

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearances" / Fear for safety

5 December 1996

ZAIRE / RWANDA Phocas Nikwigize, Rwandese Catholic bishop, in his 70s
Michel Twagirayesu, former head of the Presbyterian Church of
Rwanda, and his wife and son

Phocas Nikwigize, former bishop of Ruhengeri in northwestern Rwanda, has "disappeared" in Goma, in eastern Zaire. He has not been seen since 30 November 1996. Michel Twagirayesu, former head of the Presbyterian Church of Rwanda, "disappeared" in eastern Zaire towards the end of October 1996. The whereabouts of his wife and son are also unknown.

Phocas Nikwigize had fled Rwanda in 1994 and had been a refugee in Zaire since then. On 30 November 1996, he was making his way from the bishopric of Goma towards the border with Rwanda when he was stopped by a group of armed men who reportedly took his vehicle and ordered a foreign priest who was accompanying him to return to Zaire. They then reportedly led Phocas Nikwigize away to an unknown destination. There has been no further news of him since that date, from either side of the Zaire-Rwanda border. Amnesty International believes that Phocas Nikwigize is at risk of ill-treatment and/or extrajudicial execution.

Large parts of eastern Zaire, including the town of Goma, are now under the control of the Tutsi-led armed group, the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (see below). It is assumed that the armed men who took Phocas Nikwigize away were members of the AFDL or of groups associated with them.

Michel Twagirayesu had been in exile near Bukavu, in eastern Zaire, since 1994.

There are reports that he may have been among several people allegedly killed by AFDL members in Bukavu at the end of October 1996. Other reports allege that he was arrested and taken across the border into Rwanda where he may be detained. His wife and son are also reported to have "disappeared".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The AFDL has been responsible for deliberate and arbitrary killings of hundreds of unarmed civilians, including many Rwandese refugees, since fighting broke out between the AFDL and the Zairian security forces in eastern Zaire in October 1996. Members of the Zairian security forces have also carried out many extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians, particularly of people of Rwandese origin, from both the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. There have also been reports of killings and other human rights abuses in eastern Zaire by members of the former Rwandese army and *interahamwe* militia responsible for the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

Several religious figures have been among those deliberately and arbitrarily killed in eastern Zaire in October and November. For example Christophe Munzihirwa, Archbishop of Bukavu, was killed on 28 October 1996, allegedly by members of the AFDL or by soldiers of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) who may have been assisting them unofficially. Despite denials by the Rwandese Government that the RPA is involved in the fighting and human rights violations in eastern Zaire, there have been persistent reports of the presence of RPA soldiers in the area. It appears that Christophe Munzihirwa may have been

targeted because of his public criticism of the AFDL and its alleged support from the Rwandese Government.

Another Zairian priest, Jean-Claude Buhendwa, from Burhale parish, was among those killed by AFDL members on or around 18 November 1996 at Chimanga camp in South Kivu. He was shot dead after he protested at the killing of unarmed Rwandese and Burundi refugees and displaced Zairians.

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

- asking the Rwandese authorities to contact AFDL leaders to obtain information on the whereabouts of Phocas Nikwigize and Michel Twagirayesu and his family, who have not been seen since the end of October 1996 and 30 November 1996 respectively;
- asking the Rwandese authorities to seek assurances that Phocas Nikwigize, Michel Twagirayesu and his family will not be ill-treated and that their safety will be guaranteed;
- calling on the Rwandese authorities to demand their immediate release if they are held in Zaire, and to explain the reason for their detention if they are held in Rwanda;

if possible also:

- ask the Rwandese authorities to seek assurances from AFDL leaders that unarmed civilians, including Zairians as well as Rwandese and Burundi refugees in eastern Zaire, will not be subjected to human rights abuses such as arbitrary detention, ill-treatment, "disappearances" or deliberate and arbitrary killings.

Note: at present we do not have addresses or fax numbers for the AFDL representatives, and so you are asked to send appeals to the Rwandese authorities, who are allegedly supporting the AFDL. This is also appropriate given that the "disappeared" people in this UA are Rwandese nationals, at least one of whom may be in Rwanda.

APPEALS TO:

President Pasteur Bizimungu
Office of the President
BP 15
Kigali, Rwanda
FAX: 250 84769 / 84390
Telegrams: President Bizimungu, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Major General Paul Kagame
Vice-President and Minister of Defence
Office of the Vice-President
BP 23
Kigali, Rwanda
FAX: 250 72431 / 76969
Telegrams: Vice President Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président / Dear Vice-President

Anastase Gasana
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
BP 179

Kigali, Rwanda

FAX: 250 72904 / 72934

Telegrams: Foreign Minister Gasana, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of ZAIRE and RWANDA accredited to your country.

Also, if possible, send copies to your country's diplomatic representatives in Zaire and Rwanda, asking that the concerns be brought to the attention of AFDL leaders, as well as to the attention of Zairian and Rwandese government authorities.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 17 January 1996.