

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 16/06/97

UA 75/97

Fear of ill-treatment/torture / possible
prisoners of conscience

19 March 1997

**BURUNDI Reverend Emmanuel Ndayiziga
Reverend Eliezer Ntunzwenimana
Another pastor, name not known**

On 15 March 1997, the Reverend Emmanuel Ndayiziga, president and legal representative of the *Union des Eglises baptistes du Burundi*, Union of Baptist Churches in Burundi, was arrested in Rohero parish, Bujumbura and taken away by 10 members of the *Brigade spéciale de Recherches* (BSR), Special Investigation Brigade. No reason was given for the arrest. Two pastors of the same church have also been arrested: Reverend Eliezer Ntunzwenimana was arrested on or around 7 March and another pastor, whose name is not known to Amnesty International, was arrested on or around 16 March 1997. All three are currently detained at the BSR headquarters in Bujumbura, where Amnesty International has received reports that they are being ill-treated. Amnesty International is concerned for their physical safety and fears they may be at risk of further ill-treatment or torture.

The three men have not been charged with any offence, but they are believed to have been accused of providing assistance - blankets and medicine - to members of Hutu armed groups (*assaillants*). They were arrested after Reverend Ndayiziga refused to buy blankets from the wife of an army officer. Members of the security forces then searched the compound and took away blankets and medicine saying they were for *assaillants*. Amnesty International believes that the three men may have been targeted for arrest on account of their welfare work among the local Hutu population.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Burundi has been in a state of civil war since the coup attempt of 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 in July 1996 which returned Major Pierre Buyoya 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 in 1996, some members of the government called for the "surveillance and denunciation of enemies", these being understood to be mainly Hutu. Many young Hutu 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 are held 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/telexes/faxes in French or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the Reverend Emmanuel Ndayiziga, the Reverend Eliezer Ntunzwenimana and another Baptist pastor who are being held at the detention centre of the BSR in Bujumbura where they are reported to have been ill-treated;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for their arrest and continued detention; calling on the authorities to release them unconditionally if they are prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for their non-violent opinions or activities;
- urging that the allegations of ill-treatment be immediately investigated and, if confirmed, that those responsible be brought to justice in accordance with international standards for fair trial;
- calling on the authorities to take immediate steps to guarantee the safety and humane treatment of the three men, and to allow them immediate access to their family, legal counsel, medical care and representatives of humanitarian organisations.

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

APPEALS TO:

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:

President

Major Pierre BUYOYA

Président de la République

Fax: 257 22 7490

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President

Minister for Human Rights

Madame Christine RUHAZA

Ministre des Droits de la Personne

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.