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Burundi: Treatment of members of the former Baganwa royal family by the government authorities, Tutsis and Hutus (1962 - July 2009)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

An article published on 13 October 2008 by the Association for Reflection and Information on Burundi (Association de réflexion et d'information sur le Burundi, ARIB), a non-profit association founded in Belgium in 1995 (ARIB n.d.), stated that the 13 October 1961 killing of Prince Louis Rwagasore, Prime Minister and eldest son of King Mwambusta IV Bangiricenge, precipitated the fall of the monarchy. According to a report on the United Nations (UN) International Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, the monarchy was overthrown in 1966 following a military coup orchestrated by Michel Micombero with the support of Tutsis (UN 23 July 1996). An article published on 29 April 2003 by the Umuco News Agency (UNA) indicates that Charles Ndzizeye (Ntare V), the last king of Burundi, was betrayed by the Ugandan government and killed on 29 April 1972 in Gitega by the Burundian authorities, who are responsible for the disappearance of his corpse.

During a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 5 May 2009, a representative of the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (Bureau intégré des Nations Unies au Burundi, BINUB) stated that the royal family has asked authorities, through Member of Parliament Rosa Paula Iribagiza Mwambusta, to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of the last king of Burundi, to organize a state funeral in his honour and to give special treatment to the family members of former leaders (UN 5 May 2009; see also Renaissance FM/Bonesha FM 27 Feb. 2009 and RTNB 30 Apr. 2009), because, since his death, [translation] "none of the succeeding governments . . . has made any effort to find his remains and give him a dignified burial" (Renaissance FM/Bonesha FM 27 Feb. 2009). With regard to the repatriation of the remains of King Mwambusta IV, who died in exile in Switzerland in 1976, the Burundian authorities reportedly consider that the matter [translation] "is not a priority" (ARIB 13 Oct. 2009).

During a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 3 May 2009, the project manager for the Burundian Human Rights League (Ligue burundaise des droits de l'homme ITEKA, Ligue ITEKA) stated that his organization has never heard of a situation in which a person was subjected to any particular treatment by the Hutu or Tutsi authorities merely because he or she was a monarchist. Moreover, the Representative from Ligue ITEKA indicated that, although certain Baganwa express some nostalgia for the times of the monarchy, the country's current political context forces them to choose between the party in power and the opposition (Ligue ITEKA 3 May 2009).

However, according to some sources, Princess Esther Kamatari, King Mwambusta's niece (Afrik.com 18 Jan. 2005), reportedly received death threats after she announced her candidacy for the 2005 presidential elections in Burundi (Telegraph.co.uk 7 Nov. 2004; see also Histoire de l'Afrique n.d.). In addition, Princess Esther Kamatari stated in an article published on 22 August 2005 by the UNA that Prince Godefroid Kamatari, her older brother (*The Independent* 23 Oct. 2004), had died in Kigali under unexplained circumstances. Information on the authors of the death threats made against Princess Esther Kamatari during the 2005 election campaign or on the circumstances surrounding the death of Prince Godefroid Kamatari could not be

found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. Additional information on the treatment of the Baganwa by the Tutsi or Hutu authorities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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