

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 47/16/95

UA 195/95

Fear of further political killings

9 August 1995

RWANDA Placide KOLONI, administrator of Ruhango sub-prefecture

Immaculée NYIRAMBIBI, wife of Placide Koloni

Marie-Claire UMUTONIWASE, daughter of Placide Koloni

Caline UWAMAHORO, daughter of Placide Koloni

Séraphine MUREKATETE, Placide Koloni's servant

Pie NTAHOBALI, Roman Catholic priest

Oreste HABINSHUTI, former administrator of Gikongoro sub-prefecture

Recent killings, apparently politically-motivated, have heightened fears for the safety of other individuals who may be similarly targeted. People released from prison because there is insufficient evidence of their involvement in the 1994 massacres are believed to be particularly at risk.

On 27 July 1995, Placide Koloni, together with his wife Immaculée Nyirambibi, his daughters Marie-Claire Umutoniwase and Caline Uwamahoro (both under 16 years old) and his servant, Séraphine Murekatete, were killed at their home by unidentified attackers. The attackers killed them with weapons including knives and clubs, then set their house on fire, with the five bodies inside.

Soldiers of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) were reportedly seen very near the house.

Placide Koloni was the administrator (*sous-préfet*) of Ruhango sub-prefecture in the prefecture of Gitarama. He had held the same post under the previous government which dismissed him apparently because he tried to protect people from massacres in his sub-prefecture. He was reinstated by the current government in August 1994. On 14 February 1995, he was arbitrarily arrested and accused of taking part in the 1994 massacres. He was imprisoned in Gitarama Prison, where the conditions resulting from overcrowding are notoriously harsh.

On 24 July, he was released on the recommendation of a screening committee known as *Commission de triage*. Screening committees have been set up to study the cases of over 40,000 prisoners held without trial and to release those against whom there is insufficient evidence. He was killed three days later.

Amnesty International is concerned that prisoners such as Placide Koloni who are released because of insufficient evidence against them become obvious targets for reprisals as soon as they are released. The decision to release him and three others from Gitarama prison on 24 July prompted protests against the release of those branded as perpetrators of genocide (*génocidaires*). One of those released, Wenceslas Sekaziga, a former judge at canton level in the commune of Musambira, was subsequently rearrested and re-imprisoned because of these protests.

The government has announced it will launch an inquiry into the killing of Placide Koloni and his family. Details on the progress of this inquiry are not available. The government has announced inquiries into the killing of several other Hutu officials but their findings have not been revealed.

In separate incidents, the bodies of two men were discovered on 2 August. One was that of Pie Ntahobali, a Roman Catholic priest, who had been taken away by soldiers from his home in Kamonyi on the evening of 1 August. A peasant found his body the following day in a banana plantation less than two kilometres away from his parish; he had been shot through the eye. Pie Ntahobali was a Hutu priest who had tried to protect Tutsi seeking refuge in his parish during the mass killings of Tutsi by the former government forces and militia in 1994.

After the present government of Rwanda took power, Hutu residents in his parish used to talk to the priest about their own experiences of ongoing human rights violations by the army in their area.

The same night, the body of Oreste Habinshuti, former *sous-prefet* of Gikongoro, was discovered in a river on the border of Gikongoro and Butare prefectures, in a deserted location. The identity of his killers and the reasons for this attack are not known.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been several other incidents of killings and "disappearances" since the present government of Rwanda took power in July 1994. Even though these are far fewer than the killings which took place under the former government of Rwanda, they nevertheless form a pattern which indicates that individuals perceived as opponents of the government and those who speak out against current human rights violations are at risk of being targeted, either by armed groups with the complicity of the security forces or, in some cases, by the security forces themselves.

Individuals released from prison because of insufficient evidence that they have taken part in the genocide (the most common accusation against the tens of thousands of prisoners currently held in Rwanda without charge or trial) are especially at risk. As international pressure mounts for the acceleration of the process of releasing from the overcrowded prisons those against whom there is no proof of guilt, Amnesty International fears that there may be further killings after such releases. The lack of progress in the reconstruction of the judicial system in Rwanda is accentuating the frustration of the population which is still waiting for justice for the crimes committed by the former government and militia particularly between April and July 1994. It is also encouraging people to take the law into their own hands.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, English or your own language:

- expressing deep concern at the killing of Placide Koloni, his wife, their two young daughters and their servant on 27 July and the killing of Father Pie Ntahobali and Oreste Habinshuti on 2 August;
- asking the government to make public the result of its inquiry into the killing of Placide Koloni and his family and ensure that those responsible are brought to justice;
- asking the government to launch an inquiry into the killings of Pie Ntahobali and Oreste Habinshuti, as well as into all other incidents which appear to be political killings and to make the results public; mention as an example that there has still not been an investigation into the killing of Pierre-Claver Rwangabo, the prefect of Butare, on 4 March 1995;
- asking the government, in conjunction with the local authorities, to guarantee the protection of those released from prison; stressing that such individuals are especially at risk as they may be perceived as criminals by the local population; ask the government to explain to the population that prisoners are being released because there is insufficient evidence against them and that they should not be considered guilty until charged and tried.

APPEALS TO:

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Président de la République

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Telegrams: President Bizimungu, Kigali, Rwanda

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Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Général Major Paul KAGAME

Vice-Président de la République et Ministre de la Défense

Présidence de la République

BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda

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Telegrams: Vice-President Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda

Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président / Dear Vice-President

Maître Alphonse-Marie NKUBITO

Ministre de la Justice

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Kigali, Rwanda

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Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES 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 22 September 1995.