

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

27 January 2011
AI Index: AFR 47/001/2011

Rwanda: Reveal whereabouts of disappeared businessman

The Rwandan government should immediately reveal the whereabouts of Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza, not seen since his enforced disappearance in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, on 26 March 2010, Amnesty International said today. Amnesty International believes that Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza is detained in military custody in Rwanda. The organization is calling on the Rwandan authorities to promptly charge or release him.

Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza, a dual citizen of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), was living in Gisenyi and working as a businessman and on the Ecumenical Programme for Peace, Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation (PAREC) demobilisation programme in the DRC at the time of his enforced disappearance. He was the leader of an armed opposition group, the *Front patriotique congolais*, in eastern DRC in the late 1990's. The group disbanded and later reformed before being integrated into the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC).

Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza was last seen on 26 March 2010 around 6am when he dropped a family member at Nyabugogo Bus Station in Kigali. On that morning, he was driving a silver grey Toyota Vista registration number RAA 060Y. He never reached his brother's home in Kigali, as planned. Family members tried to contact him by telephone later that morning. At first, he did not answer and by mid-morning, his phone was switched-off.

Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza's family reported him missing to the Rwandan National Security Service (NSS) on 27 March 2010, but have not received further news from the NSS about his whereabouts. On 7 May 2010, Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza made a phone call saying that he was detained at an unknown location in Rwanda. No-one has heard from him since.

In October 2010, Amnesty International received credible information suggesting that Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza was detained in Rwandan military custody.

The Rwandan Ministry of Defence did not respond to a letter from Amnesty International requesting information on Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza's whereabouts in November 2010. In October 2010, two months after a written request for information, the Rwandan police confirmed that Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza was not in police custody. They suggested that Amnesty International instead direct enquiries to the Ministry of Defence.

Amnesty International calls on the Rwandan authorities to:

- Immediately reveal the fate or whereabouts of Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza.
- Promptly charge Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza with a recognizable criminal offence and transfer him from military to civilian custody or release him.
- If charged, grant Robert Ndengeye Urayeneza with all the legal safeguards available under Rwandan law, including the right of regular access to a lawyer and a prompt and fair trial which meets international standards.
- Immediately release or else reveal the whereabouts and charge any other individuals subjected to incommunicado detention or enforced disappearance.

- Bring any individuals subjected to incommunicado detention promptly before a court to review the legality of their detention.
- Bring to justice all those responsible for ordering or carrying out enforced disappearances, regardless of rank, in proceedings which meet international fair trial standards.

Background

Enforced disappearances, abductions and incommunicado detention, rare in Rwanda in recent years, increased in 2010, as the Rwandan authorities investigated a spate of grenade attacks before the presidential elections.

Amnesty International received information of three other persons who disappeared in March and May 2010 in Rwanda. All were former supporters of Laurent Nkunda, the former head of the armed opposition group, the National Council for the Defence of the People (CNDP), operating in North Kivu, eastern DRC. For example, Sheikh Iddy Abbasi, a former supporter of Nkunda, has not been seen since his disappearance outside his home in Gisenyi in March 2010.

Lieutenant-Colonel Rugigana Ngabo, the brother of the former Rwandan army chief, Kayumba Nyamwasa, was held in incommunicado detention without access to a lawyer, family or independent medical care from August 2010 to January 2011. The Rwandan authorities are investigating allegations that Ngabo may have threatened state security. Following a habeas corpus request by Ngabo's family addressed to the East African Court of Justice in November 2010, the Rwandan authorities are believed to have produced Ngabo in the past week before a military court in Kigali.