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His Excellence Faustin Twagiramungu
Prime Minister of the Republic of Rwanda

Dear Prime Minister Twagiramungu,

I enclose a copy of the latest Human Rights Watch/Africa report on Rwanda. In it we point out the continuing human rights abuses of soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army and civilians associated with them. These include summary executions and other killings, arbitrary arrest, and detention in irregular facilities and in inhumane conditions. We call upon your government to take effective measures to halt these abuses immediately.

We note that the government of Rwanda has arrested a number of soldiers charged with having committed such abuses and we recommend that you proceed as quickly as possible to fair and public trials of those so accused.

We express concern over the lives lost in closing the camps of displaced persons and urge the Rwandan government to take all necessary steps, in cooperation with agencies of the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations, to prevent further loss of life as other camps are closed. We note with satisfaction that UNAMIR troops carried out a disarmament operation in the camps without loss of life and that the Rwandan government has decided not to insist upon closing all the camps before the first of the year.

We urge the international community to assist Rwanda immediately in establishing a civilian administration and an effective judicial system. We hope that such aid will soon be forthcoming and that the government of Rwanda will be able to use it promptly and efficiently to prosecute the thousands now imprisoned on accusations of genocide and other crimes. We strongly recommend that all civilian detainees be transferred to official prisons under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice. We urge also that the cases of those detained without charge be reviewed quickly and that those who have clearly been falsely accused be released. We call, in particular, for prompt action on the cases of Judge Gratien Ruhorahoza, former burgomaster Antoine Sibomana, and former ambassador Sylvestre Kamali, all of whom we believe to be arbitrarily detained.

Since the publication of the report last week, another judge, Anaclet Nkundimfura, Vice-President of the Cour d'Appel at Nyanza, was arrested and is now being held without charge. Judge Nkundimfura left his home for a displaced persons' camp in Gikongoro during the summer and was hospitalized there. In May and June, several members of his family, including a son and a son-in-law, were killed by Interahamwe militia or soldiers of the Forces Armees Rwandaises. When he returned from Gikongoro, he found the four houses he owns in Nyanza occupied by others, at least one of them by a soldier or soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army. Human Rights Watch/Africa asks that you release immediately Judge Nkundimffura unless a legally-empowered magistrate finds substantial grounds for believing that he has committed a crime.



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Thank you very much for seeing me during my last visit to Rwanda. I look forward to seeing you again when I am next in the country, possibly during the month of January.

Sincerely,

Alison Des Forges