

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 47/16/96

UA 199/96 Fear for safety / Fear of ill-treatment /
Arbitrary arrest

8 August 1996

RWANDAAmiel Nkuriza, director of *Intego* and editor of *Le Partisan*
Appolos Hakizimana, journalist at *Intego*
Isaie Niyoyita, editor of *Intego*

Two journalists with the independent weekly newspaper *Intego* are in detention in the capital, Kigali, where Amnesty International fears they may be ill-treated. The organization is concerned that they appear to have been detained simply because of the peaceful expression of their opinions and because of their association with a newspaper perceived as critical of the government.

A third man, the editor of the paper, has gone into hiding amidst rumours that he, too, is being sought by the authorities.

Amiel Nkuriza, director of *Intego* and editor of *Le Partisan* (another independent newspaper), was abducted on 6 August 1996 by four men, one in military uniform and three in civilian clothes, in the centre of Kigali. He is reported to be held in the buildings of the information services of the Prime Minister.

Appolos Hakizimana was arrested on 30 July 1996, near the bus station in Kigali.

During a routine identity check, he presented a document stating that he worked for *Intego*. He was then insulted by the soldiers who accused him of being an *interahamwe* and accused his newspaper of being "pro-*interahamwe*" (the *interahamwe* are the militia allied to the previous government of Rwanda, responsible for the massacre of as many as one million people between April and July 1994). He was beaten by soldiers and taken to the Brigade at Muhima, where he is reportedly still held.

Isaie Niyoyita, editor of *Intego* and formerly editor of *Le Messenger* (see below), is reported to have gone into hiding following the arrests of his colleagues. His whereabouts are unknown.

The arrests of Amiel Nkuriza and Appolos Hakizimana occurred after the authorities seized the latest issue of *Intego* in July and prohibited publication of future issues until further notice. It is thought that these moves were prompted by an article in the seized issue which was critical of certain government authorities, in particular of a government campaign whose stated intention is to raise awareness among the population of security risks posed by armed opposition groups close to the former Rwandese army. The article apparently implied that these awareness-raising efforts in fact resembled a terror campaign. It referred to a warning reportedly issued by the Minister of Interior who had stated that if one person were killed in a particular locality, all the residents of that locality would answer for it.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several journalists in Rwanda who have been critical of the present government have been victims of human rights violations, including arrests, ill-treatment and attempted extrajudicial executions, as well as persistent harassment and intimidation. Along with other human rights activists, including members of local human rights organizations and judicial officials, journalists have been among the main targets of the government's attempts to repress criticism of its human rights record.

Journalists working for *Intego* have been particularly singled out for harassment because of what is perceived as the critical editorial line of the newspaper. Amiel Nkuriza has been arrested previously and was detained for one day, on 10 June 1996, after publishing an article about difficulties of cohabitation between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups in the southern part of Rwanda. Joseph Akimana, another journalist of *Intego*, was beaten up by soldiers in mid June 1996.

Intego is the successor of the independent newspaper *Le Messenger*. The editor of *Le Messenger*, Edouard Mutsinzi, almost lost his life in February 1995 after being attacked by a group of men, some of whom wore military insignia. Isaie Niyoyita replaced Edouard Mutsinzi as editor of *Le Messenger* before it was closed and forced to change its name following pressure from military authorities.

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

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Appolos Hakizimana and Amiel Nkuriza unless they are to be charged with recognizable criminal offences;
- seeking assurances that they have access to lawyers, doctors and family members, that they are not being ill-treated and that their physical safety will be guaranteed;
- seeking assurances that Isaie Niyoyita, the editor of *Intego*, will be protected from human rights violations;

if possible also:

- call for measures to ensure that other journalists will be protected from human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment, and will be allowed to continue their legitimate professional activities, without fear of harassment or intimidation;
- express concern at the apparent pattern of increasing repression of critics of the government's human rights record and call for this repression to be stopped, in the interests of transparency and respect for human rights.

APPEALS TO:

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

Faxes: 250 83714

Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Monsieur Jean-Pierre BIZIMANA
Ministre de l'Information et Porte-parole du gouvernement
Ministère de l'Information
BP 1532, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: 250 84607

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

Fax: 250 76185

Telegrams: Directeur, ORINFOR, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Monsieur le Directeur

Colonel Alexis KANYARENGWE
Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre de l'Intérieur
BP 446, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: 250 84373; 83374

Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Général Major Paul Kagame
Vice-Président de la République et Ministre de la Défense
Présidence de la République, BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
Fax: 250 72431; 76969

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 20 September 1996.