

PUBLIC

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Fear of safety / Fear of torture and
ill-treatment

18 August 1998

BURUNDI **Gabriel Ntahondi**

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of Gabriel Ntahondi who was arrested on 14 August 1998 in the capital Bujumbura and who is at risk of torture and ill-treatment in detention.

Following his arrest Gabriel Ntahondi was reportedly taken to SOCARTI military camp in the Kamenge district of Bujumbura and shortly afterwards reportedly transferred to the *3e groupement d'intervention*, 3rd Intervention Squad, military camp in the Kiriri district of Bujumbura. He has not been seen since and family members who have taken food to him have been turned away.

Gabriel Ntahondi, a trader selling dried fish, had recently arrived in Bujumbura from Nyanza Lac, Makamba Province, in southern Burundi. He is reportedly accused of smuggling arms in his produce and of links with armed groups. According to witnesses, although he was searched at the time of his arrest by soldiers, no arms were found. His money is reported to have been stolen by the soldier making the arrest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

More than 8,000 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. Hundreds are also accused of participating in or collaborating with Hutu-dominated armed opposition groups. In many cases there is no substantiating evidence to support the accusations and many of the arrests appear to have been arbitrary. The majority are held without charge or trial. Many have been tortured and ill-treated to extract statements or information.

There are numerous reports of "disappearances" of detainees, particularly in military camps. Additionally, children as young as 12 years old have been arbitrarily accused of collaboration with armed groups and unlawfully detained.

Despite a cease-fire which was supposed to come into force in mid-July 1998, conflict is continuing in Burundi, particularly in the eastern provinces of Rural Bujumbura, Bubanza and Makamba and Bururi.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail in French or your own language (note that, although airmail services to Burundi have reportedly recently resumed, it may be advisable to check the service from your country prior to sending an appeal):

- expressing concern for the safety of Gabriel Ntahondi, who was arrested on 14 August 1998 and who is reportedly detained at the *3e groupement d'intervention* military camp in Kiriri district;
- seeking assurances that Gabriel Ntahondi will be safeguarded from ill-treatment and torture as stated in Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;*
- calling on the authorities to allow him immediate access to his family, legal counsel, medical care and representatives of humanitarian organisations;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for Gabriel Ntahondi's arrest.

APPEALS TO: (if a recorded message answers a fax number please try later as the service can be very erratic)

President

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

Telegrams: Major Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5036PRESIBU

Faxes: + 257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Terence SINUNGURUZA
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
Bujumbura, Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 21 48

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

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

Telegrams: Ministre Défense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5146MDMBDI / 5049MDNBDI

Faxes: + 257 22 39 59 / 21 75 05

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, Institutional Reform and Relations with the National Assembly

Eugène NINDORERA

Ministre des droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes institutionnelles,
et des relations avec l'Assemblée nationale, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 21 38 47

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 29 September 1998.

"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Article 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>