

Further Information on UA 296/06 (AFR 16/017/2006, 07 November 2006) - Fear of torture / ill-treatment and new concerns: Harsh prison conditions/ medical concern

BURUNDI

- Astère Majambere (m)
- Jean Berchmans Bangirinama (m)
- Daniel Ntirandekura (m)
- Clément Misigaro (m)
- Euphrem Ndayize (m)
- Norbert Nkeshimana (m)
- Michel Ndagijimana (m)
- Onésime Nsengiyumva (m)
- Emmanuel Nzeyimana (m)
- Narson Ndizeye (m)
- Bernard Ndayisenga (m)

The 11 men named above were reportedly transferred from Ngozi military camp in northern Burundi to Ngozi Police Station on 10 November. According to reports, they are being held in unsanitary conditions, are not being fed properly, and do not have access to medical treatment. Amnesty International fears that the men are also at risk from torture or ill-treatment.

The men were arrested between March and October 2006, on suspicion of involvement with the National Liberation Forces (*Forces Nationales de Libération*, FNL). They continue to be held without charge.

The men are detained in conditions that fall well below international standards. All 11 men are held together in a narrow, overcrowded cell, located next to the toilets in the prison. Several members of the group have reportedly caught dysentery, apparently as a result of the unsanitary conditions in the cell, and have not been permitted to receive medical treatment. The infection is likely to worsen and spread to other members of the group if they do not receive adequate treatment. A human rights monitor who visited the Police Station observed that the men were only eating uncooked corn seed. The men do also not have access to clean water.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Burundi is emerging from 13 years of civil conflict. A Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between the government and the FNL, the last armed group operating in Burundi, was signed on 7 September in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania.

In August 2005, the CNDD-FDD (*Conseil national pour la Défense de la Démocratie - Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie*, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy), the former main opposition armed movement, won the first elections to be held in Burundi since the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye in October 1993. Since August 2005, Amnesty International and other organisations have documented numerous and widespread human rights violations in Burundi. More than 30 people "disappeared" in the province of Muyinga between May and August 2006, after they were arbitrarily arrested by the military working in alliance with the intelligence services. The authorities alleged that the 30 men were suspected of having links with the FNL. The men were transported to the military camp in Mukoni in the province of Muyinga. In late August, the bodies of 16 of the arrested men were found floating in nearby rivers by local people. The men had reportedly been shot.

For their part, the FNL have allegedly been responsible for ambushes, targeted assassinations, armed robbery and killings which have taken place mainly in the provinces surrounding Bujumbura. Civilians have borne the brunt of this violence.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern for the 11 men (naming them), who were transferred from Ngozi military camp to Ngozi Police Station on 10 November, and who continue to be held without charge;
- requesting assurances that the Burundian authorities will take immediate steps to alleviate the suffering of these detainees, including the provision of adequately spacious detention cells to avoid overcrowding, the provision of satisfactory sanitary facilities, access to clean water and an adequate supply of food;
- expressing concern that some of the men are reportedly suffering from dysentery, apparently as a result of the conditions in which they are held, and calling for the detainees to receive all necessary medical care;
- calling for the authorities to protect all the detainees from torture and ill-treatment, and for them to be given immediate access to their families, lawyers, and to humanitarian and human rights organizations;
- calling on the authorities either to charge these men with a recognizably criminal offence, or release them immediately.

APPEALS TO: (fax numbers may be difficult to get through to. Please keep trying.)

President

Président Pierre Nkurunziza
Président de la République
Boulevard de l'Uprona

Rohero I

BP 1870, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Excellence

Minister of National Defence

Général Germain Niyoyankana
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense Nationale
Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: + 257 21 56 86

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Governor of Ngozi Province

Monsieur le Gouverneur Félix Niragira
Gouverneur de la Province de Ngozi
Bureau de la province de Ngozi
Ngozi, Burundi

Fax : +257 30 23 40

Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur

COPIES 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 9 January 2007.*****