

UA 268/95

Fear for safety

30 November 1995

RWANDAJean RUBADUKA, magistrate and human rights activist
Abbé André SIBOMANA, acting bishop and human rights activist
and other human rights activists

In an atmosphere of rising intimidation against human rights activists in Rwanda, one such activist, Jean Rubaduka, has narrowly escaped two assassination attempts in recent days and four priests have been threatened by a senior military official.

In the early hours of 25 November 1995, Jean Rubaduka's home in the capital, Kigali, was attacked by four armed men. They forced their way into the house and threatened to kill a neighbour who tried to intervene. They then fled.

It has been reported that soldiers responsible for providing security in the area did not intervene to prevent the attack. On the night of 27 November, Jean Rubaduka's home was again attacked by an armed group. As in the first incident, he succeeded in alerting his neighbours and the attackers fled without harming him. Jean Rubaduka, a columnist of the Catholic newspaper *Kinyamateka*, was in August 1995 elected president of the *Collectif des ligues et associations de défense des droits de l'homme au Rwanda* (CLADHO), Collective of Human Rights Associations and Leagues in Rwanda.

The attacks against Jean Rubaduka occurred one week after reports of renewed threats against Abbé André Sibomana, editor of *Kinyamateka*, acting bishop at the diocese of Kabgayi and president of the *Association rwandaise pour la défense des droits de la personne et des libertés publiques* (ADL), Rwandese Association for the Defence of Human Rights and Civil Liberties. André Sibomana has frequently denounced human rights violations by both the present government of Rwanda and its predecessor. On 17 November, a senior officer of the Department of Military Intelligence (DMI) is reported to have explicitly threatened André Sibomana and three other priests with violence. To date the four are unharmed but Amnesty International fears for their safety.

This is not the first time that André Sibomana has been threatened. On the evening of 20 September 1995, two people, at least one of whom was armed, came searching for him in Kabgayi and asked a local inhabitant where he lived. They hid in a bush and waited for him to return home. André Sibomana did not return at the expected time and escaped the ambush. In early May, military officials briefly arrested him: Amnesty International believes that he was targeted because of his non-violent activities.

Despite the fact that such intimidation is typical of the conditions under which human rights activists operate in Rwanda, a number of activists continue to document and report publicly on human rights abuses. They work in extremely difficult conditions and live in a state of permanent fear: they are regularly followed, their telephone lines and other communications are intercepted and sometimes cut off.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has documented a pattern of incidents in which critics of the government or perceived opponents have been targeted. Some have been arbitrarily arrested; others have "disappeared"; others have been killed. While the extent of government involvement in these cases is not always clear, there is a pattern of reported complicity of members of the army and the absence

of any intervention by the military or other authorities to prevent such attacks is noticeable.

For example, Manasse Mugabo, a journalist working for Radio UNAMIR (the radio station of the UN peace-keeping operation in Rwanda) disappeared without trace in August 1995 and has not been seen since; he is presumed dead. In February 1995, Edouard Mutsinzi, editor of the independent newspaper *Le Messager*, was gravely injured when he was attacked by a group of men, some of whom wore military insignia. François-Xavier Byuma, director of the *Ligue rwandaise pour la promotion et la défense des droits de l'homme* (LIPRODHOR), Rwandese League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights, was physically threatened in May 1995 by two soldiers with grenades. He reported the incident to the authorities but has not been informed of any investigation.

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

- calling for an immediate investigation into the reported attacks on Jean Rubaduka and for the results of this investigation to be made public, and asking why soldiers in charge of the security patrol in the area did not intervene to prevent the attacks;
- calling on the government to publicly condemn all threats of violence by officials, to conduct an inquiry into the threats against Abbé Sibomana and three other priests, to publish the results and to take appropriate remedial action;
- deploring the pattern of intimidation of human rights activists in Rwanda, and urging the government to honour its public declaration to protect human rights by ensuring that such activists can operate freely, without fear for their lives.

APPEALS TO:

Président Pasteur Bizimungu
Présidence de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +250 83975; 84769
Telexes: 22502
Telegrams: President Bizimungu, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Général Paul Kagame
Vice-Président de la République
et Ministre de la Défense
Présidence de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +25083980; 84769; 72431
Telexes: 22502
Telegrams: Vice-President Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président / Dear Vice-President

Colonel Alexis Kanyarengwe
Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
BP 446, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +250 85714
Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Mme Marthe Mukamurenzi
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: +250 86509

Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Madame le Ministre / Dear Minister

Note: You may experience difficulty in getting through to Rwanda by fax, although this has improved in recent weeks. It may still be easier via the international operator.

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 January 1996.