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FOR AF/C AND H.
E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: OPDC, PREL, BY, US
SUBJECT: LETTER FROM MEMBERS OF CONGRESS TO PRESIDENT BUYOYA
REF: (A) EMBASSY-AF/C TELCONS; (B) BUJUMBURA 4771

1. THE EMBASSY RECEIVED A LETTER THROUGH THE MAILS DATED OCTOBER 5, 1988, FOR PRESIDENT BUYOYA FROM TWENTY-SIX MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS. (SEE PARA. 4 BELOW FOR THE TEXT AND SIGNATURES.) IT WAS SENT TO THE EMBASSY'S LOCAL ADDRESS AND DID NOT CONTAIN ANY COVERING LETTER REQUESTING US TO DELIVER IT TO PRESIDENT BUYOYA. IN THE ABSENCE OF INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE DEPARTMENT ABOUT THE LETTER, I GAVE IT TO MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS CYPRIEN MBONIMPA ON NOVEMBER 18 (WE RECEIVED THE LETTER THE PREVIOUS WEEK), WITH THE REQUEST THAT HE PASS IT ON TO PRESIDENT BUYOYA.

2. I ALSO GAVE MBONIMPA A COPY OF THE LETTER, WHICH HE READ IN MY PRESENCE. HE PROMISED TO GIVE IT TO PRESIDENT BUYOYA IMMEDIATELY. HE SAID THE PRESIDENT WOULD DECIDE HOW TO RESPOND TO THE LETTER, BUT THAT HIS ADVICE WOULD BE TO REGARD IT AS OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS. MBONIMPA SAID THAT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, HE UNDERSTANDS THE CONCERNS UNDERLYING THE LETTER, BUT THAT THE SIGNATORIES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY EXAGGERATED MEDIA REPORTS ABOUT EVENTS IN BURUNDI. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS NO "TORTURE OR ILL TREATMENT OF PRISONERS." MBONIMPA ADDED THAT THE RECORD IS NOW BEING SET STRAIGHT BY REPORTS SUCH AS THE ONE PREPARED BY THE UN AGENCIES HERE (REF B). MOREOVER, HE ADDED, THE MEASURES RECOMMENDED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL LETTER ALREADY HAVE BEEN OR ARE BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE GRB.

3. MBONIMPA CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT THE GRB RESPECTS AND UNDERSTANDS THE CONCERNS OF THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, AND HE ASKED ME TO CONVEY TO THE SIGNATORIES OF THE LETTER THE MESSAGE THAT THE GRB WILL TAKE THEIR VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT AS IT IMPLEMENTS ITS POLICIES OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND UNITY.

4. THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS ON THE ABOVE SENTIMENTS TO THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS CONCERNED.

5. BEGIN TEXT OF LETTER.

"YOUR EXCELLENCY:

AS MEMBERS OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS, WE ARE WRITING TO EXPRESS OUR CONCERN ABOUT REPORTS THAT SEVERAL THOUSAND UNARMED CIVILIANS WERE KILLED BY GOVERNMENT FORCES IN DISTURBANCES BEGINNING ON AUGUST 14, 1988 IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCES OF NGOZI

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AND KIRUNDO. WHILE THE OFFICIAL FIGURES RELEASED IN BUJUMBURA PUT THE DEATH TOLL AT 5,000, OTHER SOURCES ESTIMATE THE FIGURE TO BE MUCH HIGHER. WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT MANY CIVILIANS ARRESTED OR EXTRAJUDICIALLY EXECUTED MAY HAVE BEEN VICTIMS BECAUSE OF THEIR ETHNIC ORIGIN AS HUTUS.

WE RESPECTFULLY URGE YOU TO ENSURE THAT ANY FURTHER ACTIONS BY GOVERNMENT FORCES BE CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONALLY-ACCEPTED STANDARDS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU:

-- IMMEDIATELY ISSUE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL SECURITY PERSONNEL THAT THE USE OF LETHAL FORCE AGAINST CIVILIANS OR OTHERS IS UNJUSTIFIED EXCEPT IN THE MOST EXTREME LIFE-THREATENING SITUATIONS AND THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH KILLINGS WILL BE PROSECUTED;

-- INSTRUCT SECURITY PERSONNEL THAT TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT OF PRISONERS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED AND THAT PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH KILLINGS WILL BE PROSECUTED;

-- ESTABLISH AN IMPARTIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO REPORTS OF TORTURE AND KILLINGS OF CIVILIANS BY GOVERNMENT FORCES TO RECOMMEND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN AGAINST SECURITY PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ACTIONS TO PREVENT FURTHER ABUSES;

-- MAKE PUBLIC THE NAMES AND PLACES OF DETENTION OF THOSE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY IN CONNECTION WITH THE DISTURBANCES; AND

-- RELEASE WITHOUT DELAY ALL PRISONERS HELD SOLELY ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR ETHNIC ORIGIN OR POLITICAL BELIEFS AND CHARGE AND BRING TO TRIAL ALL OTHERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

WE URGE YOU TO UNDERTAKE THE ABOVE ACTIONS AND THEREBY DEMONSTRATE YOUR GOVERNMENT'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED HUMAN RIGHTS.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PROMPT ATTENTION TO OUR RECOMMENDATIONS. SINCERELY. END TEXT.

(SIGNED BY:)

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 BUJUMBURA 04849

BILL GREEN
HERBERT BATEMAN
MIKE LOWRY
JOHN SPRATT
GEORGE BROWN
MORRIS UDALL
RON WYDEN
HARRIS FAWELL
MARCY KAPTUR
STENY HOYER
BARBARA BOXER
JOHN PORTER
BEN BLAZ

LES AUCCOIN
PATRICIA SCHROEDER
WILLIAM GRAY
JIM SAXTON
ROBERT MRAZER
RICHARD DURBIN
CHET ATKINS
FRANK WOLF
CLAUDE PEPPER
BYRON DORGAN
LARRY SMITH
JOE KENNEDY
JIM SCHEUER

PHILLIPS
END OF MESSAGE

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