

UA 73/97 Fear of ill-treatment / fear of torture

19 March 1997

BURUNDI- Commandant Ndabacekure, army officer

- **Captain Nziyimana, army officer**
 - **Isaac Nitereka, member of the executive board of PARENA and PARENA representative for urban Bujumbura**
 - **Alexis Simbavimbere, PARENA member**
 - **Laurent Bimenyumuremyi, PARENA deputy provincial representative in Gitega**
 - **Emmanuel Manzi, a Rwandese national**
 - **Paul Mugambage, ex-member of the Rwandese Patriotic Army**
 - **Isidore Rufyikiri, senior PARENA official**
 - **Army Lt-Col (retd.) Pascal Ntako, senior PARENA official**
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The nine men named above were arrested on 8 and 9 March 1997 in the capital, Bujumbura, and are being held at the Mpimba prison in Bujumbura. They have been accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate president Major Buyoya.

They are reported to have been tortured since their arrest and Amnesty International is concerned for their safety as they may be at risk of further torture.

The detainees have not been officially charged with any offence. According to an official government spokesperson, information has been discovered which implicates the nine men in a plot to assassinate Major Buyoya. The men are also accused of being responsible for a series of mine explosions in Bujumbura, some of which occurred on 12 and 13 March 1997. At least 40 other people are reported to have been arrested in connection with the alleged plot.

Amnesty International is investigating reports that the arrests may be politically motivated and may relate to their membership or association with the *Parti pour le redressement national* (PARENA), National Recovery Party, and its opposition to the current government. Its president, former president Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, currently under house arrest, has been outspoken in his criticism of both the July 1996 coup, stating that it would not resolve Burundi's problems, and the military's choice of Buyoya as leader.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although Major Pierre Buyoya promised to end human rights violations when he came to power after a *coup d'état* in July 1996, Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of extrajudicial execution, arbitrary arrest and torture. Critics and opponents of the government have also been harassed, arrested and tortured in a pattern of attacks on political opponents of the current government, aiming to eliminate effective political opposition. All major opposition parties have been targeted. Most of those arrested have been accused of subversive activities, have been held under house arrest or detained for short periods. Some have been tortured or ill-treated. Political opposition has been further stifled by restrictions on political activities although parliament has resumed.

On 19 January 1997, members of the *Renseignements généraux*, general intelligence service, arrested Jean-Baptiste Bagaza and other opposition members, including former Lieutenant-Colonel Pascal Ntako and Isidore Rufyikiri, and a number of executive members of *Solidarité jeunesse pour la défense des droits des minorités* (SOJEDEM), Youth Solidarity for the Defence of Minorities. The arrests came after several radical Tutsi leaders spoke out against Burundi's military leader Major Pierre Buyoya and may have been designed to prevent further

criticism. They were accused of threatening state security. Lt-Col. Ntako and Isidore Rufyikiri were held for several days before being released without charge. Jean Baptiste Bagaza was held under house arrest. His father, who required medical treatment, was also prevented from leaving the house. He has subsequently died. Amnesty International is concerned that his health may have deteriorated after he was denied medical treatment. Since then, members of the security forces have prevented his mother from leaving the house.

The secretary general of the *Front pour la démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU), Front for Democracy in Burundi, Augustin Nzojibwami, was arrested on 11 February, after being under house arrest since 7 February, and accused of subversive activities and inciting civil unrest. He was released on 12 February following a decision by the Supreme Court not to uphold a preventive detention order. Domitien Ndayizeye, the Executive Secretary of FRODEBU, was arrested on 22 February 1997 by members of the *Police de Sécurité Publique* (PSP), Public Security Police. He was detained for questioning at the Kigobe PSP detention centre in Bujumbura, where he was tortured by members of the *Documentation nationale*, a civilian security service. He was released without charge on 27 February 1997.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes or faxes in French or your own language:

- urging that immediate steps be taken to guarantee the safety and physical integrity of the men named above following reports that they have been subjected to torture and other forms of ill-treatment;
- seeking assurances that the men will be allowed immediate access to legal counsel, medical care and their families;
- urging that the reports of ill-treatment and torture be investigated, and if confirmed, that those responsible be removed from positions of authority and brought to justice in accordance with international standards for fair trial;
- seeking clarification of the legal status of the detainees and whether or not they have been charged with any specific offences; urging that they be released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling on the government to put an end to harassment of political opponents and for all allegations of such harassment to be investigated.

NOTE: no mail is getting through to Burundi at present.

APPEALS TO:

President

Major Pierre BUYOYA
Président de la République

Fax: 257 22 7490

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President

Minister of Justice

Gervais RUBASHAMIHETO
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux

Fax: 257 22 2148

Telegrams: Ministre Rubashamiheto, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Minister of Interior

Lieutenant-Colonel Epitace BAYAKANAKANDI
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Fax : + 257 222148 / 213055
Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Procurator General
Monsieur Jean-Bosco BUTASI
Procureur Général
Fax: 257 222148
Monsieur le Procureur Général

COPIES TO:

Minister of Defence
Lieutenant-Col. Firmin SINZOYIHEBA
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Fax: 257 22 39 59

Minister for Human Rights
Madame Christine RUHAZA
Ministre des Droits de la Personne
Ministère des Droits de la Personne
Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: + 257 216102
Telegrams: Ministre Ruhaza, Bujumbura, Burundi
Saluation: Madame le Ministre / Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of BURUNDI accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 April 1997.