

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 138/93 "Disappearance"

27 April 1993

ZAIRE: KENGE Mukengeshayi, Editor-in-Chief of Le Phare newspaper

Amnesty International has received reports that Kenge Mukengeshayi, editor-in-Chief of Le Phare newspaper, was abducted from his house at night by uniformed men on or around 22 April 1993. Attempts by his relatives to trace his whereabouts have so far been unsuccessful and there are fears that he may have "disappeared".

Independent sources have reported that members of the elite Division Spéciale Présidentielle (DSP), Special Presidential Division, or of the Garde Civile, Civil Guard, are suspected of carrying out the abduction. Both units are loyal to President Mobutu who has frequently used them to crush any opposition to him. The DSP is a branch of the armed forces composed mainly of members of President Mobutu's own Ngbanda ethnic group and notorious for their record of serious human rights violations. The Civil Guard is headed by a close associate of President Mobutu who comes from the same ethnic group.

It is believed that Kenge Mukengeshayi may have been abducted for publishing a story accusing President Mobutu of being behind a plot to assassinate Etienne Tshisekedi, an opposition leader who was appointed Prime Minister by President Mobutu's opponents.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President Mobutu is locked in a bitter power struggle with Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, head of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), who was elected by a pro-democracy National Conference in August 1992. Following riots by soldiers in January 1993, who were angry at being paid in controversial new banknotes which had been denounced as illegal tender by Prime Minister Tshisekedi and boycotted by supporters of his government, President Mobutu "sacked" Tshisekedi and named a new Prime Minister, Faustin Birindwa. An executive legislative body, also nominated by the National Conference, the Haut conseil de la république (HCR), Higher Council of the Republic, has rejected Faustin Birindwa as Prime Minister and is trying to reach a compromise with President Mobutu.

Zaire now effectively has two Prime Ministers who are competing for power. The security forces and the government are still controlled by President Mobutu, who continues to defy foreign pressure to yield to democratic reforms. Many opposition newspapers have been set up since President Mobutu announced reforms in April 1990.

However, many journalists have been subjected to violence and detentions for publishing articles which have displeased the President and his supporters. The offices of one newspaper and one publishing house have been bombed. The reported abduction of Kenge Mukengeshayi is reminiscent of similar abductions of dozens of other government opponents, many of whom have either "disappeared" or been found dead, which have occurred in recent years.

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

- expressing concern at the reported abduction of Kenge Mukengeshayi by members of the security forces on or around 22 April 1993;
- urging for an immediate investigation to determine his whereabouts and who was responsible for his "disappearance" with a view to bringing them to justice;

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- seeking assurances that, if he is in custody, he is not being ill-treated and urging that his relatives be informed of his whereabouts and that he be allowed prompt and regular access to them and legal counsel;
- urging the authorities to order his immediate release if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to a prompt and fair trial;
- requesting the authorities to issue and enforce clear public instructions to all members of the security forces that subjecting prisoners to detention in secret or outside the terms of the law is a violation of human rights and that those found responsible for such abuses will be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Son Excellence Monsieur Maréchal MOBUTU Sese Seko
Président de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

Telegrams: Président Maréchal Mobutu, Kinshasa, Zaïre

Telexes: 21368

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

2) Chief of Staff of the Armed forces:

Monsieur le Général ELUKI Monga
Chef d'Etat-Major Général des Forces armées zaïroises (FAZ)
Ministère de la Défense nationale
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

Telegrams: Chef d'Etat-Major Eluki, Kinshasa, Zaire

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-Major / Dear General

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Commander of the Presidential Guard:

Monsieur le Général de Brigade NZIMBI Ngbale
Commandant de la Division spéciale présidentielle (DSP)
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

2) Chief of Staff of the Civil Guard:

Monsieur VUMBO Ndebo
Président Général de la Garde Civile
Présidence de la Garde Civile
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

3) Human Rights organization:

Ligue zaïroise des droits de l'homme
20 rue Draily
6000 Charleroi
Belgium

4) Newspaper:

Elima
BP 10017
Kinshasa-Limete
Zaire

and to diplomatic representatives of Zaire accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 June 1993.