

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 16/15/96

UA 150/96

Fear of "disappearance" /
Fear of extrajudicial execution

25 June 1996

BURUNDI Marcel BIGIRIMANA, 15 years
Donatien BIZIMANA, 16 years
Maco NAHIMANA, 14 years
Gaspard MYUGI, 16 years
Said MISAGO, 13 years
BIRINDA, 15 years
Anicet NYABENDA, 15 years
MARIUS, 13 years
SELEMANI, 14 years
Joseph MANIRAMBONA, 16 years
SINZINKAYO, 14 years
Simon NGIRENTE, 15 years
John HAKIZIMANA, 16 years
KUBWIMANA, 14 years
KARIBUHURI, 14, and other children

At least sixteen children were arrested, without warrant, on 19 June 1996, in Buterere suburb of Bujumbura by soldiers of the Second Battalion of Intervention based at Ngagara Barracks. The children were first arrested along with a number of adult peasants. The adults were subsequently released; some soon after their arrest and others later in Ngagara. However, efforts made by the Cibitoke zone chief and relatives to see the children still detained have failed. Military authorities in the barracks reportedly claim that there are no children in their cells.

Amnesty International believes that these children, all of them from the majority Hutu ethnic group, are at risk of "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. Fears for the children's physical well-being are aggravated by the refusal of the military authorities to allow the children's relatives access to those held.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Burundi has been in a state of civil war since the coup attempt of 21 October 1993. Since then, more than 100,000 people have been killed by security forces or armed groups both Tutsi and Hutu. Torture is reported to be carried out systematically, and with impunity, in detention centres belonging to the security forces. Deaths in custody are also often reported.

In early 1995, a splinter group of the ruling *Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU), Front for Democracy in Burundi, frustrated by the negotiations which were stripping them of the power they had gained from the elections of 1993, created the *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD), National Council for the Defence of Democracy, and an armed wing, the *Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (FDD), Forces for the Defence of Democracy. This and other Hutu-led groups seem to have a upper hand in the ongoing struggle in the country. As a consequence, some Tutsi members of the government called for the "surveillance and denunciation of enemies", these being understood to be mainly the Hutu people.

Many young Hutu people are regularly arrested or killed on the grounds that they are "assailants" or "helping the enemy". Soldiers from the Second Battalion

of Intervention have been responsible for numerous "disappearances" and extrajudicial executions, particularly since 1994.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of children arrested without warrant on 19 June in Buterere and reportedly held in Ngagara Military Barracks;
- calling on the authorities to allow immediate access to the children by their relatives;
- seeking assurances that the children have not been and will not be subjected to torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, "disappearance" or extrajudicial execution;
- demanding that the children be released immediately and unconditionally, unless they have been charged with a criminal offence while in the custody of civilian judicial authorities.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-Colonel Firmin Sinzoyiheba
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense Nationale
B.P. 20, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 213 055

Telegrams: Ministre de la Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Army Chief of Staff

Colonel Jean Bikomagu
Chef d'Etat-major Général
B.P. 20, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 213 055

Telegrams: Chef d'Etat-Major General, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-major / Dear Colonel Bikomagu

COPIES TO:

Monsieur Sylvestre Ntibantunganya
Président de la République du Burundi
Présidence de la République
B.P. 1870, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 227 490

Monsieur Antoine Nduwayo
Premier Ministre
Présidence de la République
B.P. 2800, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 226 424

Monsieur Gérard Ngendabanka
Ministre de la Justice at Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
BP 1880, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 222 148

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 6 August 1996.