

RWANDA Joseph Ruyenzi, journalist, in his 30s

Joseph Ruyenzi, a news presenter in the kinyarwanda language for *Radio Rwanda*, was arrested by soldiers on 29 March 1996 in the capital, Kigali. Initially he was held at the *Brigade Centrale* in Kigali, but he is reported to have since been transferred to Kigali Central Prison. Amnesty International is concerned for his health and safety in the context of a pattern of government victimization of journalists in Rwanda.

Although the motive for Joseph Ruyenzi's detention is not known, Amnesty International is concerned that it may be because of his attempts to exercise his right to freedom of expression as a journalist. *Radio Rwanda*, where Joseph Ruyenzi has been working for about one and a half years, is the state-controlled national radio station, and is known to stifle broadcasts which expose current human rights abuses in Rwanda or which are critical of the government.

It is not known whether Joseph Ruyenzi has been subjected to any ill-treatment in detention. However, Amnesty International has documented a pattern of torture and ill-treatment of detainees in military detention centres in Rwanda, in the period immediately after arrest, before they are transferred to the central prisons.

Amnesty International is also deeply concerned at the conditions in many prisons and detention centres in Rwanda, resulting from overcrowding and lack of health and sanitary facilities. In many cases, these conditions amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. There are currently more than 67,000 detainees held without charge or trial, on accusations of having participated in the genocide and other massacres in 1994.

Throughout 1995 and early 1996, Kigali Prison was among the most overcrowded prisons in Rwanda. In March 1996, it held more than 11,240 prisoners, in a capacity for around 2,000. Finally, at the end of March 1996, 3,000 prisoners were transferred to a temporary site in Gikondo. However, with new arrests estimated at several hundred a week, there is no guarantee that the improvement in conditions resulting from this transfer will be long-lasting.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the current government came to power in Rwanda in July 1994, Amnesty International has documented a pattern of intimidation and harassment of journalists who attempt to distribute independent and objective information on the situation in Rwanda, particularly those who denounce human rights violations by the security forces. Several other radio and press journalists have been victims of human rights violations in Rwanda, in connection with their professional activities. These have included at least one other journalist working for *Radio Rwanda*.

Another example is Manassé Mugabo, a journalist working on the kinyarwanda service of Radio UNAMIR (the radio station of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda) who "disappeared" in August 1995 and has never been seen since. He is feared dead. Several other journalists have been also singled out for arrest or attempted assassination.

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

- asking for information on any charges against Joseph Ruyenzi;
- asking for confirmation of his whereabouts and assurances that he is not being ill-treated or tortured and has access to legal advice;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release if he is not to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- expressing concern about a broader pattern of intimidation and harassment of journalists who attempt to distribute information about the situation in Rwanda;
- asking the government to put an end to this pattern of intimidation, to protect journalists from human rights abuses and to respect the right to freedom of expression.

APPEALS TO:

Monsieur Jean-Pierre BIZIMANA
Ministre de l'Information et Porte-parole du gouvernement
Ministère de l'Information
BP 83, Kigali, Rwanda
Telegrams: Ministre de l'Information, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Major Wilson RUTAYISIRE
Directeur, Office rwandais de l'Information (ORINFOR)
Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +250 76185
Telegrams: Directeur, ORINFOR, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur / Dear Director

Colonel Alexis KANYARENGWE
Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre de l'Intérieur
BP 446, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +250 85714
Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Madame Marthe MUKAMURENZI
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
BP 160, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +250 86509
Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Madame le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Président Pasteur Bizimungu
Président de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
Faxes: +250 84769/83975

Général Major Paul Kagame
Vice-Président de la République et Ministre de la Défense
Présidence de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: +250 83980; 84769; 72431

Premier Ministre Pierre-Célestin Rwigema
Présidence de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: +250 83714

and to diplomatic representatives of RWANDA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 May 1996.