

EXTRA 77/97 Fear of torture and ill-treatment / Deaths in custody 29 May 1997

BURUNDI Detainees at Socarti military camp, Kamenge, Bujumbura including:

PAZIRUPWABO Jérôme
Pascal "Le Vieux"
NIMBONA Georges
NDIKUMANA Bosco
Alexis
Omar
NDAYISHINIYE Samuel
GIHONGA
Alexis "Papi"
BERAHINO
NGENDABADASHAKA Elie
Eric

Reports that three men have died as a result of torture in recent weeks in Socarti military camp in the Kamenge district of the capital, Bujumbura, have raised serious fears for the safety of other detainees held there, including those named above.

Muyaga (first name not known) is reported to have died in Socarti in mid-May 1997, some three weeks after his arrest. Another man, whose name is not known to Amnesty International but who is believed to have been the younger brother of Savimbi, a prominent member of the Hutu-dominated armed group, the *Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (FDD), Forces for the Defence of Democracy, is also reported to have died in mid-May some four weeks after his arrest. A third man, Ernest Kabwe, who was arrested on 5 May and taken to Socarti, is reported to have died after torture on 9 May.

Torture and ill-treatment are routine in Burundi. Detainees are especially vulnerable to such abuses in cases such as these when legal procedures are not followed and safeguards protecting detainees, such as making the place of detention known and giving full access to detainees, are not implemented or adhered to. The fact that Socarti military camp is being used as an unofficial detention centre heightens concern for those held there.

The majority of the detainees named above are reported to have been arrested in the Kinama district of Bujumbura by the *3e Bataillon d'Intervention*, Third Intervention Battalion of the Gendarmerie. Most were arrested in May although Berahino and Elie Ngendabadashaka were arrested in February or March 1997. None have been officially charged although they are reported to have been arrested on suspicion of links with armed groups. Amnesty International is concerned that some of the arrests may have been arbitrary and it is not clear if any steps have been taken to establish whether there is a legal basis for the arrests.

Amnesty International has received reports that up to 150 people, mostly young male Hutu, have been arrested in a number of raids in Bujumbura, all on suspicion of links with armed groups. Fighting is currently taking place between armed groups and government forces in the province of Rural Bujumbura close to the capital.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although Major Pierre Buyoya promised to end human rights violations when he came to power after a coup d'état in July 1996, Amnesty International has documented thousands of cases of extrajudicial execution, "disappearance", arbitrary arrest and torture since that date. Critics and opponents of the government have also been harassed, arrested and tortured in a pattern of attacks on political opponents, aiming to eliminate effective political opposition. More than 100, and possibly as many as 150 arrests have taken place over the course of the last few weeks in Bujumbura. Those arrested are predominantly young men, mostly members of the Hutu ethnic group. None are known to have been charged and at least three men have died as a result of torture and ill-treatment.

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 or trial. Torture by members of the security forces is reported to be carried out systematically, and with impunity. Deaths in custody are often reported.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes (currently no mail) in French or your own language:

- calling for immediate steps to guarantee the safety and humane treatment of all the detainees at Socarti military camp, in view of the reported death following torture of at least three detainees;
- urging that the reported deaths 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 allow the detainees held in the camp immediate access to their families, legal counsel, medical care and representatives of humanitarian organizations;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for their arrest and continued detention, calling for them to be released if they are not to be promptly charged with recognizably criminal offences;
- calling for the transfer of any detainees against whom there are legal grounds for continued detention to a civilian prison under the supervision of the Procuracy (*parquet*).

APPEALS TO:

Minister for Internal Affairs and Public Security
 Lt-Col. Epitace BAYAGANAKANDI
 Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique
 Ministère de l'Intérieur
Telegram : Ministre Interieur, Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: 257 22 21 48 / 257 21 30 55
Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre

Minister of Defence
 Lieutenant-Col. Firmin SINZOYIHEBA
 Ministre de la Défense Nationale
 Ministère de la Défense
Fax: 257 22 39 59
Telegrams: Ministre Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Gendarmerie Chief of Staff

Colonel George MUKORAKO
Chef de l'Etat-major général de la gendarmerie
Etat-major général de la gendarmerie
Ministère de la Défense nationale
Fax: 257 22 39 59
Telegrams: Etat-major general gendarmerie, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Colonel

Procureur général
M. Jean Bosco BUTASI
Procureur général
Fax: 257 222148
Telegrams: Procureur General, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur général

COPIES TO:

Minister of Justice
Monsieur Terence SINUNGURUZA
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
Fax: 257 22 21 48

President
Major Pierre Buyoya
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
Fax: 257 22 7490

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 3 July 1997.