

BURUNDI Unarmed civilians, Kanyosha and Kabezi communes, Rural Bujumbura Province

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the civilian population in Kanyosha and Kabezi communes, Rural Bujumbura province, as scores of unarmed civilians including children have reportedly been indiscriminately killed by members of the armed forces since 10 August.

The final death toll is not yet known. However, some sources claim that over 100 bodies have already been counted in Busoro and Nkenga areas, and more remain hidden in houses destroyed during the military operation. The area has been closed off by the armed forces and military operations are reported to be continuing. Members of parliament who attempted to visit the area on 12 August were not permitted to do so by the armed forces. Scores more killings are reported to have taken place early on 12 August in nearby Ruziba, Kabezi commune.

On 10 August at around 11am, members of an armed opposition group attacked a market in Kanyosha, close to the capital. At least one member of the security forces was killed in the attack. The armed opposition group reportedly looted the market undisturbed and left towards the hills overlooking Bujumbura. The subsequent sequence of events is still unclear. It appears that following the departure of the armed opposition, soldiers, reportedly accompanied by armed civilians, returned with reinforcements, including heavy weapons. Civilians fleeing towards the capital were turned back by soldiers and ordered to return to their homes. In the afternoon of 10 August and continuing into 11 August, soldiers, again according to some reports, accompanied by armed civilians, attacked, burnt and pillaged houses in the Busoro and Nkenga areas, killing inhabitants they found. Around 30 unarmed civilians may also have been shot and killed by members of the armed forces as they fled Kanyosha market.

On 12 August, upto 70 unarmed people are reported to have been extrajudicially executed by soldiers from the Gitaramuka military post, Ruziba, Kabezi. Soldiers stopped people going into Bujumbura from the hills, making them wait by the road at Butoza. They reportedly asked them for information on the armed opposition, following the attack on Kanyosha market. For reasons that are not clear, soldiers reportedly then shot, and threw grenades into the group of people, estimated to have been between 100 and 200. There is no confirmed death toll, but first reports suggest that up to 80 people may have been killed.

Other extrajudicial executions have been carried out in Bujumbura itself. On 7 August, two people, Melchior Magoranwa and Audace Gashimwe, were beaten to death with iron rods and sticks at a military position in Buterere I, Cibitoke zone, Bujumbura. Five others were injured, three of them seriously. Soldiers from the post have been removed but not charged with a criminal offence. The seven victims are reported to have been accused of breaking the curfew and suspected collaboration with the armed opposition. Another man, Rashid Delachance, was reportedly beaten to death on 9 August by police officers in Ngagara, Bujumbura. Two police officers have been arrested.

Amnesty International is appealing for the Government of Burundi to ensure that unarmed civilians taking no part in the hostilities are not targeted by its forces during counter-insurgency operations. It is also appealing for the armed opposition to refrain from committing human rights abuses.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Armed opposition groups have been increasingly active in Rural Bujumbura in recent weeks, and have attacked areas of the capital itself several times. Both sides have committed human rights abuses. Members of the armed opposition have carried out scores of deliberate and arbitrary killings. Reprisals by the armed forces have been brutal and indiscriminate. At least 600 unarmed civilians are reported to have been killed by the armed forces in Rural Bujumbura since November 1998. These killings appear to be almost exclusively extrajudicial executions as acts of reprisal, rather than resulting directly from the conflict. Virtually none of the killings have been the subject of impartial independent investigations.

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

- calling for immediate action to be taken to prevent further extrajudicial executions during and after counter-insurgency operations;
- calling for reports of extrajudicial executions to be impartially investigated, and if substantiated, those responsible brought to justice (mention the recent extrajudicial executions in Bujumbura, Kanyosha and Ruziba);
- calling for journalists, human rights organizations and investigators to have access to the area, to be able to carry out their work independently and for witnesses to be protected from human rights violations.

APPEALS TO: (Please note it can be difficult to get faxes through. You may be told by the operator that the line is not working or the number is wrong. Please keep trying.)

President

Major Pierre Buyoya
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
BP 1870, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 7490

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-Col. Alfred NKURUNZIZA
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense Nationale
BP 1870 Bujumbura, Burundi

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Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Chief of Defence Staff

Lt-Col Vincent NIYUNGEKO
Chef de l'Etat-major général des Forces armées
Etat-major général des Forces armées
Ministère de la Défense nationale
BP 1870 Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef de l'Etat-major

Fax: 257 22 39 59 / 21 75 05

Tlx: 5146MDMBDI / 5049MDNBDI

Military Prosecutor
Colonel BATUNGWAYAYO
Auditeur Militaire
Ministère de la Défense
Bujumbura, Burundi

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Salutation:Monsieur l'Auditeur Militaire / Dear Military Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights

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

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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 23 September 1999.