

Fr. Edmond Bamtupe Kisughu Fr. Anselme Kakule Wasukundi Fr. Jean-Pierre Mumbere Ndulani

Frs. Edmond Kisughu, Anselme Wasukundi, and Jean-Pierre Ndulani, three Assumptionist priests, were kidnapped on October 19, 2012, from their rectory in Mbau, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

They would have been abducted by an armed militia before being sold and then killed by a group of Islamist soldiers.

It was barely two years ago, on October 19, 2012, that three Assumptionist priests, Jean-Pierre Ndulani, Edmond Kisughu and Anselme Wasukundi were kidnapped while at their rectory, in Mbau, in the region of Beni, one of the major towns in the province of North Kivu (DRC).

At that time, no one was able to establish with certitude the circumstances of their abduction, nor what happened to them.

Given that there have been no reliable demands and given the tangled web of various enemy groups, the absence of the State in this remote area, the corruption, the abundance of armed groups, the rumors, the lies, the manipulation of information… this affair is really complex and it

basically results in incertitude about the kidnapping and fate of these three religious.

Why were they kidnapped?

"The three Assumptionist priests are Congolese, of the Nande tribe. However, they were assigned to a parish that is principally Bambuba, a tribe that is traditionally at odds with the Nande," explained to *La Croix* Nicaise Kibel'Bel Oka, editor of the bimonthly *Les Coulisses,* recognized in the greater Kivu region for being well-informed.

So, the population of Mbau *"wanted priests who were members of their own tribe",* he added. *" A group of them were undoubtedly extremely upset by the diocese's choice at the time of the renewal of the parish team in October 2012. The three priests were kidnapped a week after their installation by an armed local group before being given over to the ADF-Nalu" (Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda,*
otherwise known as the
Muslim Alliance of Democratic Forces
)
.

Actually, Kivu is a region wracked by strong sectarian tensions, exacerbated by disputes over land and other resources and/or the exploitation of minerals.

The Catholic Church itself – one of the rare institutions that is still standing in the Congo – hasn't always been able to avoid this reality: belonging to a particular group often plays a not insignificant role in the recruitment and appointment of priests and their acceptance in various parish communities in Kivu.

The ethnic group that dominates North Kivu (diocese of Butembo-Beni) is by far that of the Nande (about 90% of the population). *"Often seen as overbearing and arrogant, they do not always enjoy a lot of popularity in the region,"* explained one Congolese inhabitant of Goma. "
They occupy the positions of responsibility in the diocese of Butembo",
added Taylor Toeka Kakalal, a Congolese Catholic journalist who covers Kivu.

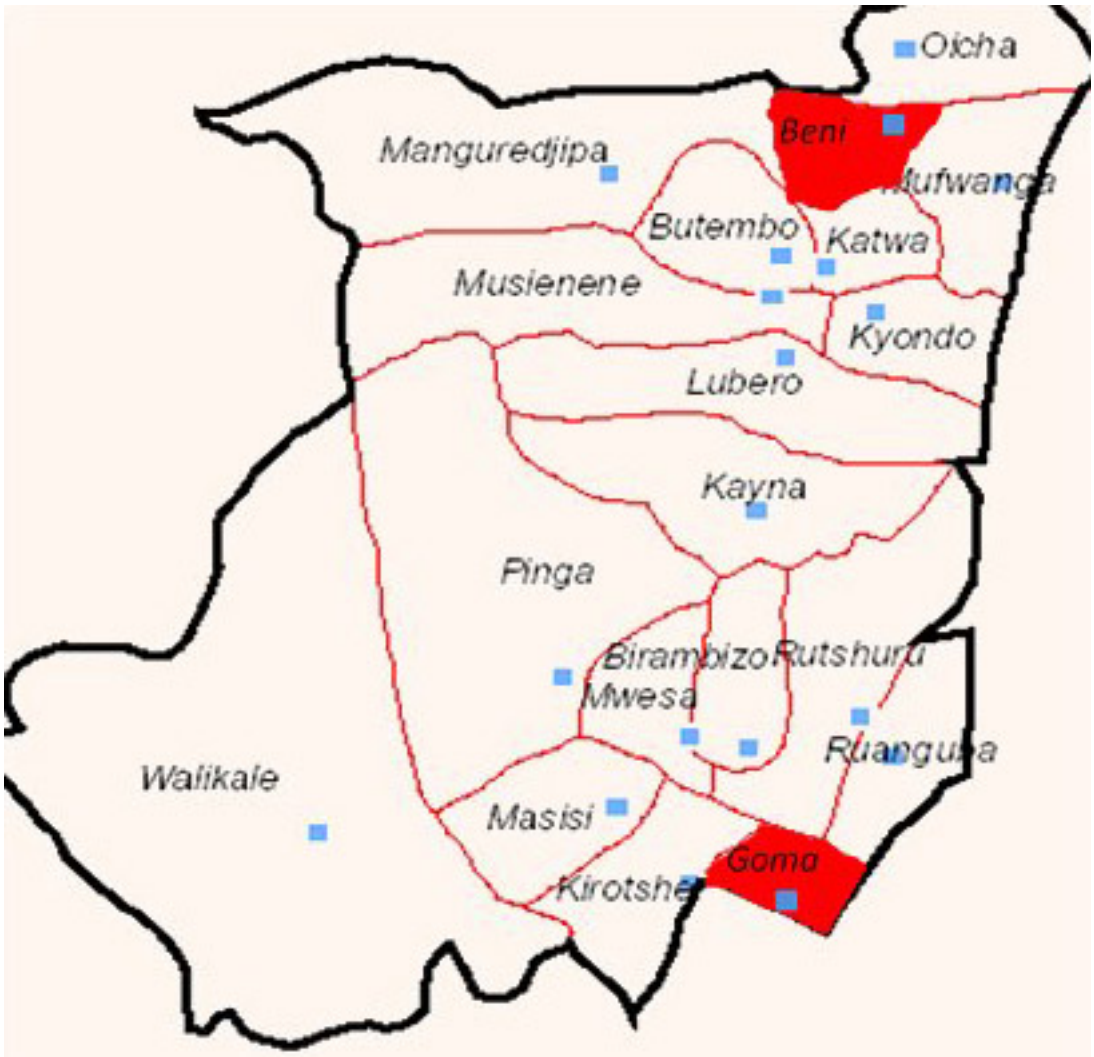
Who might have kidnapped them?

Nicaise Kibel'Bel Oka attributes the responsibility of the kidnapping possibly to a local group of Maï-Maï (1) and of « brigadier general » Paluku Kombi Hilaire, who defected from the Congolese national army and is a veritable "godfather" in this area. His supporters dominate Beni and its surroundings. Given this situation, it's hard to believe that he wasn't directly or indirectly involved in this affair.



map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

"Either he ordered the kidnapping or he got a hold of the hostages from the group that had abducted them," another person in the know commented. *"For him, holding these hostages might have been a way to assert his authority over the local population and over the groups of Maï-Maï, at a time when his friends of M23 (2) held control of another region of North Kivu and were about to lay siege to Goma."*
In any event, given what little is known, this hypothesis seems to be the most credible today.


Oicha
Beni
Manguredjipa
Butembo
Katwa
Musienene
Kyondo
Lubero
Kayna
Pinga
Birambizo
Rutshuru
Mwesa
Walikale
Masisi
Goma
Kirotshe