

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 174/96

Fear for safety

8 November 1996

ZAIRE / RWANDA

Human rights defenders

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Sources in eastern Zaire have alerted Amnesty International that armed groups, who currently control the Zairian towns of Uvira, Bukavu and Goma are targeting human rights defenders for human rights abuse. It is feared these abuses may include deliberate and arbitrary killings. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of human rights defenders, who include those known to have denounced human rights abuses in eastern Zaire.

On 31 October 1996, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bukavu, Christophe Munzihirwa, was killed apparently during fighting in Bukavu between the *Alliance des forces democratiques pour la liberation du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, and the Zairian army. Amnesty International is concerned that his killing may have been deliberate, as the Archbishop was known to have publicly criticized the AFDL and its alleged support by the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA).

On 7 November 1996, Laurent Kabila, an armed group leader in Bukavu, called on the local population to take up arms and join the AFDL

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Zaire's North and South-Kivu regions have a well-developed culture of human rights organizations including non-governmental, church and development groups, who have frequently denounced human rights violations in Rwanda and Burundi, as well as in their own country, Zaire. Many of them have been harassed and targeted for violations by members of the Zairian security forces.

The towns of Uvira and Bukavu in South-Kivu, as well as Goma in North-Kivu are now under the control of the AFDL, which is allegedly supported by the RPA. The borders with neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi are now closed and information about their activities in the two regions are currently difficult to obtain. The AFDL are reported to be behind attacks on refugee camps in North and South Kivu regions and on Lemera hospital in South-Kivu, where dozens of civilians were deliberately and arbitrarily killed.

Amnesty International has also received reports that members of the AFDL have arrested and forcibly returned Burundi refugees from eastern Zaire, handing them over to members of the Burundi security forces. Several hundred of these refugees are reported to have been extrajudicially executed by members of the Burundi security forces in recent days.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters, in equal numbers to the four addressees, in French or your own language:**

- urging leaders of the AFDL to issue public instructions to their members not to commit human rights abuses, such as deliberate and arbitrary killings, torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- calling on the leaders of the AFDL to refrain from making public statements that may incite violence, but rather to condemn human rights violations that may have been committed by their combatants;
- asking that members of the AFDL in combat respect humanitarian law at all times, reminding them that they should protect civilian against ill-treatment, vengeance and hostage-taking;
- calling on members of the AFDL not to forcibly return Burundi refugees to Burundi where they are at risk of severe human rights violations;

- reminding AFDL leaders that they will be held personally responsible for any human rights abuses committed by those under their command, unless they take action to prevent those abuses.

**APPEALS TO:**

1. Laurent Desire Kabila, Chef de l'AFDL  
c/o  
BP 1897  
Kigali  
Rwanda

**Fax: +250 77226**

**Telegrams: Laurent Kabila, BP 1897, Kigali, Rwanda**

**Salutation (for all): Monsieur / Dear Sir**

2. Andre Kissase Ngandu, Président du CNRD  
(to above address)

3. Robert Bugera, Président de l'ADP  
(to above address)

4. Masasa Minitaga, Président du MRLZ  
(to above address)

**COPIES TO:**

M. Anastase GASANA  
Ministre des Relations exterieurs,  
Ministere des relations exteriens,  
BP 179, Kigali, Rwanda

**Fax: +250 72934**

M Jean Marie Kititwa Tumansi  
Ministre des Relations exterieures  
Ministere des Relations exterieures,  
BP 7100, Kinshasa-Gombe, Zaire

and to diplomatic representatives of Zaire/Rwanda/Burundi accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 December 1996.