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BURUNDI: UPDATE ON CURRENT SITUATION

Recent developments in Burundi compel Amnesty International to add some comments to the document which is embargoed for 12 June 1996.

Amnesty International visited Burundi for ten days during which the organization documented the armed forces probable involvement in many human rights abuses including extra-judicial executions, "disappearances," torture, arbitrary detention or massacre of civilian population.

It came to the attention of Amnesty International that the army was involved in the massacres in Buhoro in the province of Gitega and that in Kivyuka in the province of Bubanza. Both incidents claimed each at least 300 people. For Amnesty International the role of the army is evident in the assassination of the Sylvestre Mvutse on 13 May as well as its implication in the incident in which a rocket was fired at a presidential convoy, injuring several people on 1 June 1996.

In a public address to the population on 14 May 1996, President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya said that the armed forces were "either accomplices or incompetent." Amnesty International believes there is a deliberate move to destabilize the country and that the government does not have enough power to counter moves taken by the military.

Amnesty International recognizes the role played by Hutu armed groups but insists that armed forces should be well restrained in their brutality against civilians and humanitarian workers. Amnesty International underscores the fact that it is in the very region where Sylvestre Mvutse was killed and the presidential convoy attacked that ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) workers were killed some days ago.

While the international condemnation of the killing of ICRC workers is a positive sign, it also highlights the relative silence while Burundians have been killing one another by hundreds for the last two and a half years.

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