

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 16/22/97

EXTRA 90/97

Fear of further torture and ill-treatment

25 June 1997

BURUNDI Reverend Josias NDUWIMANA

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the Reverend Josias Nduwimana, a member of the *Eglise évangélique des amis du Burundi*, a Quaker church in Burundi, who was arrested on 19 June 1997 in Kibimba church, Kibimba, Gitega province. Following his arrest he is reported to have been ill-treated at a nearby military camp before being transferred to Muramvya prison in neighbouring Muramvya province. He has not been charged with a criminal offence and the motive behind the arrest is not clear.

Torture and ill-treatment of detainees is routine in Burundi and Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of "disappearance" or death in custody. Detainees are especially vulnerable to such abuses in cases such as these when legal procedures are not followed and safeguards protecting detainees, such as making the place of detention known, are not implemented or adhered to.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although Major Pierre Buyoya promised to end human rights violations when he came to power after a coup d'état in July 1996, Amnesty International has documented thousands of cases of extrajudicial execution, "disappearance", arbitrary arrest and torture since that date. Critics and opponents of the government have also been harassed, arrested and tortured in a pattern of attacks on political opponents, aiming to eliminate effective political opposition. More than 100, and possibly as many as 150 arrests have taken place during the last few weeks in Bujumbura. Those arrested are predominantly young men, mostly members of the Hutu ethnic group. None are known to have been charged and at least two men have died as a result of torture and ill-treatment.

More than 6,500 civilians, mostly Hutu, including at least 2,600 accused of involvement in massacres in Burundi, are held in various prisons and detention centres around the country. The majority are held without charge or trial. Torture by members of the security forces is reported to be carried out systematically, and with impunity. Deaths in custody are often reported. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees is routine in Burundi and Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of "disappearance", torture or death in custody in detention.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes in French or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of the Reverend Josias Nduwimana who is being held at Muramvya prison, Muramvya province following reports that he was ill-treated after his arrest;
- calling on the authorities to take urgent steps to guarantee his physical safety and seeking assurances that he will be provided with immediate and adequate medical care, and allowed full access to his family, legal counsel and representatives of humanitarian organisations;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for his arrest and calling for Reverend Nduwimana to be released if he is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence in accordance with proper legal procedures;
- urging that the allegations of ill-treatment be immediately investigated and, if confirmed, that those responsible be brought to justice in accordance with international standards for fair trial.

NOTE: no mail is getting through to Burundi at present.

APPEALS TO:

President

Major Pierre BUYOYA,
Président de la République,
Présidence de la République
Telegrams: President, Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: 257 22 7490
Salutation: Monsieur le Président

Minister for Internal Affairs and Public Security

Lt-Col. Epitace BAYAGANAKANDI
Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique
Ministère de l'Intérieur
Telegram: Ministre Interieur, Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: 257 21 61 02 (via Minister for Human Rights. Ask for your fax to be forwarded to Minister of Internal Affairs))
Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre

Minister of Defence

Lieutenant-Col. Firmin SINZOYIHEBA
Ministre de la Défense Nationale
Ministère de la Défense
Fax: 257 22 56 86
Telegrams: Ministre Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Minister for Human Rights, Social and Womens Affairs

Madame Christine RUHAZA
Ministre des Droits de la Personne humaine, de l'Action sociale et de la
Promotion de la femme
Fax: 257 21 61 02
Telegrams: Ministre Ruhaza, Bujumbura, Burundi
Salutation: Madame le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Terence SINUNGURUZA
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
Fax: +257 21 61 02 (via Ministry for Human Rights)

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 25 July 1997.