

PUBLIC

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"Disappearance"/fear of ill-treatment

13 January 1999

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Christophe Bintu, human rights activist  
Bienvenu Kasole, human rights activist

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**About 25 Tutsi civilians**

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At least 25 members of the Tutsi ethnic group and two human rights activists have "disappeared" after their arrest by members of the *Forces armées congolaises* (FAC), Congolese Armed Forces, on 12 January. Amnesty International is extremely concerned for their safety.

Around 100 soldiers arrived at the Centre Bethanie, part of the Roman Catholic parish of Kinshasa-Gombe, in the early afternoon and attacked members of the community, including workers and nuns resident in the centre, smashed furniture and stole personal effects. The Tutsi families and others staying in the centre, including two human rights activists, were then loaded into a truck and taken away. Their whereabouts remain unknown.

The Tutsi had sought protection at the Centre Bethanie, fearing attacks by government supporters or security forces, who accuse them of colluding with armed opposition groups. The families' protection was being supervised by the Ministry for Human Rights in Congo and the Kinshasa office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Christophe Bintu and Bienvenu Kasole are members of a youth human rights network based in Bukavu, South Kivu province. They had recently fled persecution in eastern DRC, which is currently under the control of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy, and its allied forces of the governments of Rwanda and Uganda.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Since renewed conflict between government troops and the RCD broke out in eastern DRC in August 1998, many hundreds of Tutsi and others suspected of being allied to the RCD have been killed, tortured and arrested by the security forces and by vigilantes allied to the government in government-held territory. Hundreds of Tutsi families are currently being held in detention centres or have been seeking protection in religious centres or foreign embassies. Many others have fled the country.

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

- Asking to be informed of the current whereabouts of those arrested and taken from the *Centre Bethanie* on 12 January 1999;
- seeking assurances that all those taken from the Centre Bethanie are not ill-treated or harmed in any way.
- calling for the immediate, unconditional release of anyone held solely on account of their ethnic origin or beliefs;
- reminding the government of DRC of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Articles 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

**APPEALS TO:**

President Laurent-Désiré KABILA  
Président de la République, Présidence de la République  
Kinshasa-Ngaliema, Democratic Republic of Congo  
**Telegrams: Président, Kinshasa, DR Congo**

**Faxes: + 243 88 02120**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President**

Minister for the Interior, M. Gaëtan KAKUDJI

Ministre d'Etat, Ministre

de l'Intérieur

Ministère de l'Intérieur

Kinshasa-Gombe, Democratic Republic of Congo

République Démocratique du Congo

**Telexes: Ministre Kakudji, Kinshasa, DR Congo**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister for Human Rights, M. Léonard She Okitundu

Ministre des Droits de l'Homme, Kinshasa-Gombe, DR Congo

**Telegrams: Ministre Droits de l'Homme, Kinshasa, DR Congo**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister**

and to diplomatic representatives of Democratic Republic of Congo accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 February 1999.

***"Everyone has the right to life,  
liberty and security of person"***

Article

3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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