

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Rwanda: Reveal whereabouts of detained Rwandan refugee

Joel Mutabazi, a Rwandan refugee, was abducted from a safehouse on 25 October 2013 where he was under the protection of the Ugandan authorities and illegally returned to Rwanda. He is currently detained in Rwanda at an undisclosed location. Amnesty International calls for the Rwandan authorities to reveal his whereabouts and to ensure that he has access to a lawyer of his choice, to medical care, and is able to communicate with his family.

The Rwandan police issued a statement on 31 October 2013 confirming that Joel Mutabazi was detained in Rwanda. They said he is suspected of terrorism in Rwanda.

The police have declined to provide any information to Amnesty International, including where he is being detained, the legal basis for his detention and whether he has access to a lawyer.

Joel Mutabazi is at particular risk from the Rwandan authorities because of his former role in the Rwandan security forces, including as a bodyguard to President Kagame. He was detained incommunicado by Rwanda's Department of Military Intelligence at Camp Kami for several months in 2010 and 2011, where he was subjected to torture. Amnesty International has documented numerous allegations of torture and other ill-treatment of individuals detained at Camp Kami.

An official statement from the Ugandan Ministry for Disaster Preparedness, Management and Refugees has said that the abduction was carried out by a police officer who made an error of judgement and handed Joel Mutabazi over to Rwandan officials. The Ugandan authorities have publicly stated that they are investigating the matter and that the officer has been suspended from duty.

The Ugandan authorities transferred Joel Mutabazi without going through official extradition proceedings.

Joel Mutabazi fled Rwanda after receiving credible information that his life was under threat. He sought asylum in Uganda in October 2011.

Background:

Joel Mutabazi had previously survived an assassination attempt on 12 July 2012 at his home in Kasangati, Wakiso District, Central Region, Uganda. Joel Mutabazi reported that he heard voices outside his front door and initially assumed that it was his wife, who had gone to a neighbour's house to watch television. He opened the door and found a man with a pistol. The man fired one shot immediately, which narrowly missed Joel Mutabazi, as he ducked to protect himself. The bullet hit the door instead. The assailant fired again and the second bullet hit the other door. After Joel Mutabazi cried for help, the assailant fled. After this incident, the Ugandan government in conjunction with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) placed Joel Mutabazi under police protection.

It was reported in August 2013 that a previous abduction attempt failed. On this occasion, Joel Mutabazi was allegedly put in a car and was set free when the Office of the Prime Minister intervened by telephone and called on the Inspector General of Police to ensure he was not extradited to Rwanda because of his refugee status.

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