

# CNDD demands international inquiry into slaughter of Burundi villagers

by Linda de Hoyos

The National Council for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD) of Burundi has called for an international commission of investigation to determine the responsibility for the massacre of 500 Hutu civilians in Burundi on Jan. 1 who were living in the village of Rukaramu.

The CNDD, led by Leonard Nyangoma, has been involved in a protracted war with the military junta of Pierre Buyoya, who took power in a coup on July 26, 1996. Under Buyoya's leadership, the mono-ethnic Tutsi military of Burundi, joined forces with the Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Ugandan Popular Defense Forces of dictator Yoweri Museveni, to invade Zaire on behalf of the British Privy Council and its mining combines, which followed in the wake of the marcher-lord force.

Nyangoma was the former Interior Minister under President Melchior Ndadaye, the first Hutu and the first elected President of Burundi. But, elected in June 1993, on Oct. 21, 1993, Ndadaye was brutally murdered in an attempted coup orchestrated by Buyoya. From that point onward, the Tutsi military waged a campaign of assassination and intimidation against the elected government, murdering scores of provincial governors, cabinet members, and parliamentarians, until Buyoya destroyed any last vestige of democracy in Burundi with his coup of 1996.

The slaughter of 500 Hutu men, women, and children in Rukaramu village was first reported by the Buyoya regime, which blamed the CNDD for the massacre.

However, the CNDD contends, the destruction of the village was the Burundi military's retribution for a stunning attack by CNDD's military wing, Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD), on the international airport at Bujumbura, the nearby Gakumu military camp and police detachment.

The surprise attack awakened the Tutsi troops, "while they were in a deep sleep, after a year-end drinking bout and, more importantly, after hearing the speech of the head of the apartheid regime in Burundi, Maj. Pierre Buyoya, in which he told the population that our FDD forces had been conquered, and that his military men could indulge in New Year's celebrations with no fear," notes the CNDD declaration of Jan. 6. The military operation extended over six hours, and, according to independent sources, resulted in the death of 300 troops of the Burundian military; the destruction of three

small airplanes at the airport; the destruction of the military barracks at Gakumbu; the destruction of the main electrical unit to Bujumbura; and the seizure of the weapons and military equipment at the warehouse of the Tutsi military's brigade headquarters in the area.

It is by far the most successful military action carried out by the FDD in its three-year campaign against Buyoya.

Immediately, Buyoya ordered the entire area to be sealed off, with no foreign reporters or other agencies permitted into the region around the airport, including the village of Rukaramu.

In Rukaramu, the military, "rather than courageously confronting our combatants, or recognizing they had lost this battle, as well as several others previously, chose instead to launch a criminal attack in full daylight against the village of Rukaramu where the only inhabitants are *Hutus* repatriated from neighboring countries in the '80s and '90s."

In a replay of the Nazi liquidation of the village of the Czechoslovak village of Lidice in revenge for the resistance's assassination of Gestapo chief Reinhard Heydrich, the Burundi military wreaked revenge by murdering civilians. "Over 500 people, mainly women, children and old men, lost their lives, first shelled, then killed by bayonet. At the time of this writing, the army is still carrying out systematic massacres of civil populations in the zones of Maramvya, in the Mutimbuzi commune, outside of Bujumbura."

The Buyoya regime then issued a report claiming that the FDD had carried out the slaughter in Rukaramu. The CNDD declaration points out that the officers who officially issued this claim, Lt. Col. Mamert Sinarinzi and Lt. Col. Jean-Bosco Baradanga, were the same people who announced the Oct. 21, 1993 declaration of the army's coup attempt against President Ndayaye. That is, the putschists against Ndadaye are now the official spokesmen for the Buyoya's Tutsi military.

The battle in the suburbs of Bujumbura continues, with attacks on military installations carried out by the FDD on Jan. 6 and thereafter.

## Buyoya's record

As the CNDD declaration of Jan. 6 states, the wanton slaughter of Hutu civilians is not only completely detrimental

to the political campaign being waged by the CNDD-FDD, but coheres with *Buyoya's* record of atrocities against civilians.

Since he took power in 1996, Buyoya has incarcerated more than 800,000 Hutu civilians into so-called resettlement villages, which are no better than concentration camps. In a statement issued on April 9, 1997, the U.S. State Department protested the concentration-camp policy: "The United States finds Maj. Pierre Buyoya's self-declared Interim Government's policy of forced regroupment to be highly objectionable. Regroupment camps located in at least six of Burundi's 15 provinces house more than 150,000 Burundians, both Hutus and Tutsis.

"The forced resettlement of civilians into camps disrupts traditional rural life and places an already vulnerable population at risk of violence, malnourishment, and disease."

On March 11, 1997, the World Health Organization had reported that the camps were now the site of the most serious outbreak of typhoid since World War II, with up to 1,000 people dying daily of the disease.

On July 15, 1997, Amnesty International decried the regroupment policy, stating that hundreds of men, women, and children had been "extrajudicially executed during the process" of "resettlement." According to Amnesty: "Scores of children who could not possibly be suspected of being members of armed groups are reported to have been killed in massacres during regroupment and counterinsurgency operations. Moreover, the majority of killings of civilians during counterinsurgency operations appear to have been deliberate and targeted killings, sometimes in reprisals for attacks by armed groups."

The execution of children is a hallmark of the Burundian Tutsi military, which in 1972, under military dictator Michel Micombero, carried out a campaign, particularly in southern Burundi, to murder every male Hutu attending school. This remains a favorite tactic of the Buyoya regime. According to the CNDD, between Oct. 15 and 21, in the province of rural Bujumbura, the Buyoya military killed 161 Hutu civilians, including children, and burned down 18 primary and secondary schools in the communes of Kabezi, Mutambu, and Kanyosha.

Yet, despite this, the Buyoya regime continues to have credibility in the international community, while the duly elected government of Burundi is either dead or has joined the CNDD. The international community, the CNDD notes, continues to overlook Buyoya's record:

- "Massacre of over 80,000 civilians by an army following his orders, since his return to power on July 25, 1997.
- "Destruction of basic infrastructure throughout the country, during the war that the army has imposed on the population since Oct. 21, 1993 and which it will certainly not win. No one can overcome a people determined to free themselves from the yoke of a militaro-fascist dictatorship.
- "Creation of several Nazi-style concentration camps,

which hold only citizens of the Hutu ethnic group, accused by the apartheid regime of collaborating with FDD combatants.

- "Militarization of the entire Tutsi ethnic group, by distributing firearms to civilians belonging to his Tutsi ethnic group, as stated by the Cabinet Director of the Interior Ministry, Mr. Salvator Mikumbi, and as was the case during the 1972 genocide."

Given the past and current actions of the Buyoya regime, therefore, the CNDD declaration states: "We would request from everyone, especially the UN and the OUA [Organization of African Unity], that an international commission of investigation, the composition of which would be approved by both warring parties, be set up to investigate these massacres and determine the army's responsibility, and to thus clear our FDD combatants of the unspeakable slanders against them by the genocidalist army of the apartheid regime led by Maj. Pierre Buyoya."

### **The CNDD's political campaign**

Although the CNDD is often described as "Hutu rebels," or "Hutu extremists," the National Council for the Defense of Democracy has never been a mono-ethnic group representing Hutus, but is a principled political organization whose leadership is composed of both Tutsis and Hutus, who are committed to eradicating the apartheid regime of Tutsi overlord rule that has dominated Burundi, especially since the 1962 murder of Prince Louis Rwagasore. Although a Tutsi prince, Rwagasore, who was married to a Hutu and was expected to be independent Burundi's first President, was dedicated to forging an integrated Burundi.

Today, the CNDD is active in 60% of the territory of Burundi, according to CNDD spokesman Jerome Ndiho of Brussels. Currently, Ndiho said, the CNDD has "control of" the rural areas of the entire provinces of Cibitoke, Bubanza, Makamba, Ruyigi, Kayanza, Gitega, and all of the province of Cankuzo, including the cities. In addition, it controls half of the province of Muyinga and most of the province of Bururi. Ndiho clarified that these areas are not "liberated areas"—that is, there is no peace in these regions, but the FDD controls the secondary roads, and in some cases, the primary roads of the province.

In those areas under its control, the CNDD has established a "parallel administration," including a parallel police, a parallel judicial system, and designated local officials. The CNDD, Ndiho said, is working to ensure training or education of prosecutors, and working to improve the knowledge of the laws, "in order to reduce any popular justice without judgment"—that is, to avoid Jacobin retribution. The code of laws to be used, he said, is the Constitution of Burundi of March 9, 1992, by which the last and only national elections were held. In addition, all members of the FDD are under orders to strictly observe the United Nations 1948 Human Rights Charter.