

REPORT NO. 231 OF SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI PUBLISHED ON 16 MAY 2020

This SOS-Torture/Burundi report covers the period from 9 to 16 May 2020 concerning cases of human rights violations and abuses in Burundi.

At least three (3) people were murdered during the period. One of the victims is a well-known businessman in the city of Bujumbura. He had been kidnapped the day before and found murdered despite warnings from witnesses and his relatives. The other two victims are murdered cow sellers in Ndora.

The report also mentions twenty - six (26) cases of arbitrary arrests in different localities. The persons concerned are mainly members of the opposition CNL party during the entire presidential and legislative election campaign.

1. Violations of the right to life and physical integrity

- Unidentified individuals murdered Jackson Simbananiye nicknamed Kirahwata whose body was discovered in a ravine of the Printing avenue of District 2 in Nyakabiga zone, Mukaza commune (downtown Bujumbura) on May 14, 2020. Witnesses had alerted him the day before after he was taken on board of Toyota, T1 car brand registered H8105A when he left a sauna room in Rohero zone. Such kidnapping and execution operations have been used on several occasions by agents of the Burundian national intelligence service.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes that the victim is a well-known businessman in the city of Bujumbura. He owns one of the country's main exchange offices, which was forced to close by decision of the Burundian authorities. Three other owners of exchange offices have been murdered under various circumstances since the beginning of the Year in the city of Bujumbura. The police have not arrested any suspects to date and have not started any search despite the alerts issued after Mr. Simbananiye's abduction.



Mr. Jackson Simbananiye (Kirahwata) found murdered following his abduction.

- Unidentified individuals murdered two men whose bodies were discovered on Myave Hill, Ndora zone, Bukinanyana commune, Cibitoke province (northwest of the country) on 14 May 2020. Witnesses report that the victims are cow sellers intercepted as they returned from the Ndora market.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes that Bukinanyana police have not apprehended any suspects to date.

2. Violations of the right to liberty and physical security

- Police officers arrested Christian Munezero, Yves Maniriho, Elias Kubwimana and Clovis Hakizimana in Murago, burambi commune, Rumonge province (southwest of the country) on 3 May 2020. Relatives report that Mr. Munezero is a candidate in the municipal elections of 20 May 2020 on the list of the opposition party CNL (National Congress for freedom) and that the other three people are activists of the same party. They were arrested when they had just procured the voter cards of their comrades that were not available that day and are accused of fraud.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes arbitrary arrests of members of the opposition, including one candidate. However, the Electoral commission had authorized the withdrawal of voter cards by relatives on presentation of the identity card of the person concerned; this does not constitute fraud. Sos-Torture/Burundi also learned of their transfer to the police station in Rumonge on 10 May 2020.

- Police officers arrested Ezekiel Bitariho, Bonaventure Ndikumana, Pierre Claver Ruvugusi and Clement Nzeyimana in Bugendana municipality, Gitega province (Central) on 9 May 2020. Relatives report that all are activists of the opposition CNL party arrested while on their way to a meeting of their party. They are accused of having prepared materials, with the logo of their party, for distribution to other activists.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes arbitrary arrests of opposition activists without legal basis. These untimely arrests are aimed at discouraging members of the opposition and sabotaging the organisation of their parties in favour of the ruling CNDD-FDD party as the election campaign continues.

- Police officers arrested Gorgon Miburo in Kiremba municipality, Ngozi province (north of the country) on 10 May 2020. Relatives report that he is the regional representative of the opposition party CNL. He was arrested along with nine (9) other activists of this party after clashes with members of the imbonerakure militia of the CNDD-FDD party. Witnesses report that the clashes began after young imbonerakure assaulted CNL party members returning from an election meeting.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes again the political intolerance prevailing in the country and the partiality of the law enforcement agencies, which target only members of the opposition. This bias may exacerbate tensions between members of the main political

parties vying for the elections. None of the members of the CNDD-FDD party were arrested despite the fact that they were at the origin of these clashes.

- Police officers arrested Claver Manirakiza and Gaspard Ndege on the Mugendo hill, Mugamba commune, Bururi province (south of the country) on 14 May 2020. Relatives report that the two young men are brothers and are charged with illegal possession of a weapon.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes arbitrary detention, as the search of the two young men's homes did not permit any seizure of weapons.

- Members of the Imbonerakure militia arrested Ferdinand Nkeshimana and Josiah Irankunda on Rubarasi Hill, Giheta commune, Gitega province (centre) on 14 May 2020. Witnesses report that the two men, members of the CNL party, were running a door-to-door campaign on behalf of their party in the run-up to the May 20, 2020 elections.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes illegal and arbitrary arrests as well as the complicity of the police who have put these two members of the opposition in solitary confinement.

- Members of the imbonerakure militia also arrested Francine Nkuzimana, Egide Hakizimana and Dominique Nijimbere in Nyarusange commune, Gitega province on 14 May 2020. All are activists of the opposition party CNL. The first two were arrested when they had just planted a flag of their party in a field that would belong to an activist of the ruling CNDD-FDD party. Mr. Nijimbere, for his part, is the municipal leader of the CNL party and was arrested as he came to inquire about the reasons for the arrest of his comrades.

Sos-Torture/Burundi notes the arbitrary arrests as well as the complicity and bias of law enforcement officials. Ms. Nkuzimana and Mr. Hakizimana were sentenced to 1 month imprisonment and a fine of 50,000 francs, although the charges are not clear in this case. Mr. Nijimbere was acquitted by the Gitega High Court, but this decision was not enforced since he was taken to Gitega prison.

- Police officers arrested Laurent Nduwayo in Buyengero municipality, Rumonge province (southwest of the country) on May 15, 2020. Relatives report that he is a candidate in the parliamentary elections of May 20, 2020 in the electoral district of Rumonge on behalf of the opposition party CNL. He was in the premises of the CNL party permanence at the time of his arrest.



Sos-Torture/Burundi once again notes an arbitrary arrest of a member of the opposition, particularly a candidate in the elections. No reason was given when Mr. Nduwayo was arrested.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was initiated with the aim of informing national and international opinion on serious human rights violations in Burundi through monitoring reports including torture, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and summary executions.

This initiative to inform about the realities of the country followed the carnage of a hundred people killed during the day of 11 and 12 December 2015 by police and military under the pretext of pursuing rebels who had just attacked military camps located on the outskirts of the capital.

The affected zone are said to be protesters of the third term of President Nkurunziza namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga, Jabe, the last two being located in the center of the Town Hall of Bujumbura.

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