

EXTERNAL

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MEDICAL CONCERN

**DEATHS IN DETENTION
RWANDA**

Amnesty International has recently received reports that five detainees in Rwanda have died of dysentery and is seriously concerned for others held in overcrowded detention centres since mass arrests took place in October 1990. More than 5,000 people were arrested following an armed invasion by Ugandan-based Rwandese exiles on 1 October 1990. The government say that they have released some 3,800 detainees but are still believed to be holding over 1000. Those reported to have died from dysentery are:

- . Evariste Kamugunga: businessman aged approximately 55; died on 27 October 1990
- . Paul Gakuba: businessman aged approximately 55; died at the end of November 1990
- . Zefrin Kagiraneza: teacher; died at the end of November 1990
- . Venant Gakwaya: businessman; died in the first week of December 1990
- . Gaspard Rwabukumba: researcher at the National Institute of Scientific Research (Institut National de Recherche Scientifique); died in early December 1990

The five were all being held in Butare prison in the south of the country. Evariste Kamungunga was hospitalized on 26 October after his family pressed for medical care; he died in Butare hospital the following day. Paul Gakuba and Zefrin Kagiraneza are also reported to have died in Butare hospital where they are said to have been transferred at the last minute "on the brink of death".

The arrests took place following a sudden and violent incursion into Rwanda by armed Rwandese exiles, mainly of Tutsi origin based in Uganda, in an attempt to overthrow the government of President Juvenal Habyarimana. Those detained were arrested on suspicion of sympathy for, or involvement in, the attack. The majority, including the three reported to have died, are of Tutsi origin, an ethnic minority in Rwanda.

BACKGROUND

Previous incursions into Rwanda from Uganda and other neighbouring countries were led by Tutsi exiles in the 1960s. The minority Tutsi monarch had been overthrown in 1959 by political leaders of the majority Hutu ethnic group; intercommunal violence followed, resulting in the killings of thousands and the flight into exile of tens of thousands of Tutsi. The incursions during the 1960s led to many extrajudicial executions and the imprisonment of Tutsi suspected of connections with the insurgents. The last of these were released in 1985, although one who was arrested in 1982 is still serving a life sentence.

Following the October invasion of the country, government troops regained control of most of the towns occupied by the rebels at the beginning of the fighting and the rebels have since dispersed to various parts of northern Rwanda.

Amnesty International believes that many of those in detention may have been arrested solely on the basis of their ethnic origin or as a result of family connections with Tutsi living in exile, rather than for any involvement in the invasion. Others detained include over 200 Ugandans apparently held because the attackers were mainly Tutsi based in Uganda, rather than because they themselves had links with the fighting. Recent reports also suggest that some may have been detained for failing to voice support for the government's action against the armed rebels. The organization has been informed that those still in detention are to be brought to trial. Those already released apparently appeared before a Commission de triage, a screening or vetting committee, but it is not known what form of judicial process was involved. The

whereabouts of some detainees is still unknown, giving rise to rumours that people suspected of involvement in the insurgency have been executed extrajudicially by the Rwandese security forces.

The recent deaths and reports of an epidemic of dysentery in one of the prisons give rise to fears for those detained. Amnesty International is concerned that with over 1,000 people detained over the last two months, the overcrowding in the prisons and lack of adequate sanitary and medical facilities could lead to serious health problems and further deaths. It is appealing to the Rwandese authorities to take urgent measures to control the reported spread of dysentery and to provide guarantees that detainees in all detention centres will be provided with adequate sanitation, safe food and water supplies and proper access to medical care. It is calling on the Rwandese authorities as a matter of urgency to review the cases of those detained to ensure the release of all who are imprisoned without having committed any recognizably criminal offence.

INTERNAL

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To: Medical professionals

From: Medical Office / Research Department - Africa

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MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION**DEATHS IN DETENTION****RWANDA****Keywords**

Theme: Deaths in detention/medical care/prison conditions/possible POCs

Summary

Five detainees in Butare prison in the south of Rwanda are reported to have died recently as a result of dysentery. They were among over 1,000 people still believed to be in detention following mass arrests which took place after the 1 October 1990 invasion of the country by exiled Rwandese and the ensuing fighting between rebels and government troops. Over 5,000 were initially arrested. There is concern that conditions in the overcrowded detention centres will lead to the spread of disease and that those in detention do not have access to adequate medical care. Amnesty International is calling on the Rwandese government to release all those detained solely for suspected opposition to the government and who have not used or advocated violence. It is also calling for the release of some 200 Ugandan nationals who were apparently arrested in retaliation for the Ugandan authorities' alleged support for the rebels.

Recommended Actions

Letters, telegrams and telexes are requested from medical professionals, in French where possible, and should

- express concern at reports that five detainees held in Butare prison have died as

a result of dysentery (letters should give their names)

- ask whether there has been any inquiry into these deaths and whether the cause

of death has been definitely established

- ask that this information be made public and seek information on the measures

that are being taken to control the spread of disease in prison establishments

- express concern that over 1,000 people arrested in October and November 1990 are still reported to be detained without charge or trial and that poor and overcrowded prison conditions and the lack of adequate medical care put the lives of detainees at risk

- urge that all possible measures are taken to ensure that detainees in all detention

centres have access to adequate sanitary and medical facilities and also seek information on steps that are being taken to guarantee this

- express your concern that some of those detained may have been arrested solely because of their ethnic or national origin, their

non-violent opinions or their family

links with individuals who are suspected government opponents; seek assurances that

anyone so held and who is not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence is

released as a matter of urgency

Addresses

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COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Rwanda in your country

