

UA 255/99

Torture/F**BURUNDI** Georgette MPAWENIMANA (f)

Déo NZEYIMANA

Nestor RUBERINTWARE and scores of other detainees in and around Bujumbura

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of those named above, and scores of other detainees in police and military custody in and around the capital, Bujumbura.

Nestor Rubwerintware was arrested on or around 30 August 1999 and held until 7 September at a military camp (*bataillon para d'intervention*) behind the *Brigade spéciale de recherche* (BSR), special investigation unit headquarters, in the capital Bujumbura where was reportedly severely beaten on the head. He was subsequently transferred to police custody in Kabezi, Rural Bujumbura with up to 30 other detainees from the BSR, whose identities are not known to Amnesty International. They are being held in appallingly overcrowded conditions in Kabezi *brigade* (police headquarters). The authorities initially denied holding Nestor Rubwerintware and it was feared he had "disappeared". He is reported to have been accused of passing information to members of the armed opposition on the whereabouts of soldiers.

Déo Nzeyimana was arrested by soldiers on 22 September 1999. He has not been charged but he is reported to have been accused of passing information on human rights violations in the country to the international media, after a document - reported to be widely available in Bujumbura - giving details of the security situation and population displacement in the area around the capital was found in his possession. His wife, Georgette Mpawenimana, is reported to have been arrested on 26 September, when she went to the BSR to try to give her husband food. Neither has been questioned by an investigating police officer.

Independent human rights groups have reportedly been denied access to Déo Nzeyimana. Amnesty International has not received information that Déo Nzeyimana or Georgette Mpawenimana have been tortured or ill-treated, but believes they are at serious risk, in view of patterns of torture and ill-treatment. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees is routine, particularly in the early stages of detention. Detainees accused of participation in, or collaboration with, armed groups are routinely tortured, often to extract information or a confession. Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of "disappearance", torture and death in custody in Burundi.

On 21 September, scores of civilians were arrested by gendarmes at Bujumbura's central market, detained in a detention centre "SOGEMAC" in the market and severely beaten in public before being released. The arrests and beatings appear to have been completely arbitrary and followed rumours that the market had been infiltrated by members of the armed opposition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bujumbura has recently been frequently attacked by armed opposition groups, who have deliberately and arbitrarily killed civilians. Since these attacks on the capital increased in August 1999, there have been scores of arrests by the security forces, and Amnesty International has received several reports of torture and "disappearance". Since mid-September, the area surrounding Bujumbura has been virtually cleared of civilians, who have been moved into

temporary camps where they are being held in appalling conditions, while the army carries out counter-insurgency operations.

Since November 1998, there has been intense activity by armed opposition groups in Burundi, particularly in the province of Rural Bujumbura and the southern provinces of Makamba and Bururi. The targets have been both military and civilian. Reprisals by the armed forces have been brutal and indiscriminate. Hundreds of unarmed civilians are reported to have been killed by the armed forces in Rural Bujumbura rural as a result. Virtually none of the killings have been the subject of impartial independent investigations.

More than 9,000 civilians, mostly Hutu, are held in various prisons and detention centres around Burundi. The majority are held without charge or trial, and many people are arrested on the basis of denunciation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French or your own language (please check with your post office whether there are postal services to Burundi):

- expressing concern for the safety of the people named above, and for other detainees in the BSR, or in police custody in Kabezi (*la brigade de Kabezi*);
- seeking assurances that immediate steps will be taken to ensure that they will be protected from ill-treatment or torture;
- calling for the report that Nestor Ruberintware was tortured to be investigated, and if substantiated, for those responsible to be brought to justice;
- calling for the accusations against the detainees to be thoroughly and impartially investigated and for them to be released unless they are to be promptly charged with a recognized criminal offence, and there is substantive evidence to support the accusations against them;
- calling on the authorities to allow them immediate and continued access to their families, legal counsel, medical care and representatives of humanitarian and human rights organizations for the duration of their detention.

APPEALS TO (It can be difficult to get faxes through. Please keep trying until you get a line):

Minister of Justice

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

Fax: 257 21 86 10

Telegram: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Defence

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

Telegrams: Ministre Défense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes:+ 257 22 39 59 / 21 75 05

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Commander of the Brigade spéciale de recherche

Capitaine MANIRAKIZA

Brigade spéciale de recherche

BUJUMBURA, Burundi

Telegrams: Cmdt BSR, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes:c/o Ministry of Defence+ 257 22 39 59 / 21 75 05

Salutation:Monsieur le Commandant/Dear Commander

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, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax:+ 257 21 75 49

State Public Prosecutor

Gerard NGENDABANKA, Procureur de la République, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax:+ 257 24 15 03

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 9 November 1999.