

**BURUNDI Four people, including one woman, detained at Gatumba brigade
Four other people, whereabouts not known**

Eight people from Rukaramu, in Mutimbuzi commune, outside the capital, Bujumbura, were arrested by soldiers on 10 December on suspicion of involvement in the murder of a soldier. Four are detained at Gatumba *brigade* (gendarmerie post), and according to unconfirmed reports the rest are detained in the nearby Gakumbu military camp. Torture and ill-treatment are rife in military and gendarmerie custody and Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety, in particular because they have been accused of involvement in the murder of a soldier.

There are conflicting reports on the circumstances of the soldier's death, although it seems he was killed on 9 December, as he drank a beer in a bar in Rukaramu with a female friend. Local people have accused a soldier from Rukaramu military post, who was reportedly also drinking in the bar with other soldiers, of shooting the soldier after the two men argued over the woman. Soldiers from Rukaramu army post have blamed local people for the murder and accused them of collaborating with an armed opposition group.

The following morning, soldiers from the nearby Gakumbu military camp surrounded the Rukaramu area and demanded that the local population reveal who had killed the soldier. They said they would not let anyone leave the area until the soldier's gun was found. The eight civilians were arrested even though the population maintained that soldiers were responsible. The soldiers kept up the blockade for two days, during which the people of Rukaramu had no access to drinking water. The gun has not yet been found.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Neither of Burundi's two main armed opposition groups are party to the August 2000 peace agreement, and conflict in the country has increased since it was signed. Fighting has escalated again since a transitional government was established on 1 November 2001, in accordance with the peace agreement. Serious human rights abuses have been reported, including scores of people extrajudicially executed by soldiers or unlawfully killed by armed opposition groups.

Soldiers reportedly killed at least 93 people in Maramyva, Mutimbuzi commune, in early November, apparently in reprisal after the armed opposition group *Front National de Libération* (FNL), National Liberation Front opened fire on an army vehicle. These killings followed the extrajudicial execution by government forces of at least 31 unarmed civilians on 25 October in the Buzige and Migereka II *collines* in Bubanza Province, apparently in reprisal for the killing of at least two members of the Burundian armed forces.

People suspected of links with armed opposition groups are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment, and are systematically subjected to beatings, tied in excruciating positions, deprived of food and threatened with death. Several detainees are known to have died in custody last year as a result of torture. The problem is particularly acute as detainees are often held incommunicado and access to families and humanitarian and human rights organizations denied.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French, English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of eight people arrested in Rukaramu on 10 December: four are detained in Gatumba *brigade*, where Amnesty International fears they are at serious risk of ill-treatment and torture, and the others are reportedly held in Gakumbu military camp;
- asking the authorities to make public the whereabouts of all those arrested, ensure they are protected from torture and other forms of ill-treatment in detention and give them immediate access to their families, medical care and to humanitarian and human rights organizations;
- asking the authorities to explain why the eight were arrested, and to ensure that they are released if they are not to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence for which there is substantiating evidence;
- calling on the Burundian authorities to immediately issue strict instructions to the armed forces not to carry out reprisals against unarmed civilians and to make it clear that any member of the armed forces responsible for human rights violations will be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

Head of State

Son Excellence

Major Pierre BUYOYA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

BP 1870 Bujumbura, Burundi

Telegrams: President, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Minister of National Defence

Général-Major Cyrille NDAYIRUKIYE

Ministre de la Défense Nationale

Ministère de la Défense Nationale

BUJUMBURA, Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 56 86

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Fulgence Dwima BAKANA

Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

BP 1880 Bujumbura

Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 21 86 10

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Procureur Général de la République

Monsieur Gérard NGENDABANKA

Procureur Général de la République

Bujumbura

Burundi

Telegrams: Procureur general, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: + 257 24 15 03

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur général de la République / Dear State Public Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

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

Monsieur Alphonse BARANCIRA, 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 24 January 2002.