

EXTERNAL

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Fear for safety / "Disappearance"

10 October 1996

RWANDASylvère KANANI, mechanic

Sylvère Kanani has not been seen since 25 September 1996 when he was led away by soldiers of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) in the capital Kigali. Amnesty International is deeply concerned for his safety.

On the evening of 24 September, six RPA soldiers came to Sylvère Kanani's house searching for him. When they failed to find him, they beat three members of his family who were at his home: his wife Janvière Nyirahabineza, his 17-year-old sister Régine Kanani and his 19-year-old brother-in-law, Narcisse Harindintwali. The following evening, they returned and beat his 25-year-old nephew François Iyakaremye so severely that he reportedly died from his injuries. The soldiers forced the family to lead them to the garage where Sylvère Kanani worked. They found him there and led him away to an unknown destination. His family has still not been informed of his whereabouts.

One of the soldiers, who had reportedly threatened him previously on several occasions, is alleged to have told him that he could not escape punishment for the crimes committed by his father and brothers during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. However, to Amnesty International's knowledge, Sylvère Kanani himself does not appear to have been accused of such crimes. He had reportedly been arrested on two earlier occasions in 1995 but released on the basis of insufficient evidence against him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

More than 81,000 people are currently in detention in Rwanda without charge or trial, most of them accused of having participated in the genocide which claimed as many as one million lives in 1994. Sylvère Kanani is one of many people known to Amnesty International who have been arrested because of the role or alleged role of other members of their family during the genocide - when the authorities appear to have been unable to arrest the individuals they are really seeking.

Amnesty International is also concerned that vague accusations of participation in genocide have sometimes been used as a pretext for arresting individuals for other motives. Many of the detainees currently held in Rwanda do not have specific charges levelled against them and have been arrested on the basis of unsubstantiated accusations. It is widely believed that those most likely to be found guilty of having played a leading role during the genocide are continuing to evade justice, often in exile.

Ill-treatment of detainees is common in the period immediately after arrest, in the *cachots* (communal detention centres) or military detention centres where they are held before being transferred to the central prisons.

Amnesty International has also documented a pattern of "disappearances" in Rwanda. In some cases, these individuals have later been traced in detention centres. In other cases, they have never been found or are presumed dead.

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

- asking for information on the whereabouts of Sylvère Kanani, for this information to be communicated to his family and for him to be able to receive visits from them, as well as from a doctor and a lawyer;
- seeking assurances that he is not being ill-treated or tortured and that his safety will be guaranteed;
- asking for the reason for his arrest and for his immediate and unconditional release unless he has been formally charged with recognizably criminal offence;

if possible, also:

- appeal to the authorities to take immediate action against the RPA officials who beat several members of Sylvère Kanani's family, including his nephew François Iyakaremye who was reportedly beaten to death. These officials should be removed from their posts and brought to justice for their role in these human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

Président Pasteur Bizimungu
Présidence de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
FAXES: +250 84769
Telexes: 22502
Telegrams: President Bizimungu, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Général Major Paul Kagame
Vice-Président de la République
et Ministre de la Défense
Présidence de la République
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda
Fax: +250 2431; 76969
Telegrams: Vice-Président Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Président/Dear Vice-President

Colonel Alexis KANYARENGWE
Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre de l'Intérieur
BP 446, Kigali, Rwanda
Fax: +250 84373; 83374
Telegrams: Ministre de l'Intérieur, Kigali, Rwanda
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

M.Gerald GAHIMA
Ministre de la Justice par intérim
Ministère de la Justice
BP 160, Kigali, Rwanda
Fax: +250 86509
Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice, Kigali, Rwanda
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 30 November 1996.