in Rwanda and calling for proper investigations to be conducted into massacres and for those responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Democratic Republic of Congo

Chief of staff AFDL

Commandant Anselme Masasu NINDAGA

Chef d'Etat-Major de l'AFDL

Ministère de la Défense

BP 4734

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Commandant Nindaga, Kinshasa-Gombe, Zaire

Salutation: Monsieur le Commandant/ Dear

Head of State

Son Excellence

Laurent-Désiré KABILA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

Kinshasa-Ngaliema

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: President Kabila, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République/ Dear President

Minister of the Interior

M. Mwenze KONGOLO

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Hôtel du Conseil exécutif

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Rwanda

Général Major Paul KAGAME

Vice-Président de la République

et Ministre de la Défense

Ministère de la Défense

BP 23 KIGALI

Rwanda

Telegrams: Vice-Président Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda

Fax: 250-72431/76969

Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président/ Dear Vice President

M.Cheikh Abdul Karim HARELIMANA

Ministre de l'Intérieur, du Développement

communal et de la réintégration sociale

BP 446 KIGALI

Rwanda

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kigali, Rwanda

Fax: 250-84373/83374

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Dr Anastase GASANA

Ministre des Affaires étrangères

et de la Coopération

Ministère des Affaires étrangères

BP 179 KIGALI

Rwanda

Telegrams:Ministre des Affaires étrangères, Kigali, Rwanda

Fax: + 250 72904

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

diplomatic representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 September 1997.