

Liam Byrne, Minister for Immigration
Home Office, 3rd Floor
Peel Building,
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF
Email: byrne1@parliament.uk

Dear Mr. Byrne,

_Associate Nimpagaritse - Home Office ref. no. N1111367, due to be forcibly removed from the UK on Thursday 25th September on Kenya Airways flight KQ101 from Heathrow @ 20:00hrs to Nairobi and KQ470 onwards to Bujumbura, Burundi.

I am writing to ask you to free Associate Nimpagaritse, who is currently detained in Dungavel Immigration Removal Centre, Scotland, with removal directions for Thursday 25th September. She should not be deported to Burundi, as this could put her in great danger. It would also mean that she might never be able to be reunited with the man she loves and who loves her. I wish that she be allowed to stay in UK and marry her fiancé.

Associate is from the minority Tutsi ethnic group in Burundi and was born in Bujumbura, the capital city. Hutus killed various family members in 1993. In 2004, armed men who she believes to have been from the FNL (Forces nationales de liberation), a Hutu rebel group, shot and killed her parents at the family home. Associate and her siblings managed to escape from the house and fled to a refugee camp but she became separated from them and does not know their whereabouts. In the camp she was constantly in fear of discovery by FNL Hutus and in 2005 was helped to escape to UK where she claimed asylum. This was refused as was her fresh claim made in April 2007. She suffers from post- traumatic stress disorder and is still receiving counselling.

On February 28th 2008 Associate was arrested. She was held in a police cell at Bridge Street, Sheffield for 3 days in solitary confinement before transfer to Yarl's Wood. On March 5th she was removed to Burundi. Burundian Immigration did not accept her and she was returned to the UK. It was a terrible trauma for her and for the man who loves her.

A petition with over 1200 names, including Nick Clegg MP, was collected asking for Associate to be given right to stay in the UK.

Associate was allowed to return to Sheffield and began to rebuild her life, studying at Sheffield College, singing in the French choir at St Marie's Cathedral, helping the charitable work of Assist, attending meetings of local Amnesty group, She and her boy friend, Aime, longed to get married and applied for permission through Associate's solicitor. Having convinced the Home Office that it was a genuine relationship and that he was able to support her she received a letter of permission. Sadly when she went to register she found she needed her ID card, which had been taken from her when she was arrested in March. Despite repeated requests this is still withheld.

On September 12th at 6.15am she was arrested again in Sheffield and taken to Dungavel IRC. Her solicitor has put in a fresh claim.

Her church, her friends and her college teachers are campaigning for her to be allowed to stay on compassionate grounds in view of the very real suffering she has endured and fears that she will be attacked in Burundi and may never be able to be reunited with Aime.

I beg you to allow Associate to stay in UK and marry her fiancé. Everyone has the right to family life. It would be cruel and inhumane to separate two people who are committed to each other and have very little hope of being together ever again if Associate is removed to Burundi on Thursday next.

Yours Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

City:

Postcode:

Country:

Date:

Email:

Background information

In February 2008 Burundi was listed 5th on "The Index of State Weakness in the Developing World", published by the Brookings Institute and the Centre for Global Development. The FCO [Foreign & Commonwealth Office] country profile for Burundi states, "The human rights situation in Burundi remains poor, with widespread abuses committed by all parties, particularly in the rural areas surrounding the capital. Tens of thousands of people remain internally displaced. Killing of civilians, reprisal killings, torture, rape, theft, illegal and arbitrary detention, and forced labour have been reported. Rape and gang rape against women, girls and boys is on the increase. The judicial system has little capacity to act in timely and impartial manner, and impunity is pervasive ... " The USA, Country Report on Human Rights Practices Burundi 2007: The government's human rights record remained poor; despite improvements in some areas, government security forces continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses. Members of the FDN, the police, and the National Intelligence Service (SNR) were responsible for killings, torture, and beatings of civilians and detainees (including suspected FNL supporters). There were isolated reports that security forces raped women and young girls. Impunity and harsh, life-threatening prison and detention remained problems. The government restricted freedom of assembly and association. The government did not tolerate direct criticism of the president and journalists continued to exercise self-censorship. Security forces continued to harass members of the opposition. Societal violence and discrimination against women and trafficking in persons remained problems. Despite the cease-fire and the general lack of hostilities between the government and the FNL, abuses by the FNL against civilians continued and occurred primarily in FNL traditional strongholds of Bujumbura Rural, and the northern provinces of Bubanza, Cibitike, Muramvya, and Kayanza. These abuses included killings, kidnappings, rapes, theft, extortion, the forcible recruitment of children as soldiers, and the use of forced labor.