

PUBLIC

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Prisoners of Conscience/Detention without charge

26 May 2006

BURUNDI

Thacien Sibomana (m)

Poppon Mudugu (m)

The two men named above were arrested on 21 May as they attempted to hold a monthly meeting at a local centre in the town of Gitega. They have been charged with "threatening state security" and are being held in Gitega Prison. Amnesty international considers the men to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of assembly, association and expression.

Thacien Sibomana and Poppon Mudugu are members of "AC Genocide Crimoso", an organization which seeks to avoid any re-occurrence of genocide in Burundi by remembering the victims and engaging in open, frank discussion on the country's history. The main delegation of the organisation met in the capital Bujumbura on 21 May and a smaller group organised a partner meeting in Gitega where they booked a room for the event at the local "Club des Amis" centre. When delegates arrived at the venue, they were prevented from entering by local police who were waiting outside the building. According to local sources, the provincial authorities had deemed the meeting to be illegal and therefore a threat to state security. "AC Genocide Crimoso" has been granted authorization to hold monthly meetings since 1997. This authorization was granted permanently by the Administrator of Gitega in December 2005.

The meeting was moved to another venue nearby but was interrupted near the end when the Governor of Gitega, the Deputy Commissioner of the Judicial Police and several police officers entered the room. They broke up the meeting and seized the agenda and minutes from Thacien Sibomana. He and Poppon Mudugu were then arrested after the meeting in a nearby bar. They were initially questioned by the Chief Prosecutor of Gitega and subsequently charged with "threatening state security". Poppon Mudugu's wife Aline Ngendankazi was also arrested, though she was later released.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French or your own language:

- expressing grave concern for Thacien Sibomana and Poppon Mudugu, members of AC Genocide Crimoso, who are currently detained in Gitega prison on the charge of "threatening state security";
- urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release them as they are prisoners of conscience who have been detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of assembly;
- reminding the authorities that the right to freedom of assembly is laid down in international standards such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Burundi is a state party to both of these instruments and has an obligation to ensure freedom of expression.

APPEALS TO:

President

Président Pierre Nkurunziza

Président de la République

Boulevard de l'Uprona

Rohero I

BP 1870, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Government Spokesperson

Monsieur Karenga Ramadhani

Ministre de l'information, de la Communication, des Relations avec le Parlement et Porte-Parole du
Gouvernement

2e Bdg de l'INSS

Chaussée Prince Rwagasore

BP 1080, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 22 17 66

+257 21 63 18

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Madame Clotilde Niragira

Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux

Chaussee Prince Rwagasore

BP 1880, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 21 86 10

+257 25 00 40

Salutation: Madame la Ministre/Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior and Public Security

Monsieur Evariste Ndayishimiye

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique

Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité Publique

Avenue du Gouvernement

Building Grand Bureau

BP 1910, Bujumbura, Burundi

Fax: +257 24 53 51

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Governor of Gitega

Gouverneur de la Gitega

Monsieur Selemani Mossi

Bureau de la Province de Gitega

BP122, Gitega, Burundi

Fax: +257 40 23 37 / 40 26 22

Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur/ Dear Governor

and to diplomatic representatives of Burundi accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 July 2006.