

UA 410/97

"Disappearance"

24 December 1997

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) Antoine Nkurunziza, widower, and three children

Abimana Ngurukiye

Cyrille Botwamunyu and one child

Marthe Senwankuru (f), widow, and two children

Susanne Kagabo (f), widow

Claude Nsengiyumva and five children

Laurent Butoyi (f) and one child

Jean Habimana

Jean-Louis Habimana

Vincent Habimana

Maryse Habimana (f)

Marie Bizimanyara (f)

Zanardia Silikio (f), widow, and two

children

Jeanne Lirangiwe (f), widow, and one child

Ida Dushimirimana (f), widow

Dorothee Harerimana (f), widow, and two children

Alois Kaihura, university lecturer,

wife and two children

Amnesty International has just learned that the Rwandese refugees named above and members of their families were "disappeared" in November 1997 by members of the security forces in Kisangani, the capital of Oriental province (former Haut-Zaire) of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The 16 adults and 17 children had travelled to Kisangani from Mbandaka province and places such as Biaro, Ubundu and Bengamisa in Oriental province, where thousands of refugees have been killed by armed groups since late 1996. On 19 November the refugees, who included sick adults and severely malnourished children, were reportedly taken to Kisangani General Hospital. On the afternoon of 23 November, soldiers described as Tutsi reportedly forced the refugees on to two trucks and subjected them to severe beatings. Representatives of humanitarian organizations were chased away from the scene as the trucks left for an unknown destination. Local sources say that the soldiers said refugees would be returned to Rwanda but this remains unconfirmed.

On 17 November Alois Kaihura, a Rwandese Mathematics lecturer at Kisangani University, was arrested by soldiers believed by local sources to be members of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA). The soldiers threatened university students and lecturers who protested against Kaihura's arrest. Local government authorities reportedly refused to cooperate with his arrest. His wife and two children were also arrested and were reportedly seen at Kisangani airport later that day. It is thought by some in Kisangani that Alois Kaihura and members of his family may have been forcibly returned to Rwanda but no sources have been able to confirm this.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Members of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo, and their allies, particularly the RPA, have been involved in the forcible return to Rwanda of hundreds of thousands of Rwandese refugees. In the process, thousands

of refugees have been deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Many others have been "disappeared" or severely ill-treated.

The DRC Government has forced the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to withdraw from eastern DRC, thus leaving refugees without any protection.

Refugees are at risk of grave human rights violations in the DRC as well as on their return to Rwanda. Many of the refugees may be returned to northwestern Rwanda where thousands of unarmed civilians, many of them returnees, have been killed or "disappeared" in recent months. Northwestern Rwanda is largely inaccessible to humanitarian agencies and, as such, it is virtually impossible to monitor the safety of returnees.

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

- expressing concern at the reported "disappearance" of the refugees mentioned above (naming some), including Alois Kaihura, and urging the authorities to promptly reveal their whereabouts;
- requesting the authorities to establish and publicly reveal the identity of the soldiers who removed the refugees from Kisangani and to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice;
- urging the DRC authorities to ensure that these and other refugees, both in the DRC and Rwanda, are protected from human rights violations;
- calling on the authorities to publicly instruct members of the national or other security forces on Congolese territory to stop carrying out any "disappearance", unlawful arrest or forcible return of Rwandese or other refugees.

APPEALS TO:

President

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

Minister of the Interior

M. Mwenze KONGOLO
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Hôtel du Conseil exécutif
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Reconstruction and Urgent Works

M. Etienne MBAYA
Ministre de la Reconstruction
et des Travaux urgents
Ministère de la Reconstruction
BP 26
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Reconstruction, Kinshasa, DR Congo
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Governor of Oriental province
Monsieur Sitolo YAGI
Gouverneur
Province Orientale
Hôtel de ville
Kisangani
République Démocratique du Congo

Le Phare (independent newspaper)

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 6 February 1998.