

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 452/91 Ill-treatment and deaths in detention concern

Burundi

Ephrème Ndabwarukanye

Emile Ruvyiro

and other detainees at Bubanza prison

Amnesty International has received reports that the two prisoners named above and an unspecified number of others, all members of the majority Hutu ethnic group, currently held at Bubanza prison in Burundi's northwestern province of Bubanza have been deprived of food for several weeks. There have been unconfirmed reports that a number of prisoners have died from starvation. The authorities are reported to have started withholding food from them after a violent attack at the end of November 1991 by armed rebels on military and other installations in the capital, Bujumbura, and in the northwestern provinces of Bubanza and Cibitoke. Members of the security forces are reported to have accused Emile Ruvyiro of masterminding the attacks from inside Bubanza prison.

Emile Ruvyiro and Ephrème Ndabwarukanye were both arrested in March 1991 in Rugazi district, Bubanza province. They appear to be imprisoned because in 1990 they encouraged peasant farmers to claim land taken from them by government and security officials. They have been on trial since mid-1991 on political charges. Emile Ruvyiro was charged with endangering the security of the state and inciting ethnic hatred while Ephrème Ndabwarukanye was charged with inciting members of the public not to obey lawfully given orders. Amnesty International has been investigating their cases to establish whether they are prisoners of conscience. Amnesty International is investigating reports that Emile Ruvyiro has been tortured. It is not clear if and how many of the other prisoners have been detained for political offences.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of serious human rights violations carried out by members of the Burundi security forces in the aftermath of violent attacks which started on 23 November 1991 by armed government opponents on military and other installations in the capital, Bujumbura, and in the northwestern provinces of Bubanza and Cibitoke. The reports concern arbitrary arrests, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, extrajudicial executions and "disappearances". Many of the abuses appear to have been carried out as reprisals or on the basis of no evidence that the victims had been involved in armed opposition.

The victims of recent human rights violations appear all to belong to Burundi's majority Hutu ethnic group, whereas the security forces continue to be dominated by the Tutsi minority. The authorities blame a clandestine Hutu political organization for the attacks in late November and early December.

These human rights violations, especially the extrajudicial executions, resemble those committed on several occasions in the past, particularly in 1965, 1969, 1972 and, most recently, in 1988. Following thousands of killings by the army in 1988, the government refused to take action to bring soldiers responsible for human rights violations to justice, although at a political level steps were taken to bring about reconciliation

between Hutu and Tutsi.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters in FRENCH if possible:

- expressing concern about reports that Ephrème Ndabwarukanye, Emile Ruvyiro and other prisoners held at Bubanza prison have been deliberately deprived of food by members of the security forces and that some of them may have died from starvation;

- asking if the authorities have investigated such reports and, if so, what the results of the investigations are;

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- urging the authorities, if no investigation has occurred, to order an independent and impartial investigation into the reports and to bring those found responsible for subjecting prisoners to starvation and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment to justice;

- calling on the authorities to immediately ensure that prisoners currently held at Bubanza are given food, treated humanely and allowed visits by their relatives and members of independent humanitarian organizations, such as representatives of human rights and humanitarian organizations in Burundi;

- requesting the authorities to issue clear public instructions to all members of the security forces that withholding food from prisoners is a violation of human rights and a criminal offence and that those found responsible for such abuses will be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

1. President:

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Président/ Dear President

Major Pierre Buyoya

Président de la République

Présidence de la République BP 1870,

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: President Buyoya, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5039 presibu bdi or

5049 mnd bdi

2. Prime Minister:

Monsieur Adrien Sibomana

Monsieur le Premier Ministre/

Premier Ministre et Ministre de la Planification

Dear Prime Minister

Présidence de la République

BP 1870

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Sibomana, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: 5039 presibu bdi

3. Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Sébastien Ntahuga **Ministre Ntahuga/Dear Minister**

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 1880

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

Telegrams: Ministre Ntahuga, Bujumbura, Burundi

Telexes: via Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

5065 minirext, attn Ministre Ntahuga

COPIES TO:

1) Minister of the Interior:

Monsieur Libère Bararunyeretse

Ministre de l'Intérieur et du

Développement des collectivités locales

Ministère de l'Intérieur, BP 1910

Bujumbura, République du Burundi

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Monsieur Cyprien Mbonimpa
Ministre des Relations extérieures et de
la Coopération
Ministère des Relations extérieures
BP 1840
Bujumbura, République du Burundi

3) Minister of Health

Dr Norbert Ngendabanyikwa
Ministère de la Santé publique
Bujumbura, République du Burundi

4) Governor of Bubanza

Monsieur Balthazar Kirubusa
Gouverneur de la Province de Bubanza
Hôtel de ville, Bubanza
République du Burundi

5) General Administrator of National Security:

Monsieur Laurent Niyonkuru
Administrateur Général de la Sûreté
nationale
Ministère de la Défense nationale
Bujumbura, République du Burundi

6) President of Human Rights Organization:

Monsieur Eugène Nindorera
Président
Ligue burundaise des droits de l'homme
BP 177
Bujumbura
République du Burundi

7) Newspaper Editor:

Monsieur le Rédacteur-en-Chef
Le Renouveau
BP 2870, Bujumbura,
République du Burundi

and to diplomatic representatives of
Burundi in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, on your section office, if sending appeals after 30 January 1992.