

RWANDAJuvénal Bagarirakose

There are fears for the safety of Juvénal Bagarirakose, who has not been seen since 9 January 1998.

Juvénal Bagarirakose was reportedly led away from his home to an unknown destination by soldiers of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) on 9 January, in Kibilira, in the northwestern *préfecture* of Gisenyi. The soldiers reportedly burned the nearby houses of two of his sisters before leaving the area. Juvénal Bagarirakose's arrest is not known to have been officially acknowledged.

Juvénal Bagarirakose, married with three children, is a teacher by training but has also worked in the commercial sector. He was a refugee in the former Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) between 1994 and November 1996 when he returned to Rwanda. As a refugee he was actively involved in initiatives to promote dialogue and non-violent solutions to the conflict in Rwanda. He continued with these activities following his return to Rwanda, with the full knowledge and the cooperation of local civilian authorities.

His home *commune* of Kibilira is one of many areas in northwest Rwanda which has experienced a high level of violence and insecurity in recent months. Many unarmed civilians are reported to have been killed there in the context of armed conflict between RPA soldiers and armed opposition groups.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since January 1997, there has been a significant escalation in the armed conflict between the RPA and armed opposition groups believed to include soldiers of the former Rwandese armed forces and *interahamwe* militia responsible for many massacres during the genocide of 1994. Thousands of unarmed civilians, including men, women and young children, have been deliberately killed - some by RPA soldiers, others by armed opposition fighters, others by unidentified groups.

In the last few months, Amnesty International has received almost daily reports of such killings, the majority from the northwestern *préfecture* of Gisenyi. The local population in these areas is living in a constant state of fear, caught between the threat of violence on both sides. Many families have been displaced, abandoning their homes and crops for fear of being killed.

Scores and possibly hundreds of people have "disappeared" in Rwanda over the last year, in many cases after being arrested by RPA soldiers. Many were refugees in the former Zaire until their return to Rwanda in late 1996. In the northwest, "disappearances" have been especially common during or following military operations in areas where insurgent activities have been reported.

Some individuals have later been traced in detention centres and a number have been released, but the majority remain unaccounted for. Many families remain without news of their relatives for several weeks or months. Official investigations into reported "disappearances" are rare and deaths of the "disappeared" are hardly ever confirmed. Attempts to find the "disappeared" are further frustrated by the fact that access to military detention centres - where some of the "disappeared" may be held - is generally prohibited by the authorities, both to families of the "disappeared" and to independent human rights and humanitarian organizations.

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

- expressing deep concern about the "disappearance" of Juvénal Bagarirakose, who has not been seen since 9 January when he was reportedly led away by RPA soldiers from his home in Kibilira, Gisenyi;
- appealing for information as to his current whereabouts;
- appealing for his safety to be guaranteed, if he is still alive;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into his "disappearance" and for the progress and results of this investigation to be communicated to his family.

APPEALS TO:

M.Cheikh Abdul Karim HARELIMANA

Ministre de l'Intérieur, du Développement communal et de la Réintégration sociale

Ministère de l'Intérieur, du Développement communal de la Réintégration sociale
BP 446, Kigali, Rwanda

Telegrams: Ministre Intérieur, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: + 250 84373/83374/85714

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Général Major Paul KAGAME

Vice-Président de la République et Ministre de la Défense

BP 23, Kigali, Rwanda

Telegrams: Vice-President, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: + 250 72431/76969

Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président / Dear Vice-President

Capitaine MUHIRWA

Préfet de Gisenyi

Préfecture de Gisenyi

BP 173, Gisenyi, Rwanda

Telegrams: Préfet, Gisenyi, Rwanda

Salutation: Monsieur le Préfet / Dear Sir

COPIES TO:

Faustin NTEZILYAYO

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 160, Kigali, Rwanda

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 16 March 1998.