

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 47/09/96

1 July 1996

Further information on UA 91/96 (AFR 47/04/96, 2 April 1996) and follow-ups (AFR 47/06/96, 25 April; AFR 47/07/96, 2 May) - Fear for safety / Fear of ill-treatment

RWANDA Joseph Ruyenzi, journalist, in his 30s

Members of the Urgent Action Network have received more replies from the Rwandese government and its diplomatic representatives abroad in response to appeals on behalf of Joseph Ruyenzi.

Many have received identical letters from the Rwandese Minister of Information, Jean-Paul Bizimana. His letters state that Joseph Ruyenzi's arrest was not connected with his work as a journalist or his ethnic background, but that he was arrested on suspicion of acts of rape and mutilation he allegedly committed during the genocide of 1994, as reported in the UA update of 25 April.

The Minister's letters imply that Amnesty International is calling for Joseph Ruyenzi's unconditional release. This is not the case. The organization only calls for Joseph Ruyenzi's release if he is not formally charged with a recognisable criminal offence.

Amnesty International's concerns that Joseph Ruyenzi may have been ill-treated in detention appear not to have been addressed by the Rwandese authorities.

However, when Amnesty International delegates visited Joseph Ruyenzi in Kigali Prison in May 1996, he reported that he was not being ill-treated and he appeared to be in good health.

Appeal-writers in Canada have received letters from the Rwandese embassy in that country. In these letters, the embassy asks why Amnesty International has not taken up the case of the Rwandese diplomat Francis Mugabo, who was detained in Kenya until recently, in connection with an assassination attempt on the former Rwandese Interior Minister Seth Sendashonga (see UA 49/96, AFR 01/02/96, 27 February 1996 and update of 6 March). The letters also ask why Amnesty International is not taking action in the case of the killings in North Kivu in Zaire, in which many people of Rwandese origin have been killed or driven from their homes (see AI News Service 109/96, AFR 62/04/96, 14 June 1996).

This Urgent Action is now being closed, and no further appeals to the Rwandese authorities on behalf of Joseph Ruyenzi are requested. Amnesty International continues to monitor his situation, along with the thousands of other people detained in connection with the 1994 genocide. However, those who have received letters in response to their appeals on Joseph Ruyenzi are asked, if possible, to reply to those letters stressing the points listed below, as appropriate.

- In response to letters stating that Joseph Ruyenzi is being detained on suspicion of serious crimes allegedly committed during the genocide - ask for details of the progress of the investigations into his case, and assurances that he has access to legal advice.

- In response to letters alleging that Amnesty International is seeking Joseph Ruyenzi's unconditional release, refer to the specific parts of your original letter stating that the organization's specific concerns were that Joseph Ruyenzi might be ill-treated in detention, and that he might not have been charged with a recognisable criminal offence. State that Amnesty International

was calling for his release only if he was not to be formally charged with any recognisable criminal offence.

- in response to any letters inquiring why Amnesty International has not taken any action over (A) the case of Francis Mugabo and (B) the situation in North Kivu:

(A) refer to UA 49/96, and its update which reported that Francis Mugabo had been arrested on suspicion of attempted murder, and that it was the failure by the Rwandese government to lift his diplomatic immunity which rendered it impossible for the Kenyan authorities to prosecute him. (He has since reportedly been released and deported to Rwanda, on or around 22 June 1996).

and

(B) refer to Amnesty International's News Service 109/96 of 14 June 1996, concerning the situation in North Kivu. In this item, AI called on the Zairian authorities to urgently provide protection for the tens of thousands of people who fled their homes in the face of violent attacks and intimidation by armed groups in the Eastern Zairian zones of Masisi, Rutshuru, Walikale and Lubero. If you have access to a copy of the news item, please enclose it in your reply.

- if you receive a reply from the Rwandese authorities raising any new issues, please forward it on to the International Secretariat.

Thanks to all who have taken action on this case.