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Public Statement

DRC: Amnesty International urges the Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda to stop killings

Amnesty International is appealing to Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda to end atrocities by their troops in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Ugandan troops are reported to be involved in killings and other abuses against members of the Lendu ethnic group in Kibali-Ituri province in April and more than 500 unarmed civilians have been killed by Ugandan and Rwandese troops fighting in Kisangani between 5 and 10 June 2000.

*The organization is urging the United Nations to urgently send human rights monitors to investigate reported human rights abuses by Ugandan troops and their allies of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie - Mouvement de libération (RCD-ML)*, Congolese Rally for Democracy - Liberation Movement. The monitors should be provided with adequate security, logistics and material resources.*

Recent reports from the province of Kibali-Ituri show that Ugandan and RCD-ML troops continue to collude with Hema civilians to kill Lendu. Tens of thousands of Lendu have fled their homes into forests where they have no access to shelter, food or medical care. Many, particularly children, are suffering from severe malnutrition and are exposed to major killer diseases such as malaria, cholera and bubonic plague.

On 20 April 2000, Ugandan and RCD-ML troops killed at least 15 unarmed Lendu civilians in Rethy. About 250 Ugandan soldiers had arrived there four days earlier and confiscated weapons, mainly bows and arrows, from the local Lendu. The population fled to surrounding forests where it has remained fearing further attacks.

On 22 April, Ugandan troops and armed Hema civilians attacked displaced Lendu camped on a farm owned by a Lendu businessman at Buba, situated south of Rethy. At least six Lendu were killed and cattle looted by the attackers. The population sought help from Ugandan troops at Kpandroma but these demanded to be provided with transport. When they got the vehicle to transport them to Buba, the soldiers deliberately took the longer route and arrived too late to be of any help. Survivors of the attack fled into the forest.

Previously predominantly-Lendu centres, such as Fataki, have either been totally destroyed or taken over by Hema. Although the Lendu may be too deep in the forest to be reached by the soldiers, many of them are continuing to die from starvation, treatable diseases and exposure. Ugandan soldiers and Hema armed groups are reportedly carrying out a deliberate and calculated campaign to drive Lendu from their homes in areas rich in gold and commercial wood. In a report entitled *DRC: Killing human decency*, published on 31 May 2000, Amnesty International reported that as many as 7,000 civilians had been killed in Kibali-Ituri during the second half of 1999.

Amnesty International is also continuing to receive details about serious human rights violations committed between 5 and 10 June 2000 by Ugandan and Rwandese troops fighting in Kisangani, the capital of DRC's Orientale province. The violations were mainly characterized by indiscriminate shelling, extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians and summary executions of captured soldiers.

Amnesty International urges the UN Secretary-General to urgently send human rights experts to Kisangani to investigate violations of human rights and international humanitarian law during fighting between Rwandese and Ugandan troops in June 2000, as well as

previously in August 1999 and May 2000. In its Resolution 1304 of 16 June the UN Security Council requested the UN Secretary-General to submit an assessment of the damage (loss of life and property) as a basis for reparations.

Promptly after the report by the investigators identifying the victims and the perpetrators, the UN Security Council should demand that the Ugandan and Rwandese governments compensate the victims without undue delay, and that those responsible be brought to justice.

Sources in Kisangani have informed Amnesty International that more than 500 civilians were killed -- some estimate as many as 1,000 -- during the six days of fighting between the two armies. Some of the sources say that it will take time to get a full picture as some of the bodies found on the streets were of Rwandese soldiers who were stripped of their uniforms by their commanders to disguise their identity.

Cases of extrajudicial executions of local Congolese civilians include a man identified as Bolembo, his wife and five children who were shot dead by Rwandese soldiers on 7 June when the family was found looking at bodies of dead Rwandese soldiers in their compound on 7th Avenue in Commune Tshopo. On 9 June Ugandan soldiers shot dead Sophie Longeni, wife of Raphael Matata, as she collected vegetables from her garden on nearby 5th Avenue.

Many people were killed when shells fired by both sides landed on residential houses. For example, five members of the Kanyinda family, four of them children aged between six and 13 years, were killed on 7 June when a shell fired by Rwandese troops landed on their house on the 11th Avenue in Commune Makiso. Four members of the Ngunga family, including three children aged between two and 10 years, were killed on

5 June when a shell fired by Ugandan troops landed on their house on Hospital Avenue in Commune Makiso.

Rwandese soldiers are reported to have summarily executed at least 10 Ugandan soldiers captured at Plateau Boyoma in Commune Makiso on 11 and 12 June, after the fighting had stopped. The organization is investigating reports that some civilians in Tshopo were killed by Rwandese troops for refusing to kill Ugandan soldiers.

Meanwhile, civilians accused of links with Uganda, and particularly Ugandan nationals, are reported to be at risk of human rights abuses by Rwandese troops and their allies of the RCD-Goma in Kisangani. Rwandese soldiers are reported to have broken into the house of a Ugandan Anglican bishop, Tibafa, in Kisangani on 11 June, stripped his wife and stolen his money. A Ugandan Roman Catholic priest, Raphael Wokorath, is reportedly in hiding after he was being sought by Rwandese troops.

Background

Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have sent armies to the DRC to support armed opposition groups seeking to overthrow the government of President Laurent-Désiré Kabila since August 1998. The armies of Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola are supporting the DRC government forces. Since August 1999 the otherwise allied armies of Rwanda and Uganda have fought each other in the DRC because of disagreements on territorial control of the areas they occupy and support for rival Congolese armed opposition groups.

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