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PETITION FROM MR. KIZITO GITAMBALA CONCERNING
RUANDA-URUNDI

(Circulated in accordance with rule 85 and supplementary rule F
of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council)

COPY

GITAMBALA Kizito
Prisoner in Usumbura Prison
Patient in the Hospital for Africans
at Usumbura

Usumbura, 18 February 1955.

To Mr. Bozidar Aleksander,
Principal Secretary,
United Nations Visiting Mission,
New York City.

Requesting him kindly to see that action is taken on this petition, I have
the honour to be, etc.

(Signed) Gitambala Kizito,

Usumbura, 18 February 1955.

Sir,

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the letters I have sent
to the Belgian legal authorities and, at the same time, to submit information to
you on the complaints of the Bayarmanda and Barundi.

(Signed) Gitambala Kizito

Usumbura, 18/2/1955.

GITEAMBALA, Kizito
Prisoner in Usumbura Prison,

Usumbura, 18 February 1955,

The Public Prosecutor, Usumbura

The Legal Adviser, Chief of the Department
of Justice and Legal Affairs, Usumbura.

Copy to Dr. Hallet, Director of the Hospital for Africans, Usumbura,
(for information) through the Governor of Usumbura Prison.

Copy to the Secretary-General, United Nations Visiting Mission, New York.

Sir,

I have the honour to bring to your attention the difficulties I have encountered in meeting the repeated requests of DANSE, Albert, who is replacing the Public Prosecutor at Kigali.

I am ill (I am suffering from tubercular adenitis and chronic pharyngo-laringitis) and am a patient in Usumbura hospital.

I have just undergone an operation and the attending physician has promised me that he must perform another operation. My case is therefore serious and I am very weak, as the Director of the Hospital for Africans at Usumbura must have testified.

I am now being compelled to leave the isolation ward at the hospital against the wishes of the doctors who are treating me and who objected to orders from Kigali to send me there urgently to answer questions which must appear futile.

My illness has become chronic owing to the lack of care at Kigali. I do not agree with what Kigali claims, namely that there is a hospital there also, as no one knew how to care for me there, and specialists in this case are not at Kigali but at Usumbura.

If, however, Kigali wants to do something, either to force me to appear as a witness or as offender, it would have been much better to request information through a rogatory commission from the Court at Usumbura instead of endangering my health, which is already frail.

I strongly protest against this way of endangering my life as a hospital patient. I also ask that a decision be urgently taken to authorize and order

the Governor of the Prison to allow me to return to hospital, where I was in the isolation ward for treatment.

I hope, Sir, that your kind intervention on my behalf will lead to a quick decision being taken as regards my return to hospital for health reasons, in accordance with doctors' orders (Doctors Hallet and Vyncke). In any case, I reserve the right not to obey any order to leave before having received a reply to the present request.

I have, etc.

(Signed)

QUESTIONS FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS VISITING MISSION

I.

May I have free of charge from the United Nations a booklet on the Trust Territories prescribing the manner in which the Administering Authorities - Belgian, English and others - should care for Trust Territories, including all the articles which the Administering Authorities should comply with in order to civilize us, as well as all the laws under which we are governed and punished.

I would like this book because I often write to tell you that the Belgians are illtreating us. I must have this book to prove such ill treatment and to assure myself that the Belgians are unjust. I hope to receive this book with the annual reports for 1954.

II.

All the Banyarwanda and Barundi wish to know why the Belgians order us about and punish us in accordance with the laws of the Belgian Congo, although we are not Congolese. In addition the Belgians do not comply with such laws here in Ruanda-Urundi. Here is an example:

An inhabitant of the Congo who has four or six children does not pay the head tax. No cattle tax is imposed in the Congo, and the supplementary tax is not payable on extra wives. In Ruanda-Urundi, however, anyone who has six, ten or even more children pays and there are persons exempted from payment of the head tax by the doctor. When such a person works to earn his living the White members of the Administration make him pay again although he has been exempted by the doctor. This evil results from the fact that the chiefs and sub-chiefs keep a part of the tax which is known as "refund" in Kinyarwanda (Ubuletwa). That is why, unknown to the doctor, they go to an Administrator to demand payment of the head tax.

A tax is imposed on cows in Ruanda-Urundi while in the Belgian Congo this system is non-existent. The Belgian Government says that it is because cattle are more numerous here. But why does a person who owns many cows pay and a person who owns few pay also?

The cattle tax is collected twice yearly in Ruanda-Urundi. The first time it amounts to sixty-five francs and the second time the tax is collected in the summer. The sub-chief demands a payment of twenty francs per cow for grazing privileges. The Europeans are aware of this unlawful practice but never do anything about it.

Why are these chiefs and sub-chiefs granted unlawful grazing rights when they were given the hills in order that they might care for the inhabitants, but not sell the land? Moreover, the Belgians say that no Munyarwanda or Murundi has land (property).

III.

In justice we Banyarwanda and Barundi have full rights to our property for the following reasons:

(a) The Banyarwanda have the land where they have lived for many generations and which was unoccupied before.

(b) They also own their property. Ever since I was born I have found that in order to live on this virgin soil, which was neither inhabited nor cultivated, the Banyarwandi had to give one cow to the chief or sub-chief, until he had given five cows, because he had to pay each year. Has he therefore no right to say that he owns property? Moreover, each cow was worth 4,000 francs. In order to have somewhere to live at present one must pay a sub-chief 1,000, 2,000 or even 3,000 francs. Have the sub-chiefs the sole right to sell hills or to say that a hill belongs to them? All this is known to the Belgian Government, but despite our requests the Belgians do nothing.

IV.

Agricultural question. The Administration (the administrators, the agriculturists, the chiefs and sub-chiefs) wish to increase agricultural output by unlawful means, because they do not listen to advice given them by a simple unyarwanda or Murundi.

They gather together the taxpayers of a sub-chiefdom and make them cultivate the land adjoining the road so as not to inconvenience the authorities who have to inspect the crops, and also in order that higher authorities, seeing the crops from the road, will think that the land in the interior is cultivated in the same way as land adjoining the road.

Some of the taxpayers of a sub-chief with a large sub-chiefdom come 16 kms and have to cultivate the land far from their homes. They return home very late and do not come at harvest-time because they live too far away. Others cultivate barren ground because the sub-chief wants them to cultivate land near the road and there is never any harvest because the soil produces nothing.

They must also transport manure to the communal fields which are 16 km from their homes. It would be better to ask the Belgians to allow us to cultivate the land near our homes. Except in the case of the cultivation of manioc everyone has to gather together in the valleys. That is why the Banyarwanda and Barundi emigrate to Uganda.

It is very sad to see the chiefs and sub-chiefs receive a refund (Ubuletwa) for having made the people work (for the sub-chiefs) which they should not do. I would say that their workers receive almost nothing because they do not even receive 5 francs a day while in the case of others, like the Clôns or Mututsi, the daily wage is 13 francs.

We ask that the chiefs and sub-chiefs be given a fixed wage and that they should also pay the correct wages.

There are some educated people in Ruanda-Urundi; some have completed eleven years of classical study, others have had eight or seven years at the School group at Astrida. The latter are not even paid one-quarter of the salary paid to a White man who has completed secondary school only. Moreover, these Africans can easily replace Europeans but they do not ever receive one-third of the latter's salary. This is the one thing which upsets our Banyarwanda and Barundi youth. Moreover, some members of the Barundi and Banyarwanda are experienced garage-hands and very efficient chauffeur-mechanics. Although they work well they are paid barely 2,000 francs monthly. We ask that they be paid according to the distance travelled. I am writing this to remind you that our wages are not much help because we are always poor in spite of working.

We must eat and we must clothe ourselves and we have our children who must attend school. Where shall we find the money for their fees? I wrote to you in 1951 and you saw how the Belgians replied and yet nothing has been done.

VI.

We believed that the Belgian Government would protect us from man's injustice, but we notice that injustice prevails among the Belgians. Moreover, property taken by others can never be regained.

When a person goes to Uganda or Tanganyika or elsewhere to work, because the daily wage is too low here in Ruanda-Urundi, he leaves his property, his fields and his banana plantation. Upon his return after one, two or even three years he finds that his property has been ceded or is occupied by the sub-chief. When he claims it, the sub-chief harries him on every side and when he appeals to the Administration he is sent away and naturally returns to Uganda permanently.

Further, the sub-chiefs want to force their people who own a good banana plantation to work so that they will leave and the sub-chiefs will then take possession of their property. You will notice that very few sub-chiefs own banana plantations in Ruanda-Urundi. We ask that the Belgians settle all these matters which no longer satisfy us. I would also ask you to approach the Belgians with a view to my indicating to them some of the shortcomings which exist in Ruanda-Urundi and which they will remedy when they discover that my statements are true.

VII.

We ask you to approach the Belgians about the taxes imposed by the Ruanda-Urundi fiscal authorities. The Belgians impose a high business tax.

The business man starts his business with thirty thousand francs without deducting what he paid for the building. You will well understand that he does not carry on business with much capital. Having opened a small business, he is taxed by the fiscal authorities who do not base the tax on his income. He cannot buy goods from wholesalers on credit and funds cannot be advanced him from the country's treasury.

Anyone with little money who wishes to set up a business must pay 1,000 francs for a licence, although he may have only 5 francs with which to carry on the business.

The owner of six goats who wishes to enter business must sell them for other personal needs because he sees that the six goats will not sell for more than 2,000 francs, and he cannot buy a licence with that. Thus, one cannot set up in business in Ruanda-Urundi with a small sum of money and one cannot find much money because one is paid too little. You have travelled in Ruanda-Urundi and what wealth have you noticed there?

A wholesale cattle dealer's licence costs 6,500 francs. This has become progressively higher, although the country has not advanced... Any person who owns two cows only cannot sell them in order to set up in business, although he wishes to do so, because by selling two cows he could never obtain the 6,500 francs needed to buy a licence and other things in order to do business. Even when he sells his two cows he merely wastes his money on other necessities instead of keeping to his intention of setting up in business. All this has been pointed out to the Belgians, but they do not wish to take any action. So, when the person concerned cannot fulfil his wishes, he goes off to Uganda.

A person who wishes to enter business for the purpose of selling native drinks, also spends his money for other needs because he must pay 7,500 francs and for a licence to sell such drinks. Thus, anyone with only 1,500 francs who wishes to enter business cannot do so because an African must pay 7,500 francs and a non-indigenous inhabitant 1,500 francs. When the latter has 1,500 francs only, he uses it to buy other goods.

A Munyarwanda who makes beer and sells it to pay his head tax is arrested by the police and taken to the Commissioner, who imposes a fine of 7,500 francs and sentences him to two months' imprisonment in default of payment of that huge sum. When he comes out of prison, he merely goes off to Uganda to stay.

We are very surprised to see how the licence fee has increased, although we do not notice any increase in the country's wealth. We notice mines being worked and no income accrues to the country, although we have many gold mines and deposits of tin-bearing ores, wolfram and other precious metals.

The increase in the licence fee is very exaggerated - in 1939 a wholesale cattle-dealer's licence cost 1,700 francs only. Please ask for the list of increases in licence fees since 1942 and you will see how exaggerated they are.

We ask you to approach the Belgian authorities and request them to help us find the means of doing business in order to assist our country's development from the social and economic point of view. The Belgians do not want us to get rich, and for that reason impose high taxes on us so that we shall fear the tax and give up business because they wish us to remain poor always.

Very few persons are employed by Europeans or indigenous inhabitants in Ruanda-Urundi. Others are not regularly employed. How can the latter obtain money when it is so difficult for them to enter business with the little money they have?

VIII.

Something else annoys us very much. With the exception of the Governor, the Residents and a few Administrators and Territorial Agents, government servants have inscribed on the doors of their offices the hours at which Europeans and the indigenous inhabitants may call. Even in the case of a serious accident, murder, robbery or arson, the Commissioners will not hear the complaints of the indigenous inhabitants outside the office hours indicated for Africans. In this way we cannot catch a thief or arrest a murderer, because we must wait our turn. But this method is not followed in the case of Europeans. A European may call at any time. We wish to be told whether there is a separate government in Ruanda-Urundi for us and for the Europeans which allows the latter to be governed by different laws.

IX.

The Europeans have children by our Banyarwandakazi and Barundikazi girls. They will not recognize their children and leave them with the mothers, but do not give the mothers any money to rear and educate them. If the girl comes from a wealthy family, her relatives try to treat the children in a European way, but the Belgian Government never does anything to help these women to educate

their children. To what race do these children belong? According to the Banyarwanda and Barundi customs, a child of a mother for whom no bride-price has been paid belongs to the mother's family, that is to say to its grandfather...

Although these mulattos leave us when they grow up because we are not of the same colour, the Belgians do not recognize them as true Europeans because they do not give anything to the person who has reared them (to us who have reared the children).

Sometimes Africans wish to marry female mulattos, but, knowing that according to the principles of religion a mulatto can never become a priest or nun, they give up the idea because they are afraid that their children can never be ordained as a priest or become a monk or a nun or even a lay brother.

We would like to know why mulattos can no longer be ordained priests or become nuns.

Can the child of a mulatto and an African become a priest, nun or monk? If not, why not?

To what race do mulattos who are not recognized belong? What funds are there in the country's treasury to educate them?

If the Belgian Government hands these children over to us, what written agreement can we obtain covering such action?

XI.

The Government knows very well that there are people in Ruanda-Urundi who, not knowing how to do manual work, were helped by their servants, to whom they gave cows. Now that ubuhake has been abolished, how are we Batutsi going to live? And as the Belgians still do not wish our children to attend school, what is the aim of our civilization?

We appeal to you to increase the number of schools, especially state schools, in order that our children may not remain in the ignorant state in which the missionaries have kept us.

We ask that vocational training schools be set up and that our children aged 18 be admitted, so that they may learn a trade which they will use for their own benefit because, so far, the Belgians have taught us how to serve them like machines and not to be of service to ourselves both intellectually and materially.

You have invented so many things to increase your knowledge, for example you have manufactured typewriters, calculating machines and later on you will introduce other methods which our children have not learned at school, and how will they live?

We do not know how to tan hides in order to make shoes, nor do we know how to make preservative in order to preserve our meat so that we can sell it, for example, in the Congo where there is no meat. We have learned nothing during the long time that the Belgians have been ruling us.

Some of us, having noticed that the Belgians are doing nothing to civilize us, have had to emigrate and have established ourselves in other colonies where we can obtain education.

I hope that you will be able to arrange something with the Belgians so that our children will be better taught than at present.

XII.

Our people are distressed by what they have learned vaguely, that, after the herds of cattle have been divided, companies will be set up to buy our cattle, and veterinary surgeons will indicate which cows must be sold compulsorily against the owner's wish. Although this has not yet taken place, it probably will and we ask you in advance for permission to protest in case they should try to sell our cows by force.

The Belgians wish to reduce our herds under the pretext that they are too large and prevent the land from being cultivated, although many Banyarwanda and Urundi do not own any cows, and there are also vast uninhabited forests. Why do they not make people inhabit such lands in order to cultivate it and raise stock? Who will help us when they have taken away all our cattle? In Ruanda-Urundi cows are the main source of wealth. As the Belgians cannot bear to hear the word cow, we shall be going backwards instead of advancing so far as the wealth of the country is concerned. The Belgians wish to deprive us of our wealth and do not want to teach us how to set up other companies in order to trade instead of raising cattle.

In Ruanda-Urundi we are able to clothe ourselves, pay our taxes and in fact to everything thanks to our cattle. Now we are going to be deprived of all

our power; we shall become truly poor and feeble because everything we have comes mainly from our cows, and after that from our goats, sheep and a few coffee shrubs.

Our cows were our money. Every European in Europe has money in accordance with the custom of each European country. Why did you not prevent a country from abandoning its money and compel it to make another type? What will the Belgians give us as a symbol of our money (cow). We ask you to see that the Belgian Government does not compel us to get rid of our cattle, which are the true money of the Munyarwanda and Murundi.

(Signed) for Urundi
" Bukeba Francois for Ruanda
By order
(Signed) Gitambala Kizito
