

PUBLIC

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Intimidation / fear for safety

BURUNDI

Stany Mbazumutima (m), human rights defender

A senior police officer has allegedly made three threatening phone calls to human rights defender Stany Mbazumutima, after he wrote about Rwandan military spies operating in a refugee camp for people who have fled Rwanda in the north of the country. Amnesty International believes he is in danger.

Stany Mbazumutima is a human rights monitor for the Burundian human rights organisation Ligue ITEKA, investigating and reporting human rights violations in Ngozi province. An estimated 19,000 Rwandan asylum-seekers are living in camps in the region, mainly in the Musasa and Songore transit camps in Ngozi. On 4 April Stany Mbazumutima published an article on the Ligue ITEKA website describing how Rwandan spies had been operating in the Musasa camp, disguised as refugees, obtaining information for the Rwandan government. The reasons for retrieving the information remain unclear.

The Regional Commissioner for the State Security Police (*Commissaire régional de la police de sécurité intérieure*) allegedly called him on 4 and 5 April, telling him that he must publicly reject the contents of the article. On 6 April the Regional Commissioner allegedly phoned a third time, telling him: "Your work is sowing the seeds of discord between Rwanda and Burundi. If you do not comply with orders, then you will face retribution. Your work as a human rights defender will not protect you."

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The work of Ligue ITEKA is vital to the promotion and protection of human rights in Burundi. The organisation's research contributes hugely to the national and international communities' understanding of the human rights situation on the ground, especially in more isolated rural areas.

The influx of Rwandan refugees, which started in April 2005, remains a cause of difficulty between the governments of Rwanda and Burundi. During April and May 2005 the Burundian government, in breach of their regional and international obligations, forcibly returned approximately 8,000 Rwandan asylum-seekers, in collaboration with the Rwandan government.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:

- expressing grave concern for the safety of Stany Mbazumutima, a human rights monitor for Ligue ITEKA, who was allegedly threatened on 6 April by the Regional Commissioner for the State Security Police;
- urging the authorities to take immediate measures to protect him;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation into the threats, with the results made public and the perpetrator brought to justice;
- reminding the authorities that they are obliged to ensure that human rights defenders are able to carry out their activities without any restrictions or fear of reprisals, in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Individuals, Groups and Institutions to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice
Madame Clotilde Niragira

Ministère de la Justice
BP 1880
Bujumbura
Burundi

Fax: +257 21 86 10
Salutation: Madame la Ministre

Minister for Constitutional Reform, Human Rights and Parliamentary Relations

Madame Françoise Ngendahayo
Ministère de Réformes Constitutionnelles, Droits Humains et Relations avec le Parlement
BP 6518
Bujumbura
Burundi

Fax: +257 21 82 01
Salutation: Madame la Ministre

Minister of the Interior and Public Security

Monsieur Evariste Ndayishimiye
Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique
BP 1910
Bujumbura
Burundi

Fax: +257 24 53 51
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Regional Commission for Police State Security

Commissariat regional de la police de sécurité intérieure
Ngozi
Burundi

Fax: +257 30 22 49

and to diplomatic representatives of Burundi accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 May 2006.