



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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22 April 2005

BDI43522.FE

Burundi: Whether a group called "Amasekaya" exists and, if so, its objectives, structure, and participation in demonstrations in Bujumbura, particularly in those that took place in March and May 2004 (April 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No mention of a group called "Amasekaya" could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, several sources reported the existence of a "Tutsi organization called Self Defence Forces of Amasekanya" or PA Amasekanya [Puissance d'autodéfense Amasekanya] (AFP 20 Jan. 2005; see also *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.b; Net Press 4 Apr. 2005).

Described as a "hard-line Tutsi movement" (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.b; see also AFP 20 Jan. 2005) and an "anti-genocide movement" (Net Press 4 Apr. 2005), the PA Amasekanya is led by Diomède Rutamucero (AFP 20 Jan. 2005; Net Press 4 Apr. 2005; *ibid.* 24 Nov. 2004).

The PA Amasekanya president in Bujumbura provided the following information on his organization during a 21 April 2005 telephone interview.

The PA Amasekanya was founded in 1994 following the 1993 "genocide" of Tutsis by the government authorities in power at that time. The group is working to ensure that no other genocide occurs in the African Great Lakes Region, particularly in Burundi. Moreover, the group denounces the fact that the perpetrators of the genocide are permitted to hold government positions. It also opposes both the presence of the United Nations in Burundi, claiming that UN forces support the [translation] "genocidal" regime, and the Arusha Accords, which are the basis for the transitional government currently in place.

In its early days, the PA Amasekanya consisted mainly of youths. Today, however, its members include men and women of all ages and ethnic groups. Small committees of PA Amasekanya members can be found in Burundi and abroad, particularly in Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Canada. The group does not issue membership cards because it is not recognized by the government authorities and because it wants to keep its members from being flushed out and arrested. Nevertheless, any member can request and obtain a certificate from the organization's president. In such a case, the PA Amasekanya leader verifies the person's participation in his or her respective committee (each committee has a list of members) before issuing a certificate. Every PA Amasekanya certificate is issued on the organization's letterhead, bears the group's seal, and is signed by its president.

During a 20 April 2005 telephone interview, a journalist from NetPress, a private news agency in Burundi, indicated that PA Amasekanya members often organize unauthorized demonstrations in Bujumbura, which result in frequent conflicts with security forces. He also said that, with the exception of their president, who is often detained for long periods, most of the group's supporters are arrested and detained for a few hours or days, and then released (NetPress 20 Apr. 2005).

Several sources reported that the PA Amasekanya president had been arrested and detained on several occasions (AFP 20 Jan. 2005; Net Press 24 Nov. 2004; *ibid.* 17 Jan. 2003). Moreover, *Country Reports 2004*

indicated that, during 2004, "the Transitional Government denied requests by PA Amasekanya . . . to demonstrate on several occasions" (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.b). The same source also stated that "[f]rom February 22 to May 2, approximately 67 members of PA-Amasekanya . . . were arrested" (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.b).

In a 29 March 2004 news program, the local Bonesha FM radio station reported that the PA Amasekanya movement was calling for the release of 15 of its members, who were being detained by the Burundi special branch. In a 24 March 2004 news program, the same radio station reported that a "[d]emonstration organized by members of PA Amasekanya [was] stopped by gendarmerie" (Bonesha 24 Mar. 2004).

For more information on the PA Amasekanya movement, please see BDI40655.F of 4 February 2003.

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Publications : *Africa Confidential* , *Africa Research Bulletin* , *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* , *Keesing's Record of World Events* , Resource Centre country file.

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica, Amnesty International, BBC Africa, Human Rights Watch (HRW), IRIN, International Crisis Group (ICG), ITEKA.

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