

UA 114/00

Fear of i.

BURUNDI Alphonsine MINANI (f)
Salvatore KARARAYE
Berchmans BIZIMANA
Gaspard NDABIGEZE
Claude HICUBURUNDI
Innocent

The six people named above were arrested by government soldiers on 7 May, apparently when they tried to stop the soldiers from stealing their possessions. They are now detained incommunicado at a gendarmerie detention centre in the capital, Bujumbura. Torture and ill-treatment are routine in Burundi, particularly in military detention.

The six were arrested at Kavumu "regroupment camp". Much of the population of Rural Bujumbura, the province that surrounds the capital, has been forced into these camps, in an attempt to prevent attacks on the capital by Hutu-dominated armed opposition groups (see background information).

On 7 May the governor of the province visited the Kavumu camp with a military delegation. While the governor was addressing the people living in the camp, soldiers started looting their belongings. Some of the camp's inhabitants tried to stop them, and fighting broke out. The six are reported to be among those who tried to stop the soldiers. They are now held in the *District de Bujumbura rural* gendarmerie detention centre in Bujumbura.

After they were arrested the detainees were accused of collaborating with armed opposition groups operating in Rural Bujumbura. Some sources claim armed opposition groups receive support from regroupment camps in the area.

Access to the camp has been blocked since 9 May, after protests and condemnation in Bujumbura of the soldiers' behaviour. Amnesty International fears that the inhabitants of the camp could face reprisals from soldiers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Torture and ill-treatment of detainees are routine in Burundi, in particular in police and military custody during the first days and weeks of arrest and during interrogations. Detainees accused of links with armed opposition groups are at particular risk of torture and "disappearance". The risk of torture and "disappearance" increases when detainees are held incommunicado.

In September 1999, with attacks on Bujumbura by Hutu-dominated armed opposition groups increasing, Burundian government officials and armed forces forcibly moved approximately 80% of the population of Rural Bujumbura from their homes, forcing most into various "regroupment" camps throughout the province. Conditions in the regroupment camps are appalling and hundreds of people are reported to have died from disease. Rape, beatings and "disappearances" have been reported in and around the camps. Freedom of movement is restricted and some camps are still receiving no humanitarian assistance. The government has claimed that the camps are to protect the local population, but they appear clearly to be a counter-insurgency tactic, isolating a population from which armed opposition groups might gain or coerce support. However, conflict in the province has continued and armed opposition groups have continued to operate. They too have been responsible for human rights abuses including the deliberate and arbitrary killing of unarmed civilians.

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

- calling for immediate action to protect the people named above, and for them to be given immediate access to their families, medical care, and humanitarian and human rights organizations;
- calling for them to be released if they are not to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence for which there is substantiating evidence;
- calling for steps to be taken to ensure that the population of Kavumu regroupment camp does not face intimidation or other reprisals;
- calling on the government to end the practice of forcibly regrouping the population.

APPEALS TO: Please note that fax numbers can be unreliable. Please check whether there is a postal service from your country to Burundi.

Procureur Général de la République
Monsieur Gérard NGENDABANKA
Procureur Général de la République
Bujumbura
Burundi

Telegrams: Procureur general, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: + 257 24 15 03

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur général de la République / Dear State Public Prosecutor

Minister of Defence
Colonel Cyrille NDAYIRUKIYE
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense Nationale
BUJUMBURA
Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 22 39 59 / 22 71 05

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice
Monsieur TERENCE SINUNGURUZA
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
BP 1880, BUJUMBURA
Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: 257 22 21 48

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Monsieur Eugène NINDORERA
Ministre des Droits de la Personne humaine, des Réformes institutionnelles et des Relations avec l'Assemblée nationale, Ministère des Droits de la Personne humaine, des Réformes institutionnelles et des Relations avec l'Assemblée nationale, BUJUMBURA, Burundi

Fax: + 257 21 75 49

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 June 2000.