

**EXTERNAL**

**AI Index: ACT 33/11/94  
Distr:SC/CC/CO**

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# **@BURUNDI WEEK 16-23 MAY 1994**

## **Cases for appeals**

## Léonce HANTAKIRUTIMANA

*"...The soldiers attacked me with machetes and knives. They hit me with machetes and knives and as I lifted my arms above my head to protect myself, my right hand was cut off by a strike of the machete...As my hand was cut off I fainted for an instance. My assailants must have thought I had just died because they left me alone."*

At 1pm on 5 December 1993, Léonce Hantakirutimana, a twenty-seven year old technician in an agricultural research institute was passed by several men on motorbikes in a street near Ngozi town centre. Moments later, the men returned with two other men and stopped Léonce. Léonce knew all the men. Two of them were local civilians, the other four were soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, who were based at the local military camp. The soldiers attacked Léonce. When Léonce had regained consciousness, he got up and started to run for his life. One of his assailants, realizing he was not dead, began to chase him. Léonce saw a military jeep and ran towards it, but the soldiers in uniform inside the jeep ignored him and made no attempts to stop the attack. At that point a local policeman arrived, armed with a rifle, causing the attackers and the jeep to leave. The policeman took Léonce to the hospital in Ngozi, but he was transferred the same evening to hospital in Bujumbura for his safety. Léonce still lives in hiding in Bujumbura. He believes that if he returns to Ngozi he will be killed.

On 22 October (the day after the attempted coup) Léonce fled to neighbouring Rwanda. A Hutu, he was a long-standing member of the *Front pour la démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU), Front for democracy in Burundi, the political party of President Ndadaye, murdered in the attempted coup. He was one of hundreds of thousands of Burundi nationals who left the country in fear of massacres. Having joined FRODEBU before it was declared legal in 1992, he was probably considered by many Tutsi in his local area as being a Hutu radical. He returned to his home town of Ngozi on 3 December 1993, believing that the violence and insecurity had died down. Two days later the attack occurred. Violence in Burundi continues months after the initial wave of massacres.

## **Etienne NTAHONDEREYE**

*"On Saturday 23 October at about 10 in the morning, eight soldiers arrived at our place. They called for my husband, Etienne Ntahondereye. As he came out, the soldiers took him and then went to our neighbour's house. There they called for my neighbour, Leon Philbert. He came as well. When my neighbour came, the soldiers pointed their guns and shot. After shooting they bayoneted them to death. I've seen it all, I was in front of my house."*

Vénérende Bucumi was left a widow at the age of 26. She has six children and is expecting another child in July. After the soldiers had killed her husband, a 38 year-old farmer, they forced her to sit on his dead body while they entered her house and took all the money and valuables they could find. They then ordered her to identify her neighbour's valuables and set the house on fire. At that point some other villagers approached and the soldiers opened fire once again. Vénérende saw twelve more villagers killed, before the soldiers eventually left.

This incident took place in the commune of Tangara in northern Burundi's Ngozi province two days after the attempted coup in Bujumbura. At least 17 people were believed to have been killed there by members of the armed forces on that day. The victims appeared to have been arbitrarily targeted simply because they belonged to the Hutu ethnic group, the same as the slaughtered President Ndadaye. However, one of the victims was a Tutsi. Locals believe this was a "mistake."

## Richard NTAHOMVUKIYE

*"On Friday 29 October at around two in the afternoon, my son was killed. We were still at the displaced person's camp in Gashikanwa. About 15 soldiers came and ordered the Tutsi's in the camp to collect the Frodebistes. The Tutsi took 11 Hutu, including my son Richard Ntahomvukiye, and other men I knew. The soldiers then commanded the Tutsi to kill them, which they did with machetes and clubs while the soldiers stood by to encourage them. When all 11 were dead they took the bodies behind a nearby building, where they were laid down and covered with sand and grass. The dogs have eaten the bodies in two days."*

Richard Ntahomvukiye had fled with his family for protection to a displaced people's camp in Gashikanwa after they had seen a group of Hutus kill three Tutsi. After being in the camp only a few hours, soldiers arrived and took five men including his father Paul Bavakure, apparently because he was a local representative of the FRODEBU party. Paul Bavakure and two others were stabbed to death with bayonets in a eucalyptus grove about 100 yards from the camp. The other two men managed to escape. The three bodies were allegedly left on the roadside for three days because the soldiers prevented them from being buried.

Left in the camp with the rest of the family was Paul's widow and Richard's mother, 55 year-old Sylvie Ntungiyabani. She eventually returned home to Kivumbu hill in Gashikanwa zone, Ngozi province in November with her remaining family. When they got home, they discovered all the family's possessions had been stolen.

Paul and Sylvie had been married in 1962. She is now 50 years old (Paul was 55 years old). Their nine children, including Richard who was 24 when he died, helped on the farm that Paul ran. Sylvie will try to carry on the farm with the older children.

## Joseph MIBURO

*"On 21 October at eight in the morning about 200 Hutu came down to the commercial centre...Nothing happened at that time, but the same day they started to cut down trees to block the roads.*

*...On the 22nd at around six in the evening, I was sitting with my family outside our shop when a group of Hutu walked towards us. We didn't expect anything to happen because all had been quiet before. But suddenly they started to attack us."*

Issa Ndururutse saw his father Joseph Miburo, as well as his brother and half-brother killed with machetes by the Hutu mob. Somehow he managed to escape with the women of the family, two of his father's wives and his own wife, Celine. They fled to local police headquarters where they stayed for a few days, before being moved to a displaced person's camp. In mid-November, the family went back home.

Joseph Miburo a 75 year-old agricultural worker, was a Tutsi Muslim with three wives, one of whom (Issa's mother Sylvie Minani) was a Hutu. Joseph's two sons who died with him were 25 year-old Asmane and 29 year-old Saïd. Joseph's sons owned three shops between them in Butihinda in Muyinga province in northern Burundi, which is where the killings took place. Since the three shops they owned have all been pillaged, the remaining family members have had to rely on friendly neighbours to help them survive.

## Zabulon NKUNZIMANA

Zabulon Nkunuzimana an 18-year old man from Bururi province of Burundi was arrested on the night of 6 March by soldiers in the Kamenge district of Bujumbura, the capital, and taken with a group of about fifty other Hutus, including women and children, to a place where the soldiers then opened fire on the crowd. Zabulon was hit by a bullet in the shoulder and collapsed on the ground, he became covered as other people were shot dead and fell on him. The soldiers then loaded the bodies onto army trucks and drove them to the banks of the Rusizi river. Zabulon heard one of the soldiers ask another if they were going to check whether or not there were any survivors on board, to which the other replied that any survivors would be eaten by crocodiles anyway. Fortunately for Zabulon, he was thrown onto the muddy banks of the river where he managed to clamber out and escape. He walked all night long until he reached a village, where someone took him to the Red Cross in Bujumbura. From there he was transferred to hospital. Zabulon was later given shelter at the Hotel Club of Lake Tanganika, where he received medical treatment. It was alleged that two soldiers were out looking for him whilst he was in hospital, to attempt to stop his testifying.

On the night of 6 March 1994, over 200 Hutu's were killed by members of the Burundi armed forces acting on government orders to "disarm extremist Hutu elements" in the Hutu-dominated district of Kamenge. However, the army reportedly carried out many extrajudicial executions using firearms and bayonets. Bodies of men, women and children were thrown in the Rusizi river, others were left on the side of the road. No arrests were known to have been carried out in the course of the operation, and only two weeks later the army re-entered the district again under government orders.

## **Tharcisse BIGIRMANA**

Tharcisse Bigirmana, aged 16, was one of around 120 Tutsi adults and children who were rounded up on 22 October 1993 on Taba hill in Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province by a group of Hutu, including a local administrative official, armed with spears, knives and machetes.

Tharcisse was forced with the others to go first to Masazi hill where they were held for some time outside a local bar. The bar which belonged to a Tutsi had already been destroyed. Tutsi from Masazi hill were also taken, and the group now numbering about 180, were then taken to Nyange hill where they were made to lie on the ground and severely beaten. The next morning the local official returned with more Hutu and gave the order for the Tutsi to be killed.

Tharcisse, who lost 10 members of his family in the massacre, was one of two survivors. He survived despite severe neck wounds inflicted by machetes to both sides of the neck. He and the other survivor managed to escape after being left for dead and initially hid with a Tutsi family on Nyange hill. When this house was attacked by a group of Hutu that night, the boys hid in a banana grove behind the house. The next day they were found by some Tutsi who helped them to a displaced person's camp at Ruyigi, Ruyigi province, from where they were taken to hospital for treatment.

In early February 1994, Tharcisse returned on foot to his home. He found his family's house, possessions and land had been taken over by members of the local Hutu community. He was reportedly told that he could return to live on the hill provided he made no attempt either to regain any of his family's property or to bring the killers to justice. He walked back to the camp some 10 to 15 kilometres away. He does not know what to do.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Appeal to your own government to fulfil their international obligation to help the people of Burundi.
2. Alert others in your country to the human rights crisis in Burundi and ask them to join in this campaign.
3. Write to the heads of the army and *gendarmérie* in Burundi appealing to them to take immediate measures to stop the killings:

Chef de l'Etat-major général des forces armées  
Ministère de la Défense nationale  
Bujumbura  
Burundi

Chef de l'Etat-major général de la gendarmerie  
Ministère de la Défense nationale  
Bujumbura  
Burundi

4. Write to the President of Burundi appealing to him to end the impunity which protects the army and urging him to set up an independent and impartial inquiry into the killings:

Son Excellence le Président  
Présidence de la République  
BP 1870  
Bujumbura  
Burundi