

RWANDA - No business of the military.

Illegal detention and beatings of civilian tea workers in Mukamira army camp result in death.

In September 1999 six civilian men were arrested by soldiers of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) and detained at Mukamira army camp in Ruhengeri *préfecture*, northwestern Rwanda. In the following days and weeks several of them were tortured and ill-treated by soldiers. One, **Frodouald Ngaboyisonga**, later died of his injuries.

The six men were workers at the Nyabihu tea processing factory in Karago *commune*, Gisenyi *préfecture*. The RPA arrested five of the men on 28 September and a sixth on 29 September, accusing them of the theft of an engine from the factory, although there appears to have been no evidence linking them with the crime. In arresting and detaining the men, the RPA were acting outside their jurisdiction: the theft should clearly have been a matter for the Rwandese civilian authorities or Gendarmerie to investigate.

In addition to Frodouald Ngaboyisonga, a driver and mechanic in his late 30s, others arrested were **Jean-de-Dieu Hakizimana**, a driver; **Gakezi**, a factory guard; **Jean-Bosco Byiringiru**, a machine operator; **Thomas Ngarambe**, a mechanic; and **Cyridion Hakuzimana**, a driver. The RPA officer who made the arrests told the men that “even if they weren’t the real thieves, they must be accomplices” since they had been working near the engine at the time it was stolen.

All the men were taken to Mukamira military camp, where they were beaten and told to confess to the theft. The ill-treatment was especially severe during the morning of 29 September, when the men were interrogated separately. In at least one case the interrogation lasted for about two hours, during which time the detainee was beaten repeatedly with a whip and a bundle of sticks. Although this man insisted that he didn’t know where the engine was, his interrogator told him that the workers must return it or face death. At one point, made desperate by pain, the detainee told the officer that he would prefer to die.

For most of his detention this man was kept in a cell holding 11 people, including two of his co-workers from the factory and a number of other civilians. Some of the other detainees were being held in handcuffs. The detainees used a jerry can in the cell for a toilet. The detainee was denied food for the first four days and was only given drinking water. After this time, his family was allowed to bring him food. He alleges that he was interrogated every day and regularly beaten by different soldiers, including by the officer who had arrested the workers at the factory.

Jean-Bosco Byiringiru was released after two days. The other five workers were held in custody for nearly a month. No charges were ever brought against them and the judicial authorities were not notified of their arrest or detention. When the men were released on 25 October they were told that there was no evidence against them. As they left the camp, soldiers threatened the workers, saying that they would be taken to Ruhengeri “to die there”.

After his release Frodouald Ngaboyisonga was admitted to hospital in Ruhengeri, suffering from internal injuries and a badly swollen body and face. On 11 November, a few days after leaving the hospital, Frodouald Ngaboyisonga died at his home in Byumba, apparently as a result of the beatings he received in Mukamira camp. Jean-de-Dieu Hakizimana continued to have pains across his abdomen and in his arms, is unable to lift

heavy objects, and still has difficulty going to the toilet. Cyridion Hakuzimana also experienced pain for several days after his release.

The stolen engine was later recovered in Kabaya and a worker and a security guard at the factory were arrested by *Gendarmes*. None of those originally detained by the military appears to have been involved in the theft.

In meetings with Amnesty International delegates in November 1999, two senior Rwandese officials with responsibility for army affairs -- the Chief of Staff of the RPA, Brigadier-General Kayumba Nyamwasa, and the Chief Military Prosecutor, Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Rwigamba -- said they could not condone the actions of the RPA in this case and promised to investigate the matter thoroughly. However, to date, the Rwandese authorities are not known to have taken action to investigate the case or to bring the offending RPA personnel to justice.

Amnesty International calls on the Rwandese authorities to investigate this case thoroughly and promptly, and to bring the RPA soldiers responsible for the ill-treatment of the Nyabihu tea factory workers and the death of Frodouald Ngaboyisonga to justice.

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the well-being of all those held in military custody in Rwanda. Former detainees have reported that ill-treatment or the threat of violence, insanitary conditions and insufficient food and medical care are common in military custody. Most of those held -- including an unknown but reportedly large number of civilians -- have not been charged or had their cases put to any form of judicial review. The RPA routinely denies relatives of detainees and independent human rights and humanitarian organizations access to military detention centres.

Amnesty International calls on the Rwandese authorities as a matter of urgency to stop detaining civilians in military custody, to conduct an immediate judicial review of the cases of all those held in military detention, and to give families, lawyers and human rights and humanitarian organizations unhindered access to all military detention centres.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Please write to the Rwandese **Vice-President and Minister of Defence** -

Major General Paul KAGAME
Vice-Président de la République et Ministre de la Défense
Ministère de la Défense
BP 23 KIGALI
République rwandaise

Ask the Minister to:

Launch an immediate investigation into the the death of Frodouald Ngaboyisonga and other reported acts of ill-treatment and unlawful detention by soldiers at Mukamira military camp.

Bring the perpetrators of these human rights violations to justice and compensate the victims or their families fully.

Stop the practice of detaining civilians in military detention centres. Order the release or transfer to civilian detention centres of all civilians held in military and other unlawful custody.

Allow the families and lawyers of detainees, and independent human rights and humanitarian organizations immediate and unrestricted access to all those held in custody in Rwanda.

For full details of this case please see Amnesty International's report, *RWANDA - No business of the military: unlawful, arbitrary detentions and ill-treatment of civilians in Mukamira military camp* (AI Index AFR 47/01/00, February 2000).

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