

UA 80/01

Torture /

BURUNDI Léonidas NTAKAHUTIMANA, student, aged approximately 16
Matheso
Vincent HASAVYUMUTIMA

Other detainees held at the *Groupement d'intervention* in Bujumbura

At least three detainees, including a 16-year-old student, are being held incommunicado by a special gendarmerie unit, where detainees are routinely tortured. One of them has been severely beaten, and they are all at serious risk of torture.

Léonidas Ntakahutimana has reportedly been severely beaten while held by the *Groupement d'intervention*, a special gendarmerie unit in the capital, Bujumbura, where he was transferred on 29 March. He has been detained since December 2000, when he was arrested on suspicion of having collaborated with an armed opposition group, the *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL), National Liberation Forces. He was first held at a military camp known as SOCARTI in the Bujumbura district of Kamenge. The FNL had reportedly forced him to carry property they had looted during an attack on his home district of Kinama back to their bases in late 2000. The security forces apparently suspected Léonidas Ntakahutimana of having joined the FNL because he failed to tell the authorities that he had returned to Kinama safely.

Two others, Matheso and Vincent Hasavyumutima, are also held incommunicado by the *Groupement d'intervention* on suspicion of having collaborated with the armed opposition. It is not known when they were arrested or on what basis.

Although the *Groupement d'intervention* has no legal right to detain suspects, it regularly holds and tortures detainees. At least one detainee, who was also held on suspicion of collaborating with the FNL, is reported to have been tortured to death by the unit this year.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There has been a noticeable increase in cases of torture in Bujumbura since the FNL, one of the most active Burundian armed opposition groups, occupied parts of the north of the city for about two weeks before withdrawing around 10 March 2001.

Amnesty International has taken up several cases of people arbitrarily arrested and tortured by the armed forces since the attack. In previous counter-insurgency operations, the Tutsi-dominated security forces have carried out brutal reprisal killings of unarmed Hutu civilians. They have also tortured and executed civilians accused of collaborating with the armed opposition.

Torture and ill-treatment are routine in the early stages of detention in Burundi. The problem is particularly acute in military detention, particularly as detainees are often held incommunicado in illegal places of detention and are denied access to family, lawyers and humanitarian and human rights organizations. Fears that detainees may have "disappeared" are aggravated by the frequent refusal of military authorities to disclose places of detention. Relatives may be told without further explanation that the detainee is no longer or has never been detained, arousing fears that the detainee may have been killed. In some cases, this fear is well-founded. In others, the detainee may

have been transferred to a different place of detention and may subsequently "reappear".

Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French or your own language (please check whether there is a postal service to Burundi from your country):

- expressing concern for the safety of Léonidas Ntakahutumana, Matheso and Vincent Hasavyumutima, who are held by the *Groupement d'intervention* in Bujumbura, following reports that Léonidas Ntakahutumana has been severely beaten;
- calling for the detainees to be given immediate access to their families, lawyers, medical care and to humanitarian and human rights organizations;
- calling on the authorities to clarify the reasons for their arrest, and for them to be released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- asking the authorities to ensure that the security forces follow proper arrest and detention procedures, and that relatives and lawyers have access to all places of detention.

APPEALS TO: (Please note, it can be difficult to get through on the numbers given below, and you may be told by the operator that they are temporarily out of order. Please be patient and keep trying):

Head of State

Son Excellence

Major Pierre BUYOYA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

BP 1870 Bujumbura, Burundi

Telegrams:President, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes:+ 257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Minister of National Defence

Colonel Cyrille NDAYIRUKIYE

Ministre de la Défense Nationale

Ministère de la Défense Nationale

BUJUMBURA, Burundi

Telegrams:Ministre Defense, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes: + 257 22 56 86

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Chief of Staff of the Gendarmerie

Colonel Salvator NDAYIYUNVIYE

Chef de l'Etat-major générale de la Gendarmerie

Etat-major général de la gendarmerie

Ministère de la Défense nationale

BUJUMBURA, Burundi

Telegrams:Chef Etat Major Gendarmerie, Bujumbura, Burundi

Faxes:+ 257 22 56 86

Salutation:Monsieur le Chef de l'Etat-major / Dear Gendarmerie Chief of Staff

State Public Prosecutor

Monsieur Gérard NGENDABANKA

Procureur Général de la République

Bujumbura

Burundi

Telegrams: Procureur general, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: + 257 24 15 03

**Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur général de la République / Dear State Public
Prosecutor**

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, Institutional Reform and Relations with the National
Assembly

Eugène NINDORERA, Ministre des droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes
institutionnelles, et des relations avec l'Assemblée nationale, Ministère des
droits de la Personne humaine, des réformes institutionnelles, et des relations
avec l'Assemblée nationale, Bujumbura, Burundi

and to diplomatic representatives of BURUNDI accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 May 2001.