

EXTRA 163/99

Fear for safety / Possible prisonersof consci

**DRC/UGANDA Kasereka Kihuvi - businessman and vice-president of Federation of small businesses in Butembo**

**Lumbu Lumbu - president of Civil Society groups in Butembo**

**Kanyonyu - vice president of Justice and Peace Commission**

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Amnesty International is very concerned for the safety of three prominent members of Congolese civil society after a witness reported that they had been severely tortured, by being whipped, in armed opposition detention.

Their arrest, by the Ugandan-backed faction of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la democratie* (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy (see background information), appears to be linked to a petition they and 11 others signed in September 1999 criticizing the RCD for the social and political crisis in North-Kivu province - a region which has experienced heightened ethnic tensions and armed conflict for several years. Some of the other signatories are now in hiding to avoid arrest.

Kasereka Kihuvi was arrested at his home in Butembo, North-Kivu province, on 13 November 1999. Kanyonyu was arrested as he was leaving church mass on 14 November and Lumbu Lumbu was arrested, also at his home, later that day. They were first taken to the *Direction Generale d'Intelligence* (Intelligence agency) but soon transferred to Beni, a town to the north of Butembo, near to the Ugandan border.

Sources in the region have indicated that the detainees could shortly be transferred to Kampala in neighbouring Uganda.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The armed conflict in the DRC began in August 1998 when the RCD, supported by Rwandese and Ugandan government forces, launched a rebellion against the new government of Laurent-Désiré Kabila. In May 1999, however, the RCD itself divided into two factions, both - RCD-Goma (allied to Rwanda) and RCD-Kisangani (allied to Uganda) - fighting against each other.

There is currently a *de facto* split between territory held by each of the RCD factions. Both factions and their allies, however, are also involved in fighting against several local armed groups known as the *Mayi-Mayi*.

The right to freedom of expression has been blatantly violated in both RCD- and government-controlled areas. Human rights activists and other members of civil society have faced harassment, arrest, "disappearance" and death throughout the country.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/E-mails/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern that Kasereka Kihuvi, Lumbu Lumbu and Kanyonyu have been tortured, including being severely whipped, in RCD detention in Beni;
- seeking reassurances that they will not be subjected to further torture or ill-treatment;
- stating that, if the reason they are being held is linked to a petition they signed in September 1999, in which they expressed their non-violent

political opinions, they you consider them to be prisoners of conscience and asking for their immediate release;

- urging the RCD and its allies, the Ugandan armed forces, to stop the use of torture in all instances and halt the arrest and intimidation of those who exercise their right to freedom of expression in the DRC.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic and Minister of Defence

Mr Yoweri K MUSEVENI

Office of the President

Parliament Buildings

PO Box 7168

Kampala

Uganda

**Telegrams: President Museveni, Kampala, Uganda**

**Faxes: + 256 41 235462 / 257986**

**Emails: museveni@starcom.co.ug**

**Salutation: Dear President**

Minister of State for Defence

Mr Stephen KAVUMA

Ministry of Defence, PO Box 7069

Kampala

Uganda

**Telegrams: Minister of State, Kampala, Uganda**

**Faxes: + 256 41 245911**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

President RCD

Professor Wamba dia Wamba

President RCD

**Faxes: + 256 41 22 37 08**

**E-mails: cmadishi@hotmail.com**

**Salutation: Dear President**

**COPIES TO:**

Uganda Human Rights Commission (government body)

PO Box 4929

Kampala

Uganda

Brigadier James Kazini

Army Chief of Staff

Armed Forces Headquarters

PO Box 3798

Kampala

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 15 December 1999.