
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 184/94

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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - BURUNDI (This is a short briefing paper following the return of the delegation from Burundi a couple of weeks ago, enclosed for your information.)

PLEASE NOTE: I now have the full text of our response to the Indian Government's comments on our memorandum arising from our research visit to India earlier this year. As it is very long I won't send it out in the news service but please contact me if you need it and I can e-mail or fax it to you. Thanks - Dina

PLEASE NOTE: Some of you have been asking for more information about the video footage on Haiti to be released on 24 August. The footage is being shot by a camera crew currently in the Dominican Republic. So far they have shots of refugees coming from Haiti into the Dominican Republic and where they are being held, and also shots of AI delegates interviewing the refugees. The camera crew were also going to try and get into Haiti to get footage of any human rights violations taking place there, but we do not know yet if they have been able to do that.

A letter from AI to the UN Secretary General on the possible UN mission to Haiti is being given by AI's UN office in New York to the press. There is no news service on this letter but if you get any queries you can contact Andrew Clapham at AIUN office in New York or the IS press office for further information.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

India - 16 August - SEE NEWS SERVICE 175/94

**** Haiti - 24 August**** - There is going to be a press conference in Miami at 1300 hrs Eastern Standard Time at which we will be launching a report on the situation in Haiti. A news release is being written also embargoed for that date to focusing on the refugee issue, the possible invasion and human rights violations taking place in Haiti. A tape of the video footage currently being shot will be distributed to media at the press conference. On the press conference panel will be Carlos Salinas from AIUSA, Ingrid Kircher who is the AI representative in the Dominican Republic and Judit Arenas the press officer from the Mexican section.

Brazil - 14 September - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL RELEASE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Kosovo - 19 September - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - first week of October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

France - 12 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

**** Thailand - 6 September**** - **PLEASE NOTE:** The report and news release on refugees at risk has been postponed until 6 Sept. so that we can mail the document out to sections in time for the release date. We should be able to send out the news release this week and we will send out the document in a press officers mailing next week. SEE NEWS SERVICE 176/94

Bhutan/Nepal - 25 August - See news service 168/94

Togo - 15 September - See news service 168/94

Indonesia - 28 September - LAUNCH OF CAMPAIGN

Turkey - 14 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

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BRIEFING PAPER FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL VISIT TO BURUNDI 25 JULY - 4 AUGUST 1994

Amnesty International representatives visiting Burundi over the past 10 days, nine months after the massacres which followed President Melchior Ndadaye's murder on 21 October 1993, found a country which is experiencing bitter internal divisions and further politically-motivated killings on a virtually daily basis.

The majority Hutu and minority Tutsi are for the most part now living in mutually hostile camps or urban areas, whereas the two communities formerly dwelled alongside each other in both rural areas and in towns. Among the country's elite, the divisions are essentially political, but among the rest of the population the splits are mainly ethnic, with the majority Hutu identified with the Front pour la démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU), Front for Democracy in Burundi, the political party elected to power in June 1993, and the Tutsi identified with opposition parties.

As the three representatives, from Benin, Chad and the United Kingdom, arrived in Burundi on 25 July, violence was flaring in the central Muramvya province, with Mbuye and Rutegama communes witnessing hundreds of killings. Both ethnic groups blame armed extremists belonging to the other ethnic group for starting the killings and, although some killings occurred in the context of fighting, it is clear that many were deliberate and arbitrary killings involving defenceless victims selected uniquely because of their ethnic origin. On the eve of the Amnesty International (AI) delegates' arrival the corpses of Hutu villagers killed in Rutegama commune were displayed on a main road in apparent protest against the lack of official action to end the killings.

Little is being done by the authorities themselves to establish who is responsible for the ongoing killings and to hold them to account, and negotiations for a political solution between politicians in the capital, Bujumbura, appear to be making only slow progress. Opposition political parties blame members of FRODEBU for condoning or supporting armed guerrillas who have carried out attacks on the Tutsi community or the Tutsi-controlled security forces. Last April, several hundred extrajudicial executions occurred as the security forces suppressed an armed rebellion against them in several northern suburbs of the capital.

In other cases killings have been carried out by Tutsi militia receiving support from soldiers. This was apparently the case on 23 July when Hutu villagers fleeing an attack were shot down in cold blood at Kibasi in Rutegama commune and survivors bayoneted to death.

In the absence of any functioning criminal justice system to investigate responsibility for the ongoing killings, AI is urging the deployment of more international observers alongside units of the security forces to monitor their activities. At present the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) observation mission, MIOB (Mission de l'OUA au Burundi / OAU Mission in Burundi) has some 65 personnel in the country, insufficient to cover all the areas affected by violence.

AI is also calling on the international community to provide observers to monitor the progress and ensure the independence and impartiality of investigations into political killings, both those relating to late 1993 (the murder of President Ndadaye and other senior officials and the ensuing massacres of an estimated 50,000 people) and the thousands which have occurred in 1994.

AI's representatives had first hand experience of the refusal of the authorities to pursue investigations for political reasons, following the discovery in late July of a mass grave in Bugabira commune in the northeast Kirundo province. The mass grave was visited on 25 July by representatives of another human rights organisation, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), who found circumstantial evidence that the shallow grave might contain the bodies of Rwandese asylum-seekers who "disappeared" from a nearby refugee reception centre at Kiri on 11 June, when eye-witnesses reported seeing more than 100 asylum-seekers hacked to death. Despite clearance at ministerial level, the local civil, judicial and military authorities refused to proceed with a site investigation to establish the number of the dead and obtain forensic evidence about the circumstances of their deaths as scheduled on 1 August, claiming that any exhumation of the grave might "disturb public order" ("perturber l'ordre public") in the province.

AI's representatives had noted an increase in tension in the province following the proposal to examine the mass grave, with members of the security forces particularly opposed to it. However, as Burundi troops were alleged to have been involved in the massacre, it was inappropriate that the investigation should be blocked.

An AI representative with experience of forensic investigations of graves containing the remains of victims of political killings, Chadian lawyer and former Commission of Inquiry chairman, Mahamat Hassan Abakar, visited the site of the mass grave on 1 August, along with representatives of Physicians for Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the MIOB and other international observers, along with the local Procurator and other military and government officials, to find that the grave had been tampered with and burnt in the preceding days.

Well over one hundred Rwandese asylum-seekers are believed to have been killed on the evening of 11 June after arriving at Kiri, situated near Burundi's border with Rwanda at the western end of Lake Cohoha (Cyohoha). According to eye-witnesses, men and boys among the new arrivals were told by armed men in military uniforms (who with only one exception were identified as being of Burundi origin rather than Rwandese) to get into trucks and were taken to nearby Mamfu where they were killed in successive groups by Tutsi civilians armed with machetes and axes. Several shallow graves were found nearby the next day, as well as the body of one slain asylum-seeker, but the whereabouts of the rest of the bodies was unknown.

During July 1994 the UNHCR reported on several other incidents involving Rwandese asylum-seekers being killed after crossing into Burundi: 31 "disappeared" in Kayanza province on 13 July. Burundi soldiers and others in Burundi's Tutsi community have voiced concern that the asylum-seekers include members of Rwanda's infamous interahamwe death squads, responsible for mass killings of Tutsi. However, no evidence is available to link any of the asylum-seekers with the mass killings in Rwanda; indeed, many of those arriving in Kiri on 11 June are reported to have come from an area of Rwanda in which relatively few killings of Tutsi had occurred.

In the absence of forensic investigations or the collection of other evidence, the authorities responsible for criminal investigations in Burundi depend almost exclusively on complaints or "denunciations" by relatives of the victims of political killings to trigger official investigations and identify suspects. As the Tutsi community is generally more literate, as well as dominating the judiciary and criminal investigation services, far more investigations appear to have been opened into killings of Tutsi victims of last year's massacres rather than Hutu: almost all of the approximately 300 suspects detained in connection with the massacres so far have been Hutu. While it is clear that the wave of massacres which occurred immediately after President Ndadaye's murder were indeed of Tutsi victims by Hutu killers, it has also been well established that both soldiers and vigilantes supporting opposition parties, predominantly Tutsi, were also responsible subsequently for unlawful killings on a massive scale. A total of 15 soldiers are under arrest in connection with the murder of President Ndadaye and others.

On account of the failure of the criminal justice system to investigate political killings adequately - whether of Tutsi or Hutu victims, and whether from Burundi itself or Rwanda - AI is urging the Burundi authorities to set up a commission of inquiry to investigate incidents of political violence and establish the circumstances in which killings have occurred - in particular whether defenceless victims have been deliberately put to death. This commission should be asked to investigate the possibly direct or indirect involvement in summary executions or other deliberate and arbitrary killings of both units of the armed forces and other political leaders represented in the government. It should also be asked to recommend ways of preventing killings and limiting loss of life when violent incidents occur. As the bitter divisions in Burundi society will inevitably lead to accusations of bias, it is important that such a commission include observers or representatives of the international community.

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