

UA 52/99

Fear for

**RWANDA**Eustache Nkerinka (member of parliament)  
Jacques Maniraguha (member of parliament)  
Jean-Léonard Bizimana (member of parliament)

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**Bonaventure Ubalijoro (former party leader)**

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There are fears for the safety of the three members of parliament (MPs) named above, outspoken government critics who were dismissed from the parliament on 9 March 1999, and of the former leader of their party, who was arrested on 27 February.

MP Eustache Nkerinka had been under house arrest in the capital, Kigali, after being taken in for questioning on the evening of 19 March. On the morning of 22 March he was arrested again and driven away, accompanied by one of the soldiers who had been guarding his house. His family was not informed of his whereabouts. Later in the day, it was reported that he had been provisionally released and that he was accused of forgery. There are fears that he could be re-arrested, as his parliamentary immunity is due to be lifted this week.

Eustache Nkerinka, Jacques Maniraguha and Jean-Léonard Bizimana are all MPs of the *Mouvement démocratique républicain*, (MDR), Democratic Republican Movement. All three have openly voiced their disagreement with certain government policies, notably during discussions on reconciliation and elections. Their dismissal from the parliament, the Transitional National Assembly, came after sustained pressure from the Prime Minister (who is also a member of the MDR) for them to resign, after a number of public political disagreements.

Among the reasons given for their dismissal were accusations that they are not in favour of national unity and reconciliation and that they collaborate with "infiltrators" (members of the armed opposition) - an accusation often used in Rwanda to discredit political opponents. At least one of them has also been criticized for denouncing human rights violations by the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) and for speaking to foreign media. Jean-Léonard Bizimana has reportedly been accused of taking part in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 but is not known to have been formally charged with any offences; Amnesty International is not in a position to judge whether this accusation is well-founded.

All three have been the subject of hostile articles in the press for several months. Eustache Nkerinka escaped an apparent assassination attempt in Kigali in June 1997, and his home has been attacked and searched on several occasions since 1995.

Bonaventure Ubalijoro, the former president of the MDR and an official under previous governments, was arrested on 27 February and is currently detained in Remera, a district of Kigali. A prominent critic of the current government, he faces various accusations, including sympathising with armed opposition groups in Rwanda and involvement in massacres of Tutsi in the 1960s. He is not known to have been formally charged with any offence.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The MDR is one of several political parties that sit in the Transitional National Assembly, which was put in place after the current government came to power in Rwanda in July 1994. The MDR is effectively split into two factions, one of which has been critical of the government and gradually marginalised, while the other, led by Prime Minister Pierre-Célestin Rwigema, broadly supports the policies of the government.

For several years, critics of the government have been subjected to human rights violations ranging from harassment to arrest, "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution. Evariste Burakali, an MP of the *Parti Libéral* (Liberal Party), was shot dead by a soldier in the northern region of Byumba in January 1997. At least one other MP has fled the country, fearing for his safety.

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

- calling on the authorities to ensure the safety of Eustache Nkerinka, Jacques Maniraguha and Jean-Léonard Bizimana and guarantee that their full legal rights will be respected;
- expressing particular concern for the safety of Eustache Nkerinka, after his recent arrest;
- calling on the authorities to clarify the formal charges against Bonaventure Ubalijoro, and ensure that his full legal rights are respected;
- calling on the government to ensure that no one is subjected to human rights violations because of the peaceful expression of their opinions or criticism of the government.

**APPEALS TO:**

Son Excellence Pasteur BIZIMUNGU  
Président de la République  
Présidence de la République  
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda

**Telegrams: President, Kigali, Rwanda**

**Fax: + 250 84769/84390**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Président/Dear President Bizimungu**

Monsieur Pierre-Célestin RWIGEMA  
Premier Ministre  
BP 1334, Kigali, Rwanda

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Kigali, Rwanda**

**Fax: + 250 83714**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre/Dear Prime Minister**

Général Major Paul KAGAME  
Vice-Président de la République  
et Ministre de la Défense  
Ministère de la Défense  
BP 23, Kigali, Rwanda

**Telegrams: Vice-President, Kigali, Rwanda**

**Fax: + 250 72431/76969**

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

**COPIES TO** diplomatic representatives of Rwanda accredited to your country.

Please also send a **limited number** of copies to:

Monsieur Joseph SEBARENZI  
Président de l'Assemblée Nationale de Transition  
BP 352, Kigali, Rwanda  
**Fax: + 250 83975**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 May 1999.