

UA 56/01

Fear of t**BURUNDI Paul Nsanzurwimo, civil servant**

Paul Nsanzurwimo, a civil servant, is being held at a gendarmerie special investigation unit where detainees are routinely tortured or ill-treated. Amnesty International is concerned for his safety.

Paul Nsanzurwimo was arrested on 9 March on suspicion of collaborating with an armed opposition group, the *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL), National Liberation Forces. He is being held at the *Brigade spéciale de recherche* (BSR) in the capital, Bujumbura.

His arrest followed a sustained FNL attack on Bujumbura, during which the opposition group occupied parts of northern Bujumbura, in particular the Kinama district, for several days. While most people in Kinama fled to neighbouring districts of Bujumbura, thousands of others, including Paul Nsanzurwimo, fled out of the city.

Paul Nsanzurwimo was absent for several days during the fighting, and was arrested after he returned to work at the Ministry of Social Action. His absence from work, coupled with his flight out of Bujumbura, appear to be the basis for the accusation that he was collaborating with the FNL. Paul Nsanzurwimo was previously detained for three years on charges of collaborating with a different armed opposition group. He was subsequently acquitted.

Torture and ill-treatment is rife in Burundi, particularly in gendarmerie or military detention centres, including the BSR. People accused of political offences such as collaborating with armed opposition groups are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The FNL launched a sustained assault on Bujumbura on 24 February and occupied parts of the city for several days before retreating. Around 30,000 people were reportedly displaced during the fighting, the most serious to take place in the capital for five years in the ongoing civil war. The number of civilians or soldiers killed during the fighting is not known. The authorities have now buried most of the bodies in a mass grave in Ruziba.

Scores of people fleeing Kinama were detained while the security forces checked their identities in an attempt to apprehend possible FNL members. Many were held in a police compound known as SOBECOV, where there are no cells and the detainees are held in the open. At least five people are still being held there in conditions which Amnesty International considers amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Few human rights abuses, either by the FNL or government armed forces, both of which have poor human rights records, were reported during the attack. However, military operations by the Tutsi-dominated security forces in response to the activities of Hutu-dominated armed opposition groups have in the past been marked by serious human rights abuses against unarmed Hutu civilians, who may be arbitrarily suspected by the military of having collaborated with the armed opposition, and be subjected to arbitrary arrest, torture and "disappear" while in custody, or be extrajudicially executed. Unoccupied houses

in the Kinama area have reportedly been looted, some apparently with the complicity or active participation of the armed forces. The security forces have also forced some people to return to their homes in Kinama against their wishes. Those who refused were apparently beaten. Others, who have been too frightened to return, are left without any form of shelter.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French or your own language (please check that postal services are operating to Burundi from your country):

- calling on the authorities to guarantee that Paul Nsanzurwimo will not be ill-treated or tortured in custody;
- urging that he is released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- expressing concern at the conditions in which detainees at the SOBECOV compound are being held, asking that they are moved to a recognized place of detention;
- urging the authorities to ensure that all law enforcement agencies respect arrest and detention procedures, including the right of detainees to have access to their lawyers, families and necessary medical assistance;
- asking the authorities to take immediate action against any member of the security forces suspected of human rights abuses.

APPEALS TO (Please note, it can be difficult to get through on the numbers given below, and you may be told by the operator that they are temporarily out of order. Please be patient and keep trying):

Head of State

Son Excellence

Major Pierre BUYOYA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

BP 1870 Bujumbura

Burundi

Telegrams: President, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Minister of Internal Affairs and Public Security

Col. Ascension TWAGIRAMUNGU

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique

Ministère de l'Intérieur

Bujumbura

Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 19 82

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

State Public Prosecutor

Monsieur Gérard NGENDABANKA

Procureur Général de la République

Bujumbura

Burundi

Telegrams: Procureur general, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: + 257 24 15 03

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur général de la République / Dear State Public Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, Institutional Reform and Relations with the National Assembly

Eugène NINDORERA

Ministre des droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes institutionnelles, et des relations avec l'Assemblée nationale, Ministère des droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes institutionnelles, et des relations avec l'Assemblée nationale

Bujumbura

Burundi

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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 April 2001.