

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death under Torture

10 January 1991

RWANDA: Alfred Chafubire, an Episcopal Church pastor

Amnesty International has just learned that Pastor Alfred Chafubire, director of a secondary school at Gahini in the southern region (prefecture) of Kibungo, died in custody on 6 December 1990, reportedly as a result of torture.

Gahini is located near Akagera National Park where fighting has taken place between government troops and Uganda-based Rwandese rebels who attacked northeast Rwanda in early October 1990. Alfred Chafubire was a member of the Tutsi ethnic group which plays a dominant role in the rebel force. He was first arrested in October 1990 and released after a few days. He was rearrested on 6 December and taken to a detention centre in Rwamagana town in eastern Rwanda where he reportedly died the same day. On 7 December, his body's limbs were reportedly observed to be swollen, apparently showing signs of severe torture which may have led to his death. The security forces reportedly claimed that Alfred Chafubire's name was on a list of rebel sympathizers found on the body of a rebel killed in battle. The authorities are not known to have carried out any investigation to establish the cause of Alfred Chafubire's death or to have taken any action against those responsible for his death.

Since mass arrests of suspected rebel sympathizers and others began in early October 1990, there have been numerous reports of detainees being subjected to beatings or other ill-treatment. However, this is the first such report of death under torture. Thirteen detainees arrested in connection with the rebellion were tried on 3 January 1991 by the State Security Court. Some of them told the court that they were beaten and ill-treated by members of the security forces in order to confess their guilt but the court did not investigate or consider the allegations. They had no access to legal assistance and on 7 January one of them was sentenced to death while nine others were sentenced to long prison terms.

Amnesty International is concerned that Alfred Chafubire appears to have been subjected to torture, leading to his death. Although his death occurred in suspicious circumstances, the authorities are not known to have opened a formal investigation, as required by law. By failing to do so, the authorities appear to be condoning the use of torture. The organization is also concerned that allegations of unlawful killings carried out by government troops in other parts of the country currently under government control remain uninvestigated and this may lead to government forces believing that they can commit further human rights abuses with impunity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The violent attack launched on northeast Rwanda at the beginning of October 1990 resembles several others carried out in the early 1960s by Rwandese exiles based in Uganda and other neighbouring countries. The attacks followed the overthrow in 1959 of the Tutsi monarch by Hutu politicians and subsequent intercommunal violence which led to the killing of hundreds and the flight to exile of tens of thousands of Tutsi. These exiles were responsible for the attacks in the early 1960s and also for the October 1990 attack. As a result of a major incursion by Tutsi insurgents in 1963, prisoners supporting the Tutsi cause who were already in detention were executed extrajudicially: it also provoked mass killings of Tutsi throughout the country.

At the end of October 1990 government troops regained control of most of the towns occupied by rebels. However, rebel bands are reported still to be active in various parts of northern Rwanda.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/telegrams/faxes/airmail letters, in French if possible:

- expressing concern about the reported death under torture of Alfred Chafubire in Rwamagana on 6 December 1990, and calling for a full inquiry into the causes of his death and into reports that he was tortured;
- inquiring if any information is available about the causes and circumstances of his death;
- urging the authorities to investigate all reports of the torture or beating of prisoners and suggesting that an independent and competent commission of inquiry be set up to receive and investigate reports of torture and other human rights abuses committed by the security forces in all parts of the country;
- urging that any security personnel incriminated in torture, beating or killing prisoners be suspended from duty while their cases are investigated with a view to their being prosecuted and punished;
- calling on the authorities to issue clear and public instructions to all members of the security forces and others responsible for custody of prisoners reminding them that torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, including beatings, are illegal and prohibited at all times.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence Président HABYARIMANA Juvénal
Président de la République
BP 15

Kigali, République Rwandaise

Telegrams: President Habyarimana, Kigali, Rwanda

Telexes: 22517

Faxes: + 250 74583

Monsieur MUGEMANA Jean-Marie Vianney
Ministre de l'Intérieur et du développement communal
Ministère de l'Intérieur
BP 446

Kigali, République Rwandaise

Telegrams: Ministre Mugemana, Kigali, Rwanda

Telexes: 22502

Monsieur MUJYANAMA Théoneste
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
BP 160

Kigali, République Rwandaise

Telegrams: Ministre Mujyanama, Kigali, Rwanda

Telexes: 22502

Monsieur le Docteur BIZIMUNGU Casimir
Ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la coopération
Ministère des Affaires étrangères
BP 179

Kigali, République Rwandaise

Telegrams: Ministre des Affaires étrangères, Kigali, Rwanda

Telexes: 22502

Faxes: + 250 72902; + 250 72904

COPIES TO:

- Rédacteur-en-Chef, Imvaho, BP 83, Kigali, République Rwandaise
- Rédacteur-en-Chef, Kinyamateka, BP 761, Kigali, République Rwandaise
- Rédacteur-en-Chef, La Relève, Office rwandaise d'information, BP 83,
Kigali, République Rwandaise

and to diplomatic representatives of Rwanda in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 February 1991.