

UA 317/99

"Disappea**DRC/RWANDA Francine Ngoy (f), aged 22**

Amnesty International is extremely concerned for the safety of Francine Ngoy who has "disappeared" since November 1999.

Francine Ngoy was arrested in Goma (in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo) on 27 May 1999, by officials, believed to be Rwandese, of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy. She was accused of having contact with enemy forces - particularly the Congolese Government and the Rwandese *interahamwe* militia (see background information). She was initially held in a private residence in Goma used by the RCD as an unofficial detention centre where she was reportedly tortured and raped. In August 1999 she was admitted to hospital in Goma, but three weeks later was made to return to the detention centre.

She "disappeared" in November after being reportedly transferred from Goma to Gisenyi, in neighbouring Rwanda. Initially, she was believed to be detained in the *brigade* (detention centre of the gendarmerie) in Gisenyi. However, in early December, she was reportedly no longer there. There are unconfirmed reports that she has been transferred to an unofficial military detention centre in Gisenyi. To date it has not been possible to locate her in any recognized detention centre in Gisenyi.

The reasons for her arrest and detention have not been made public and she is not known to have been charged with any recognizable criminal offence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Armed conflict in the DRC began in August 1998 when the RCD, supported by Rwandese and Ugandan government forces, launched a rebellion against the new government of Laurent-Désiré Kabila. In May 1999, however, the RCD itself split into two factions - RCD-Goma (allied to Rwanda) and RCD-Kisangani (allied to Uganda) - fighting each other.

There is currently a *de facto* split between territory held by each of the RCD factions. Both factions and their allies, however, are involved in fighting local armed groups, known as the *Mayi-Mayi*, as well as the Rwandese *interahamwe* militia who participated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Thousands of people accused of collaborating with forces opposing the RCD and its allies have "disappeared", been killed or remain otherwise unaccounted for. In several cases, people arrested in areas of the DRC controlled by RCD-Goma have been transferred to Rwanda, where it has been difficult to locate them. Some - including civilians - have been detained in military detention centres in Rwanda, where access is almost always denied.

Since the outbreak of the war in the DRC, Amnesty International has documented many cases of torture. Detainees held by the RCD and their allies have been routinely tortured. For women, the torture generally includes rape. Detainees in Rwanda have also been subjected to ill-treatment, particularly in military detention centres.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Francine Ngoy, who "disappeared" in November 1999, after reportedly being transferred from a detention centre in Goma to an unknown location in Gisenyi;
- asking for information of her whereabouts and seeking assurances that she is not being tortured or ill-treated;
- asking to be informed of the reasons for her continued detention, and asking that, if she is not charged with a recognizable criminal offence, she be immediately released and allowed to return to the Democratic Republic of Congo if she so wishes.

APPEALS TO:

Major General Paul KAGAME
Vice President and Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
BP 23, Kigali, Rwanda
Telegrams: Vice President, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: + 250 72431 / 76969
Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président / Dear Vice-President

Brigadier General Kayumba NYAMWASA
Chief of Staff of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA)
Office of the Chief of Staff
RPA Headquarters
Kigali, Rwanda
Telegrams: RPA Chief of Staff, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: + 250 72863
Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-Major / Dear Chief of Staff

Capitaine Jean-Baptiste MUHIRWA
Préfet de Gisenyi
Préfecture de Gisenyi
BP 173, Gisenyi, Rwanda
Faxes: + 250 61312
Salutation: Monsieur le Préfet / Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Alexis Thambwe-Mwamba
Chef du Département des relations extérieures
Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)
c/o Rue Uyttenhove 33/2
1090 Bruxelles, Belgique

Léonard Kanyamuhanga
Gouverneur de la Province du Nord-Kivu
Goma, République démocratique du Congo
Faxes: + 243 88 85689

and 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 25 January 1999.