

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture/Prisoner of conscience 13 May 1998

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Immaculée Birhaheka (f)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Immaculée Birhaheka who is currently detained at the *Police d'intervention rapide* (PRI), Rapid Intervention Police, in Goma, North Kivu Province.

Immaculée Birhaheka was arrested on 8 May 1998 at her home in Goma. She was reportedly arrested because she had been in contact with an American citizen working for a development agency in the province. Immaculée Birhaheka is a leading member of a women's organisation, *Promotion et appui aux initiatives féminines* (PAIF), Promotion and Support for Women's Initiatives.

Members of the security forces frequently subject detainees to beating and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. It is feared that Immaculée Birhaheka may be ill-treated in detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of people have been arrested in various parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo, took power on 17 May 1997. Many of those arrested are leading members of non-governmental organizations, political opposition groups, journalists and human rights activists.

There is a clear pattern of abuses against members of non-governmental organisations in DRC and especially in Goma, North Kivu. For example, Kati Kati, leader of a human rights group in Goma, was detained for two weeks in April 1998. Gallican Ntirivamunda from the organisation *Grande Vision*, has reportedly been detained in Goma since late January 1998.

Torture is widespread in DRC.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Immaculée Birhaheka;
- calling upon the authorities to guarantee the safety of Immaculée Birhaheka;
- urging the authorities to release Immaculée Birhaheka, if she has not been charged with any recognizably criminal offence and is held only because of her meeting with a representative of a US American development agency;
- urging the government to stop harassment and arrests of members of other non-governmental organizations.

APPEALS TO:

Please note: fax tones can be very difficult to obtain

Son Excellence Laurent-Désiré KABILA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

Kinshasa-Ngaliema

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: President Kabila, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Faxes: + 243 88 02120

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Governor of North-Kivu

M. Léonard Gafundi KANYAMUHANGA
Gouverneur
Province du Nord-Kivu
Hôtel de ville
Goma
Democratic Republic of Congo
Telegrams: Governor, Nord-Kivu, Goma, DR Congo
Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur

Minister of State for Internal Affairs
Gaetan KAKUDJI
Ministre d'Etat à l'Intérieur
Hôtel du Conseil exécutif
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo
Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Le Phare (independent newspaper)

Faxes: + 1 212 3769270 (Note: this is a number in the United States from where faxes are transmitted to *Le Phare*)

to diplomatic representatives of the 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 June 1998.