

0001 hrs gmt Thursday 28 May 1992

**EBURUNDI**

**@TOLL OF EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS REACHES AT LEAST 1,000.**

**INQUIRIES INTO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS URGED**

At least 1,000 members of the Hutu ethnic group were extrajudicially executed by soldiers following rebel attacks in Burundi late last year -- some killed when they were bayoneted in the face or when grenades were hurled into their homes, Amnesty International said today.

In releasing its report on the massacres and other killings, the human rights organization urged the government to hold public inquiries into the extrajudicial executions and "break its 25-year habit" of not punishing police and army killings. Similar killings took place in 1965, 1969, 1972, and 1988.

"Time after time soldiers and gendarmes in Burundi have got away with such slayings," Amnesty International said. "Unless the government establishes the truth and brings the killers to justice the bloodshed will no doubt happen again."

The organization also called on the government to take steps now to stop torture, which is endemic in the country, and to establish what has happened to several dozen people who "disappeared" following their arrest in late 1991, including the journalist Renovat Ndikuma.

The government has stated that some 500 people died in violence in November and December 1991, but has rejected reports that extrajudicial executions took place.

An Amnesty International investigation team that visited Burundi earlier this year received dozens of eyewitness reports that directly contradict the government's version of events. The organization has highlighted three sets of killings in particular where it found ample evidence for the government to hold a public inquiry.

- 11 workers at a Roman Catholic seminary in the capital were killed by soldiers, who claimed they had been used as a "human shield" by insurgents. Eye-witnesses say most of the workers were ordered out of their home, forced to kneel and then shot dead. One was apparently bayoneted to death as two priests tried to shelter him.

- Survivors held at the end of 1991 at Bubanza gendarmerie headquarters and detention centre have described how virtually every prisoner was tortured, how some were left to die from starvation, and how dozens of others were killed, some being clubbed to death after being gagged and others bayoneted through the mouth. The authorities have denied these killings.

- Six members of one household, including an eight-month-old baby, were killed when soldiers apparently hurled a grenade into the house, after having searched it and failed to find the head of the household whom they were looking for. Military authorities have suggested that they were killed in cross fire.

"A common excuse for not investigating human rights violations is the lack of evidence," Amnesty International said. "These eye-witness accounts now give the government a good starting point for launching an inquiry."

The human rights crisis at the end of 1991 took place after insurgents carried out a series of attacks on military and civilian targets in the capital and other provinces in the northwest of the country in some cases killing unarmed civilians because of their ethnic

origin. The insurgents were mostly members of the country's majority Hutu ethnic groups, while the armed forces are drawn mainly from the minority, but dominant, Tutsi.

Soon after the attacks had started government troops launched counter-insurgency operations, carrying out reprisal attacks against Hutu who were suspected, mostly without evidence, of supporting or sympathizing with the insurgents.

Many Hutu were extrajudicially executed when soldiers used guns and bayonets to kill their victims. Large numbers were also arrested and then beaten or injured with bayonets, resulting in dozens of deaths. By May this year, some 500 people were still in custody, mostly held without charge or trial. No one has yet been brought to trial.

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