

Global Write-a-thon 2008: Case Sheet

Justine Masika Bihamba, DRC



Justine Masika Bihamba is a human rights worker in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As a result of her work as the coordinator of a women's human rights organization, Synergy of Women Against Sexual Violence (SFVS), she and her family have been targeted by the DRC military. SFVS counselors have regularly been threatened and attacked because of their work.



On September 18, 2007, six army soldiers forced their way into Justine's house while she was away. They tied up her six children at gunpoint, and demanded to know where their mother was. Justine's 21-year-old daughter pleaded with the soldiers to take what they wanted but not to hurt anyone. One of the soldiers replied that they had not come to steal anything, but rather were on a "well-defined mission" ("*une mission bien déterminée*"). The group searched the house. One soldier kicked Justine's 24-year-old daughter in the face, breaking her tooth. He then tried to rape Justine's 21-year-old daughter and sexually assaulted her with a knife.

Justine returned home during the attack and immediately telephoned the authorities. In a search of the neighborhood with the military police, Justine and her children identified the soldiers involved in their attack as those guarding an army officer. The military police refused to arrest the men and claimed that there was no evidence against them.

On September 27, 2007, Justine lodged a legal complaint against the soldiers. In the following weeks and months, senior military and civilian authorities promised Justine that justice would be done. One year on from the attack, however, the men have still not been arrested or brought to trial.

Justine regularly sees the same men in the streets that attacked her children in their home. They continue to threaten her. Justine's five-year-old son now fears he will be killed whenever he sees a soldier. Her two daughters have fled abroad.

Take Action!

Ask the President to:

- Ensure there is an immediate, full and impartial investigation into the attack on Justine Masika Bihamba's family that results in the perpetrators being brought promptly to justice;
- Immediately protect human rights defender Justine Masika Bihamba and her family.

Write to:

President Joseph Kabila
Cabinet du Président
Palais de la Nation
Kinshasa/Gombe
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Email: cabinet_president@yahoo.fr

Airmail postage: 94 cents

Salutation: "Your Excellency"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Article 12:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his/her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his/her honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.