

BURUNDI Jean Népomuscène MINANI

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Jean Népomuscène Minani who has not been seen since his arrest on 28 November 1997. He was arrested by soldiers at the Kwipera military position, Gasarara zone, Kanyosha commune, Bujumbura Rural as he returned home from the capital.

The reason for his arrest is not known although he has reportedly been accused of writing letters in which he was critical of the current government. Since then he has not been seen and his whereabouts have not been established. Amnesty International fears he may have been "disappeared" or may be held in an unknown place of detention where he is at risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Torture and ill-treatment are routine in Burundi. Detainees are especially vulnerable to abuse in cases, such as this, where legal procedures and safeguards aimed at protecting detainees, such as making the place of detention known and giving full access to detainees, are not followed. Numerous cases of "disappearance" after arrest are also reported. In some cases, fears of "disappearance" are generated because the authorities do not immediately make public the place of detention or whereabouts of the detainee or prisoner. In other cases it is feared that detainees may have "disappeared" after being killed in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Burundi has been in a state of civil war since the coup attempt on 21 October 1993. Since then more than 150,000 people have been killed by security forces or armed groups from both Tutsi and Hutu communities. Since the coup that occurred in July 1996, in which Major Pierre Buyoya was returned to power, the conflict has continued and human rights violations by the government security forces and by Tutsi and Hutu armed groups have continued. Due to an increase in attacks by Hutu-led groups during 1996, some government members called for the "surveillance and denunciation of enemies", these being understood to be mainly Hutu. As a consequence many young Hutu civilians are regularly arrested or killed by the Tutsi-dominated army on the grounds that they are "assailants", or are "helping the enemy". Such accusations often lead to arbitrary arrests.

Although Major Pierre Buyoya promised to end human rights violations when he came to power, Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of extrajudicial execution, arbitrary arrest and torture. Critics and opponents of the government have been harassed, detained or held under house arrest. More than 6,500 civilians, mostly Hutu, including at least 2,600 accused of involvement in massacres in Burundi, are held in various prisons and detention centres around the country - the majority without charge. Torture is reported to be carried out systematically, and with impunity, in detention centres belonging to the security forces. Deaths in custody are often reported.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Burundi authorities to investigate human rights violations, including extrajudicial execution, "disappearance", torture and ill-treatment and arbitrary arrest, committed by members of the Burundi security forces who continue to act with complete impunity.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jean Népomuscène Minani, who has not been seen since his arrest by soldiers at Kwipera military position on 28 November 1997;
- calling for the arrest to be immediately investigated and for the whereabouts of Jean Népomuscène Minani to be established and made public;

- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to protect his physical integrity and to allow him immediate access to his family, legal counsel, medical care and representatives of humanitarian organisations;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for the arrest of Jean Népomuscène Minani;
- calling on the authorities to bring to justice in accordance with international standards of fairness officials who are found to have carried out or condoned human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

Fax services can be intermittent.

President

Major Pierre Buyoya

Président de la République, Présidence de la République

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 74 90

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Terence SINUNGURUZA

Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 21 48

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Chief of Defence Staff

Lt-Col Vincent NIYUNGEKO

Chef de l'Etat-major général des Forces armées

Etat-major général des Forces armées

Ministère de la Défense nationale

Telegrams: Lt-Col Niyungeko, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 56 86

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-major

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister

Pascal Firmin NDIMIRA

Premier Ministre, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 64 24

Minister for Human Rights, Institutional Reform and Relations with the National Assembly

Eugène NINDORERA

Ministre des droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes institutionnelles, et des relations avec l'Assemblée nationale, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 21 38 47

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 20 March 1998.