

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 171/96

Fear for safety

1 November 1996

ZAIRE

Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, human rights activist
Harouna Mbongo, human rights activist
Bashi Nabukili, human rights activist

Members of the Tutsi ethnic group

Three human rights activists in the Zairian capital, Kinshasa, are reported to have been arrested in recent days by the Zairian authorities because they were inquiring about human rights abuses against members of the Tutsi ethnic group. One of the activists, Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, is the President of a human rights group *La voix des sans voix* (VSV), Voice of the Voiceless. Amnesty International has not been able to establish their place of detention, and fears that they may be ill-treated.

Amnesty International has also learned that an unspecified number of Tutsi families have been removed from their homes and are being held in Kinshasa by members of the Zairian security forces. It has been reported that the Zairian authorities intend to expel the families from Zaire on the grounds that they are not Zairian nationals. It is feared that these Tutsi and other Tutsi living in Zaire may be subjected to human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, "disappearance", torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is growing hostility and violence against members of the Tutsi ethnic group, and to a lesser extent those of the Hutu ethnic group, since fighting began in eastern Zaire in September 1996 between Tutsi known as Banyamulenge and Zairian armed forces. The hostility on the part of the Zairian authorities and sectors of the civilian population is also extended to anyone suspected of sympathizing with the Tutsi. Hundreds of Tutsi have already been deported by the Zairian authorities to Rwanda and Burundi.

Banyamulenge claim that they are fighting for their right to Zairian nationality which they have been denied by the Zairian authorities. Banyamulenge have already captured several towns in eastern Zaire's North and South-Kivu regions. The Zairian authorities have accused Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda of supporting the Banyamulenge armed group, a claim denied by the governments of those countries.

It has been reported that on 31 October 1996, the Zairian parliament overwhelmingly voted to demand that Zaire severs diplomatic relations with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. The parliament also demanded the removal of Tutsi from government jobs, including the security forces. Many Tutsi have already fled the country fearing for their lives.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, Harouna Mbongo and Bashi Nabukili, simply because they inquired about human rights abuses against Tutsi;
- expressing concern at the removal of Tutsi from their homes in Kinshasa and the threat to expel them from Zaire;

- pointing out that the human rights activists and members of the Tutsi families who have been arrested are prisoners of conscience and demanding their immediate and unconditional release;
- seeking guarantees that the detainees will be protected from any form of torture or ill-treatment.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

Monsieur Léon KENGO Wa Dondo
Premier Ministre
Hôtel du Conseil Exécutif
Avenue des 3Z
Kinshasa - Gombe, ZAIRE

FAX: +243 88 42062

Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Kinshasa, Zaire

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Joseph Nsinga Udju
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
BP 3137
Kinshasa- Gombe, ZAIRE

Telegrams: Ministre Nsinga, Kinshasa, Zaire

Faxes: +243 88 43778

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Armed Forces Chief of Staff

Grand amiral ELUKI Monga
Chef d'Etat-major général des
Forces armées zairoises (FAZ)
Ministère de la Défense nationale
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

Minster of Interior

Monsieur Gérard KAMANDA WA KAMANDA
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Hotel du Conseil exécutif
Kinshasa-Gombe
République de Zaire

and to diplomatic representatives of Zaire accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 December 1996.