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Burundi: Human rights abuses must be investigated

Amnesty International is calling for an immediate, independent and impartial investigation into the killing of at least 28 civilians by the Burundian armed forces in Bujumbura, at the end of September 2000. The organization is calling on the Government of Burundi to ensure that no member of the security forces or administration hinders the investigations.

Despite an official denial by the armed forces, a wide range of unofficial sources in Bujumbura insist that the armed forces were responsible for the extrajudicial execution of these unarmed civilians. More information is still emerging on both the circumstances of the killings and the identities and numbers of the people killed or wounded.

“Respect for human rights must be regarded by all as a requisite for the implementation of a peace agreement and a cease-fire. All parties to the conflict must refrain from human rights abuses now and be held accountable for their actions,” the organization said.

*Reports from Bujumbura stated that the killings followed an attack on the capital which was attributed to a Hutu-armed opposition group, the *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL), National Liberation Forces. According to these reports, the FNL clashed with the Tutsi-dominated national army on the night of 28 September 2000 and attacked a military post in the Kamenge area in northern Bujumbura. The FNL then withdrew and the following morning soldiers of the *Bataillon Para* carried out reprisal killings in the Kamenge, Gasenyi, Gituro areas of Bujumbura, mainly inhabited by Hutu. The soldiers reportedly entered the area with the pretext of looking for members or supporters of the*

armed opposition. Most of those killed, including women and children, are reported to have been bayoneted to death, some in their homes, while others were killed as they fled.

The area was closed off by soldiers after the killings and Amnesty International is concerned that the number of dead could be much higher and that incriminating evidence may have been destroyed.

BACKGROUND

A peace agreement was signed on 28 August 2000 between the government, major political parties and some armed opposition groups. Two major armed opposition groups, including the FNL, have yet to sign.

Violence escalated in Burundi immediately prior to the signing of the agreement and scores of human rights abuses have been committed by all parties since.

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