

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 457/91 "Disappearances"

23 December 1991

Burundi: Charles Bafekurera, a taxi driver
Libère Barankitse, a trader
Venant Baranyanka, an employee of the French Cultural Centre
Bawila Kisimba Kalimba, a taxi driver
Théophile Karegwa, an employee of the Education Program Bureau
(BPE)
Dartus Manirakiza, a teacher at the School of Public Works
Paul Mbonayo
Denis Mbabarempore, an employee of the National Telecommunications
Office (ONATEL)
Vital Mbonihanguye, an employee of a baby food factory

Justin Minani, an agronomist employed a market gardening project
Antoine Muhitira, an operator of a public transport service
Renovant Ndikumana, a journalist of Burundi News Agency (ABP)
Pascal Nimbona
Vincent Sindayihebura, an employee of Civil Aviation

The 14 people mentioned above are reported to have "disappeared" in military custody in the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, after they were arrested in late November and early December 1991 by members of the Burundi security forces. Those "disappeared" appear all to belong to Burundi's majority Hutu ethnic group, whereas the security forces continue to be dominated by the Tutsi minority. They were arrested in the aftermath of the violent attacks which started on 23 November 1991 on military and other installations in Bujumbura and the northwestern provinces of Cibitoke and Bubanza. The authorities blame a clandestine political organization for the attacks. Most of the "disappeared" are said to have been held at Mura and the paratroopers barracks in Bujumbura. One of them, **Antoine Muhitira**, is reported to have been arrested by soldiers from Gatumba barracks, 15 kilometres northwest of Bujumbura.

Relatives of those reported to have "disappeared" have tried and failed to trace them and in most cases the authorities are reported to have denied having arrested them. In the case of **Antoine Muhitira** the authorities are said to have said that he was being held without mentioning his whereabouts. Independent sources have expressed concern that he and at least 30 others may have been executed extrajudicially.

Amnesty International is concerned that the Burundi authorities have not made public the whereabouts of these 14 prisoners and others and that this exposes them to a risk of being executed extrajudicially. The organization is concerned that there has been no official investigation to establish what may have happened to those reported to have "disappeared" and is urging that if they have been executed extrajudicially or subjected to other forms of human rights violations, those responsible be brought to justice.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of serious human rights violations carried out by members of the Burundi security forces in the aftermath of violent attacks which started on 23 November 1991 by armed government opponents on military and other installations in the capital, Bujumbura, and in the northwestern provinces of Bubanza and Cibitoke. The reports concern arbitrary arrests, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances". Many of the abuses appear to have been carried out as reprisals or on the basis of no evidence that the victims had been involved in armed opposition.

These human rights violations, especially the extrajudicial executions, resemble those committed on several occasions in the past, particularly in 1965, 1969, 1972 and, most recently, in 1988. Following thousands of killings by the army in 1988, the government refused to take action to bring soldiers responsible for human rights violations to justice, although at a political level steps were taken to bring about reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the reported "disappearance" in late November and early December 1991 of the 14 people named above (naming some) and others and asking the authorities for information of their whereabouts;
- asking if the authorities have investigated such reports and, if so, what the results of the investigations are;
- urging the authorities, if no investigation has occurred, to order an independent and impartial investigation into reports and to bring those found responsible for subjecting prisoners to unlawful and secret detentions or other violations of human rights to justice;
- requesting assurances that those reported to have "disappeared" have not been ill-treated or executed extrajudicially and, if in custody, will be allowed immediate access to their relatives, independent legal counsel and members of independent humanitarian organizations, such as representatives of human rights organizations in Burundi and the International Committee of the Red Cross;
- requesting the authorities to issue clear public instructions to all members of the security forces that subjecting prisoners to secret detention is a violation of human rights and an offence against Burundi's own laws and that those found responsible for such abuses will be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

1. President:

Son Excellence

Major Pierre Buyoya

Président de la République

Présidence de la République BP 1870,

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: President Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5039 presibu bdi or

5049 mnd bdi

[Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President]

2. Prime Minister:

Monsieur Adrien Sibomana

Premier Ministre et Ministre de la Planification

Présidence de la République

BP 1870

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Sibomana, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5039 presibu bdi

[Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre/Dear Prime Minister]

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3. Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Sébastien Ntahuga Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 1880

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Ntahuga, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: via Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

5065 minirext, attn Ministre Ntahuga

[Salutation: Ministre Ntahuga/Dear Minister]

COPIES TO:

1) Minister of the Interior:

Monsieur Libère Bararunyeretse

Ministre de l'Intérieur et du

Développement des collectivités locales

Ministère de l'Intérieur, BP 1910

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

2) Governor of Bubanza

Monsieur Balthazar Kirubusa

Gouverneur de la Province de Bubanza

Hôtel de ville, Bubanza

République du Burundi

3) General Administrator of National Security:

Monsieur Laurent Niyonkuru

Administrateur Général de la Sûreté nationale

Ministère de la Défense nationale
Bujumbura, République du Burundi

4) President of Human Rights Organization:

Monsieur Eugène Nindorera
Président
Ligue burundaise des droits de l'homme
BP 177
Bujumbura
République du Burundi

5) Newspaper Editor:

Monsieur le Rédacteur-en-Chef
Le Renouveau
BP 2870, Bujumbura,
République du Burundi

and to diplomatic representatives of Burundi in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 February 1992.