



UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



GENERAL

T/PET.3/54

25 October 1951

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

PETITION FROM MRS. MADELEINE CEBENGWE
CONCERNING RUANDA-URUNDI

Note by the Secretary-General: In accordance with rule 84 and supplementary rule F of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the Trusteeship Council and to the Government of Italy as the Administering Authority of the Trust Territory of Somaliland, two communications dated 5 and 6 August 1951 from Mrs. Madeleine Cebengwe concerning the Trust Territory of Ruanda-Urundi.

These communications were transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in East Africa.

COPY

Kitega, 5 August 1951.

To our honoured Protectors:

We know that your aim is to see that we are well treated by those who have accepted the trusteeship of Ruanda-Urundi with a view to promoting the development of civilization in our country.

Unfortunately, we are not being well treated. For example, we suffer much injustice at the hands of a certain Belgian, the Resident Schmidt. I would even add that all the Government agents and officials do much wrong to the natives because of him as they are under his orders and cannot gainsay him. The native chiefs, his friends in private, excel even the officials in the persecution of persons coming under their administration.

To quote an example, my brother, Harushumwami, sub-chief in Ngozi, in the chiefdom of Baranyanka, is now being persecuted in a most unjustifiable manner. Ever since 1948, chief Baranyanka, in collusion with the Resident Schmidt, has been trying to remove Harushumwami from office, but as the latter has never been guilty of any breach of duty which would warrant his dismissal, the Mwami did not agree to the proposal.

Even today Harushumwami is still the sub-chief, although he is unable to carry out the duties which devolve on him, because the chief prevents everyone in his sub-chiefdom from executing my brother's orders. In consequence, he might conceivably be accused of serious dereliction of duty, and such an accusation might, in turn, lead to his dismissal. No one may work for the sub-chief, even against wages; no one may visit him and anyone who renders him the least service is liable to severe punishment.

The Administering Authorities, although aware of the chief's animosity and hatred for the sub-chief, dare not take any action lest the Resident resort to reprisals. All this bitterness is the result of past friction between Chief Baranyanka and sub-chief Buryeburye (elder brother of Harushumwami, who was transferred because of the same troubles with the same chief).

/My brother

My brother Harushumwami requested a transfer and the district Mwami agreed. In spite of this, Schmidt did his utmost to put obstacles in the way of this transfer solely to please his friend chief Baranyanka.

My statements are not unfounded for these matters are common knowledge among the entire Barundi tribe, most of whom suffer under the rule of their chief.

At present, the said authorities are doing their utmost to pick a quarrel with my brother so as to be able to justify his dismissal. All sorts of misdemeanours are laid at his door although he has never been punished in any way in the past. We feel that this is a matter for you to take up and we hope that you will protect the interests of unfortunate people such as my brother. What is he to do? As I have already said, his woes is the result of the difficulties which beset his elder brother Buryeburye. It is indeed regrettable that you have not the time to visit the native people in their own settlements so as to see the wretched conditions which prevail among the masses. The manner in which they are treated, in spite of the good-will of the district Mwami, must evoke pity in all human hearts. Injustice is the order of the day in Ruanda-Urundi.

As for the Europeans, they consider that the best natives are those who persecute their own people.

I would ask you not to disclose my name, as otherwise I shall be subjected to the severest penalties.

Madeleine Cebengwe
c/o Residence Mwami a Kitega (Urundi)

(signature illegible)

COPY

Kitega, 6 August 1951.

To our Honoured Protectors,

I beg to submit a few details concerning the case of my brother, the sub-chief Buryeburye, who is now in prison at Kitega. With great anguish I tell you how my well-beloved brother is suffering in this prison.

It is most unfortunate that you did not inspect the prison as you would then have seen how prisoners unfriendly disposed towards Mr. Schmidt are treated.

The said sub-chief is imprisoned because, finding that Mr. Schmidt would not give him equitable monetary compensation for property which he abandoned on account of Mr. Schmidt's actions, he wrote to the Governor. From that time, he was persecuted up to the very day Mr. Schmidt had him imprisoned. The inhabitants of the sub-chiefdom, seeing their sub-chief in trouble, did not hesitate to accuse him of a number of irregularities, most of which could not possibly have occurred. He was immediately jailed like a criminal, without any investigation as to whether the charges made against him were true or false. He has been under lock and key since March 1951, and he is often confined in a dark cell; sometimes for five or ten days, and even for as long as a month.

Here are some facts I remember: He sleeps in a cell close to a drain which is used as a W. C. by those confined in the prison cells. He eats in his cell and flies from the W. C. hover over his food. He is indeed a pitiful sight! He is run down and suffers from weakness, whereas formerly he was a strapping fellow. In the past, even murderers have never been subjected to such harsh treatment.

Some prisoners are visited by members of their family, but for my brother this is not permitted. One day I myself was on the point of being clamped into jail because it was suspected that we had seen one another, although that was not the case.

/When

When you arrived, he was forced to work outside the prison at three kilometres distance with the sole object of concealing him, because had he seen you, he would certainly have spoken to you. After your departure he was again subjected to the usual tortures.

If it were possible, I would like to see him transferred to Usumbura so that he might see you. He could explain everything. His children are starving and no one looks after them. The crops which their father had raised have even been stolen from the fields because there is no one to watch over them; their mother was able to harvest only a very small part. What is to become of these five children? I find it impossible to tell you all I know. There are others, whom I have not named, who have been robbed by the Resident Schmidt. These people are poverty-stricken although previously they were in comfortable circumstances.

I would again ask you not to disclose my name for fear that I should be ill-treated by the authorities.^{1/}

Madeleine Cebengwe
c/o Residence du Mwami
Kitega (Urundi)

(Signed) illegible

^{1/} Note by the Secretariat. Before transmitting this petition to the local administration, the Visiting Mission satisfied itself that there was no ground for apprehension on the part of the petitioner.

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