

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/possible prisoner of conscience/  
detention without charge

RWANDA

**Augustin Butorano (m), (also known as Nkuba), Vice-President of *Itara*  
political youth group  
Other members of *Itara***

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Augustin Butorano, a member of a non-violent political youth group called *Itara*, who was detained by police on 26 May. He may be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of his political beliefs. Other members of *Itara* have reportedly also been detained.

On 26 May, a referendum was held on a new national constitution, which the Rwandese people voted to accept. On the same day, Augustin Butorano, from the Cyahafi neighborhood in the capital Kigali, was detained by police. He is accused of "*atteinte au bon déroulement des élections*", ("threatening the smooth administration of the referendum"), but he has not been charged with any offence. According to reports, other members of *Itara* have been detained and are facing similar unsubstantiated accusations, which Amnesty International fears are politically motivated. It is unclear whether Augustin Butorano actually participated in campaigning activities.

Augustin Butorano is being detained in Muhima police station in Kigali. He has reportedly been interrogated by police and asked to produce the names of other members of *Itara*. According to reports, he may soon be transferred to the Kigali Central Prison. Human rights monitors were refused access to Augustin Butorano, and there are fears for his safety. These fears are heightened by a number of recent reports of "disappearances" (including those of Damien Musayidizi and Dr. Leonard Hitimana in April 2003) and beatings in police detention. Individuals accused of being part of political opposition parties have sometimes been brutally tortured.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Rwanda is reaching the end of its nine-year transitional government. A popular referendum on the draft constitution was held on May 26, and presidential and parliamentary elections are scheduled for August and September respectively. Tensions have been rising in the run-up to the elections, and political activists and human rights activists have come under increasing pressure from the Rwandese government, dominated by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

*Itara* is considered as the youth wing of the main opposition party, *Mouvement Démocratique Républicain*, (MDR), Democratic Republican Movement. The Rwandese government dissolved the MDR in the run-up to the elections. A recent parliamentary report denounced the MDR as a divisive party that foments violence, and described *Itara* as an MDR party militia, comparable to the *Interahamwe* militia that was responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The Rwandese President, Major General Paul Kagame, promised that punitive action would be taken against *Itara* and those funding the group. The Rwandese government announced on 27 May that it is taking 27 MDR members to court.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Augustin Butorano, who is in police custody in Kigali;
- expressing concern at reports that other members of *Itara* have also been detained by police;

- calling for the immediate release of Augustin Butorano and other *Itara members* as prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs;
- seeking clarification of the charges against Augustin Butorano and calling for assurances that he will be treated humanely in detention.
- asking the government of Rwanda to cease the harassment of Itara and MDC members and to permit political parties to participate fully in the country's transition process.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Rwanda

President Paul Kagame

P.O. Box 15

Kigali, RWANDA

**Fax:** +250 84769/84390

**e-mail:** presirep@rwanda1.com

**Salutation:** Dear President / Monsieur le Président de la République

Minister of Local Government, Information and Social Affairs

Christophe Bazivamo

Minister of Local Government, Information and Social Affairs

Ministry of Local Government, Information and Social Affairs

Kigali, RWANDA

**Fax:** + 250 82228

**Salutation:** Dear Minister / Monsieur le Ministre

**COPIES TO:**

Commander of National Police Force

Colonel Frank Mugambage

Commander

National Police Force

Kigali, RWANDA

**Fax:** + 250 86602

**Salutation:** Dear Commander / Monsieur le Commandant

President of National Human Rights Commission

Kayitesi Zainabu

President

National Human Rights Commission

P.O. Box 269

Kigali, RWANDA

**Fax:** +250 510393

**Email:** cndh@rwanda1.com

**Salutation:** Dear President / Madame la Présidente

and to diplomatic representatives of Rwanda accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 July 2003.