

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 01/12/97

12 August 1997

Further information on UA 248/97 (AFR 26/01/97, 31 July 1997) and follow-up (AFR 26/02/97, 11 August 1997) - Fear of refoulement / ill-treatment and new concern: Refoulement

GABON / RWANDA Around 155 Rwandese asylum-seekers in Gabon

On 12 August 1997, around 155 Rwandese asylum-seekers arrived in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, after being forcibly repatriated from Gabon.

This group is thought to include 97 soldiers from the former army and their families in addition to other civilians and eight people recently screened by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Gabon and said to qualify for UNHCR protection. They are currently in the custody of the Rwandese authorities who are reportedly registering and screening them. A Rwandese government delegation has recently visited Gabon to encourage the Gabonese authorities to repatriate the Rwandese refugees remaining there.

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

1. TO GABON:

- expressing concern that the Gabonese authorities forcibly repatriated around 155 Rwandese asylum-seekers on 12 August, including eight individuals who reportedly qualified for UNHCR protection;
- stating that this act of *refoulement* violates Gabon's international commitments not to forcibly return refugees to a country where they could face human rights violations, as guaranteed by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa - both ratified by Gabon.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence
Monsieur El-Hadj Omar BONGO
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
BP 546, Libreville, Gabon
Telegrams: Président, Libreville, Gabon
Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President

Dr Paulin OBAME NGUEMA
Premier Ministre
Bureau du Premier Ministre, Libreville, Gabon
Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Libreville, Gabon
Fax: +241 77 20 04
Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre/Dear Prime Minister

Monsieur le Général Idriss NGARI
Ministre de la Défense nationale, de la sécurité et de l'immigration
Ministère de la Défense nationale, de la sécurité et de l'immigration
BP 13493, Libreville, Gabon
Telegrams: Ministre de la Défense, Libreville, Gabon
Fax: +241 74 60 47 / +241 77 86 96
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

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

2. TO RWANDA

- asking for assurances that the approximately 155 Rwandese refugees who arrived in Kigali from Gabon on 12 August 1997 will not be subjected to human rights violations and that their safety will be guaranteed;
- asking for information on their current whereabouts;
- expressing concern that a number of soldiers of the former Rwandese armed forces and their families have been extrajudicially executed and others ill-treated after returning to Rwanda in late 1996 and 1997;
- stating that if the group of 155 includes individuals suspected of participation in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, these accusations should be properly investigated and if appropriate, the individuals brought to justice, in a fair trial and without use of the death penalty.

APPEALS TO:

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: 250-83374/84373

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 September 1997.