

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 02/41/96

18 December 1996

Further information (2) on EXTRA 189/96 (AFR 02/36/96, 6 December 1996) and follow-up AFR 02/38/96, 12 December 1996 - Fear of refoulement

TANZANIA / RWANDA More than 500,000 Rwandese refugees in Tanzania

Over 130,000 of the more than 500,000 Rwandese refugees in Tanzania are now reported to have returned to Rwanda after their forcible expulsion from Tanzania. Hundreds of thousands more are expected to cross the border in the next few days.

Following a joint statement issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Tanzanian authorities stating that all Rwandese refugees were expected to return to Rwanda by 31 December, around 300,000 refugees fled from camps in the Ngara region in a mostly failed attempt to avoid being forcibly repatriated. However, members of the Tanzania security forces forced them to change direction and to move towards the border. There is a heavy military presence in the area and members of the Tanzania security forces also reportedly entered camps and forced refugees to leave in the direction of the border. Amnesty International is investigating unconfirmed reports of beatings and ill-treatment of some refugees by the Tanzania security forces. Several international humanitarian organizations were denied access to the camps by the Tanzanian authorities for several days. Senior Rwandese military and political officials were seen around the camps.

Around 100,000 other refugees are reported to have fled into the countryside. The precise figure and their location are not yet clear. They have no access to humanitarian aid or protection.

UNHCR officials have informed Amnesty International that refugees are not being registered with the UNHCR as they leave Tanzania or as they cross over the border into Rwanda. Instead they will only be registered once they have returned to their homes in Rwanda. Amnesty International is concerned that such a system provides no protection against "disappearance" and does not allow proper monitoring of the fate of individual refugees. Amnesty International is also concerned that some humanitarian organizations in Rwanda have been denied access to the border area by the Rwandese authorities and at reports that some refugees are being prevented from resting en route and from stopping at food distribution points. Concerns at similar procedures were noted by Amnesty International and other organizations in mid-November after 500,000 refugees returned to Rwanda fleeing violence in Zaire.

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

To the Tanzanian authorities

In addition to points already raised (see original EXTRA):

- protesting the on-going *refoulement* of hundreds of thousands of Rwandese refugees and at reports of ill-treatment by members of the Tanzanian security forces;
- pointing out that this is in clear violation of Tanzania's obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Organization of African Unity's Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which outline the fundamental principle of *non-refoulement* and provide that no one should be forcibly returned to a country where they are at risk of serious human rights violations;

- reiterating that Amnesty International has documented patterns of serious human rights violations in Rwanda including arbitrary arrest, detention without trial in life-threatening conditions, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution;
- asking for immediate assurances that the remaining refugees or future refugees in Tanzania will not be forced back to Rwanda against their will and will be provided with adequate protection by the Tanzanian authorities.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Ndugu Benjamin William MKAPA
Office of the President
State House
PO Box 9120
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Fax: + 255 51 469 13
Telegrams: President, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Salutation: Dear President of the United Republic

Edgar MAOKOLA Majogo
Office of the Ministry of Defence
PO Box 9544
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Telegrams: Defence Minister, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Salutation: Dear Minister

The Hon. Ndudgu Ali Amer MOHAMMED
Minister of Home Affairs
PO Box 9000
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Telegrams: Home Affairs Minister, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Telex: 41231
Salutation: Dear Minister

To the Rwandese authorities

- seeking immediate assurances that all those refugees who have been forcibly returned from Tanzania will be protected from human rights abuses in Rwanda, in particular from arbitrary arrest, extrajudicial execution and "disappearance";
- urging that humanitarian and human rights organizations be allowed immediate access to the border area and to carry out their work unimpeded.

APPEALS TO:

Dr Ephraim KABAIJA
Adviser to the President and Chair of the Committee on Repatriation
Office of the President
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
Fax: +250 84390
Telegrams: Dr Ephraim Kabaija, Committee on Repatriation, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Dear Dr Kabaija

Monsieur Patrick MAZIMHAKA
Ministre de la Réhabilitation et de l'Intégration sociale
Ministère de la Réhabilitation et de l'Intégration sociale
BP 2034, Kigali, Rwanda

Fax: +250 72338

Telegrams: Ministre de Réhabilitation, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Dear Minister

Vice President Major-General Paul KAGAME

Présidence de la République

BP 23, Kigali, Rwanda

Fax: +250 72431 / 76969

Telegrams: Vice President Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Dear Vice President

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Rwanda and Tanzania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 January 1997.