

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 16/001/2007

09 January 2007

Further Information on UA 303/06 (AFR 16/018/2006, 15 November 2006) - Threat of arbitrary arrest and illegal detention/possible prisoner of conscience/harassment/intimidation

BURUNDI

Gabriel Rufyiri (m)

Anti-corruption activist Gabriel Rufyiri was provisionally released on 12 December. He is still however charged with "defamation" ("*imputations dommageables*") for which he faces up to a year in prison if convicted. The charge of "defamation" arose from allegations of government corruption voiced by Gabriel Rufyiri. It is vital to maintain pressure on the authorities during this important stage of the legal proceedings.

If Gabriel Rufyiri were to be detained again, Amnesty International would consider him a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Gabriel Rufyiri is the President of *L'Observatoire de Lutte contre la Corruption et les Malversations Economiques* (OLUCOME), the Observatory for the Struggle against Corruption and Economic Embezzlement. He had been arbitrarily arrested and illegally detained in Mpimba Prison in the capital, Bujumbura, on Wednesday, 17 August.

Gabriel Rufyiri had voiced concern over apparent corruption in the sale of a presidential plane. Local human rights groups criticized the speed at which the sale was made, and complained that the government did not accept the highest bid, thus losing US\$2 million.

Gabriel Rufyiri also recently criticised the alleged corrupt awarding of a contract to supply the police, with 1,500 tonnes of beans in November 2005 and 1,800 barrels of palm oil in June 2006. OLUCOME stated that the sale had been riddled with irregularities, and that it had cost the state over 200 million Burundian francs (approximately US\$300,000).

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

- expressing grave concern that the charges of "defamation" may still be brought against anti-corruption activist Gabriel Rufyiri, apparently for revealing allegations of corruption and embezzlement by the Burundian authorities;
- urging the authorities to drop all charges against him immediately and unconditionally;
- stating that if he is detained, he will be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Burundi's defamation laws are not used to undermine the right to freedom of expression.

APPEALS TO: (Fax numbers can be difficult to get through to. Please keep trying, or else send appeals by post.)

Head of Communications in the President's Office

Monsieur Willy Nyamitwe

Bureau Presse & Communication, Présidence de la République du Burundi.

E-mail : nyamitwe@burundi-gov.bi

President

Président Pierre Nkurunziza

Président de la République

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Fax: +257 22 74 90

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Excellence

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/ 21 63 18

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

(For members in European Union Countries only) - Head of Delegation, EU Mission in Burundi

Monsieur Georges André

Fax: + 257 22 46 12

Salutation: Monsieur André

and other 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 20 February 2007.