



## SOS - Torture/Burundi

Monitoring sur les cas de torture, les arrestations arbitraires, les disparitions forcées et les exécutions sommaires au Burundi

*SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI : He who saves a life saves all of humanity*

*4th anniversary of SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI*

### STATEMENT

1. On the occasion of its 4th anniversary, SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI pays a sincere tribute to the members of the organization, to the volunteers and to all the human rights defenders who are working modestly to restore the rule of law in Burundi.
2. SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI was created on 19 December 2015 under a context of massive human rights violations in Burundi. It is the result of a very strong determination of Burundian human rights defenders who love peace, justice and the restoration of good governance.
3. Creating this organization was the only way for us to combat the massive violations committed by state agents, who are indeed supposed to protect the population since the outbreak of the crisis in April 2015. Crisis related to the failure to comply with the Arusha Agreement for peace and reconciliation and with the 2005 Constitution.
4. For the past four years, SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI has been publishing weekly, quarterly and annual reports with recommendations to the Government and its partners on the human rights situation in Burundi. In addition, SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI publishes its monthly magazine "*Bulletin de Justice au Burundi*" devoted specifically to the functioning of Burundian justice. This initiative is motivated by the desire to contribute to the proper functioning of justice as a pillar of socio-political stability and democracy. The advocacy efforts are taken into account by various regional and international mechanisms monitoring and implementing human rights in Burundi.
5. It is through these actions that SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI helps to shed light on the suffering of victims of human rights violations in Burundi. Indeed, killings and arbitrary arrests have become the daily lot of citizens. Terror is set-up as mode of governance by the State to silence all critical voices. The National Intelligence Service (SNR) has taken full power over people's lives. In this context, justice is used to suppress anything that seems to express a critical position vis-à-vis the power in place. This regime of terror is based on the Imbonerakure militia, a young member of the ruling CNDD - FDD party that has become a formidable tool of repression.
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6. SOS-TORTURE / BURUNDI thus celebrates four years of denunciation of the failures of the State of Burundi to protect human rights in all its various forms. It is a plea for those who are unable to defend themselves and to combat impunity. It is thanks to the women and men who have given their time and energy, that SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI is able to listen to the population and even to the desperate victims.
7. Let us recall that SOS-TORTURE / BURUNDI has been suspended by the Minister of the interior and patriotic training, although the Organisation was simply a spontaneous initiative created by defenders in exile under their "*right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels*". Let us recall also, that this decision was not officially approved by the Ministry.
8. In addition to this harassment, international arrest warrants are also issued against human rights defenders, including the Secretary-General and founder of SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI, Armel NIYONGERE, one of the lawyers for victims of crimes committed in Burundi. This is an indicator of the criminalisation of Human Rights Defenders by the Burundian Government, which has become intolerant of the leaders of independent Burundian civil society organisations who protested against the violation of the Constitution and the Arusha Agreement in April 2015.
9. Despite these challenges, SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI welcomes the support of people who are fully aware of the importance of its work. SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI takes this opportunity to express its deep appreciation to all those who had testified on various human rights violations, regardless of their sectors of activity in Burundi. They have largely supported the continuation of investigations through the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi set up by the United Nations Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC). This is a strong signal of their determination to fight impunity in Burundi, in a context where Burundi has withdrawn from the International Criminal Court.
10. SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI also thanks its international partners for their support to its mission to protect human rights and fight against impunity in Burundi. Over the course of these four years, our partners have always been at our side and we wish this support will remain and will even be stronger in the future. We thank you for everything you have done, and for what you will do in the future!

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Armel NIYONGERE, Attorney at law  
Secretary-General

