

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 62/20/99

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 15 per section.

EXTRA 119/99

Fear for

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Mushizi Nfundiko Kizito] journalists

Omba Kamengele]

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of the two independent journalists named above, who were arrested on 25 August 1999 by soldiers of the armed opposition group *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy, in Bukavu, South Kivu province. The RCD, which is supported by the Rwandese government, currently controls most of North and South Kivu provinces, in the eastern DRC.

They are apparently arrested because they were suspected of using their radio receiver to listen in on sensitive military transmissions. However there are concerns that their arrest might be politically motivated, because of their work as journalists at an independent radio station, Radio Maendeleo, which is attached to the *Conseil régional des organisations non-gouvernementales de développement* (CRONGD), a regional umbrella organization of development associations.

The two men were arrested without a warrant, together with six other CRONGD members, reportedly as they left a CRONGD meeting, and were taken to the *Agence Nationale de Renseignements* (ANR), National Intelligence Agency. The other six were released on 27 August, but the two journalists are believed to be still detained at the ANR. While Amnesty International has not received reports that any of the eight have been ill-treated, there have been cases of severe ill-treatment at the ANR in the past.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The current armed conflict in the DRC began in August 1998 when the RCD, supported by Rwanda and Uganda, launched a rebellion against the government of Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The right to freedom of expression has been blatantly violated in both RCD-controlled and government-controlled areas. Human rights activists and other representatives of civil society have faced harassment, arrest, "disappearance" and death throughout the country, including North and South Kivu provinces.

On 6 August 1998, Jacques Semurongo, a leading member of the human rights organization *Héritiers de la Justice*, was reportedly shot dead by RCD members. Dozens of human rights defenders have been forced to flee the country. Members of *Héritiers de la Justice* and the human rights organization *Groupe Jérémie* have been threatened with violence and detention.

On 15 June, RCD combatants broke into the office of *Groupe Jérémie*, took away documents and sealed the office. The following day the RCD issued a statement, which was read on the official radio, accusing *Groupe Jérémie* and others of publishing anti-RCD tracts.

PLEASE NOTE: THESE APPEALS ARE ADDRESSED TO THE RWANDESE GOVERNMENT, THE MAIN POLITICAL AND MILITARY ALLY OF THE RCD, BECAUSE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH ANY DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE RCD.

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

- expressing concern about the arbitrary arrest and detention by RCD soldiers of Mushizi Nfundiko Kizito and Omba Kamengele, respectively Director and Information officer at Radio Maendeleo, on 25 August 1999 in Bukavu;
- expressing concern that their arrest might be politically motivated because of their work for the independent radio station Radio Maendeleo;
- expressing concern for their safety, in view of previous cases of severe ill-treatment of detainees at the *Agence Nationale de Renseignement* (ANR);
- calling on the Rwandese authorities to use their influence with the RCD to ensure the safety of the two journalists, and their immediate and unconditional release, unless they are to be charged with a recognisable criminal offence;
- calling on the Rwandese authorities to use their influence with the RCD to ensure that the two men are allowed access to their family, doctors and lawyers of their choice
- calling on the Rwandese authorities to ensure that their troops and the RCD respect the right to freedom of expression;
- calling on the Rwandese authorities to investigate whether Rwandese soldiers were involved in these arbitrary arrests, and if so, for them to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President Pasteur Bizimungu
Office of the President
BP 15, Kigali, Rwanda

Telegrams: President, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: + 250 84390

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President Bizimungu

Major General Paul Kagame
Vice-President and Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
BP 23, Kigali, Rwanda

Telegrams: Major General Kagame, Kigali, Rwanda

Faxes: + 250 76969 / 72431

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

Colonel Kayumba NYAMWASA
Chief of Staff of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA)
Ministry of Defence
KIGALI, Rwanda

Faxes: + 250 76969 / 72431

COPIES TO: the embassy of Rwanda in your country if there is one

and to diplomatic representatives of the DRC accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 October 1999.