

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 59/003/2007

21 August 2007

UA 213/07 Incommunicado detention/fear of torture

UGANDA Titi Masudi (m), human rights activist ]  
Kahindo Kabaya (m) ] Congolese refugees  
Bikay Kusimuweri (m) ]  
Patrick Kabula (m)  
Ngunda Bawula (m)  
Fabrice Buregeya (m), aged 13  
At least 35 others

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Ugandan police arrested at least 41 foreign nationals, including those named above, in the capital, Kampala on 13 August. They were initially detained incommunicado at the headquarters of the police Rapid Response Unit in Kireka, Kampala, where previous detainees have been tortured. New reports suggest that on 17 or 18 August some of the detainees were transferred to Luzira, the central prison in Kampala. Amnesty International is concerned that those who have not yet been transferred from the police Rapid Response Unit in Kireka are being held incommunicado and are at risk of torture.

The detainees are predominantly immigrants, including 15 Congolese nationals, eight Tanzanians, three Rwandans, a Kenyan and a Somali. A number of this group have been granted refugee status by the Ugandan authorities. They are alleged to have duplicated hotel room keys and stolen from hotels. The arrests are apparently part of a government drive to clear the city of those it refers to as "undesirables" before it hosts the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting on 25-27 November.

When police learned that Amnesty International was following developments in this case, they brought an unknown number of the detainees before a court in Kampala on 17 August. This group had not been scheduled to appear in court so the judge ordered they return on 23 August and in the meantime that they should be held in prison.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the beginning of July 2007, Ugandan police have been arresting and harassing people supposedly engaged in criminal activities in Kampala, in an apparent attempt to clear the city of illegal immigrants, beggars, the mentally ill and other "undesirables" before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. Similar sweeps have involved torture of detainees. In mid-July 2007 police from the Rapid Response Unit (RSU) arrested a refugee in central Kampala and accused him of stealing cars. The refugee was detained at the RSU headquarters in Kireka where he was severely beaten. When the police learned that Amnesty International was following developments in this case they took the refugee to a court in the outskirts of Kampala and charged him with being "idle" and "disorderly". The judge dismissed the case.

The Rapid Response Unit, known until recently as the Violent Crimes Crack Unit, reports directly to the Inspector General of Police. It has been condemned by Amnesty International and the Uganda Human Rights Commission for numerous incidents of torture and prolonged and arbitrary detention of suspects.

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

- expressing concern that the police Rapid Response Unit may still be detaining some of the original group of 41 people incommunicado;

- urging the authorities to ensure that the detainees are not tortured or ill-treated;
- calling on the authorities to immediately bring them before a court, and either charge them with a recognisably criminal offence or release them.
- calling on the authorities to allow them immediate and regular access to legal counsel and to their families.

**APPEALS TO:**

President

Kaguta Yoweri Museveni  
President of the Republic  
Office of the President of Uganda  
Parliament Building  
PO Box 7168  
Kampala  
Uganda

**Fax:** +256 41 4235459  
+256 41 4344012

**Salutation:** Your Excellency

**COPIES TO:**

Attorney General and Minister of Justice

Hon. Kiddhu Makubuya  
Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs  
Parliament Avenue  
P.O.Box 7183  
Kampala  
Uganda

**Fax:** +256 41 4250829

Minister of Internal Affairs

Ruhakana Rugunda  
Jinja Rd  
PO Box 7191  
Kampala, Uganda

**Fax:** +256 414343088

Inspector General of Police  
Maj. Gen. Kale Kayihura  
Inspector General of Police  
Uganda Police Force

PO Box 7055  
Kampala, Uganda

**Fax:** +256 414 342985

and to diplomatic representatives of Uganda accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 October 2007.