



## **REPORT N ° 114 OF SOS-TORTURE / BURUNDI PUBLISHED ON 17 FEBRUARY 2018**

This SOS-Torture report covers the period between February 10 to 17, 2018, concerning cases of violations of human rights in Burundi.

The present report mentions cases of repression more increased and precise, the date of the constitutional referendum of the Burundian government in May 2018. In addition to the forced contributions at all levels, members of the militiamen imbonerakure, youth of CNDD FDD party are particularly mobilized to control and demand enlistment. Schools, markets and health centers have been closed to demand that inhabitants register as voters.

The report also lists arbitrary arrests related to this referendum. People suspected of raising awareness of the "no" vote were arrested during the period.

At least three (3) persons have been abducted in Bujumbura town with no traces so far. Relatives suspect agents of the national intelligence service, who have already done so during this crisis.

### **1. The repression continues as the constitutional referendum approaches**

Sos-Torture Burundi notes an upsurge in threats to various categories of the population, as the constitutional referendum of the Burundian government of May 2018 approaches. The threats are categorized as forced contributions for the 2020 elections and the forthcoming referendum and these are introduced by the government, accompanied by duplicate contributions levied in the provinces and communes by the local authorities; as well as the requirement for a voter registration receipt, most often in the form of illegal control by members of the imbonerakure militiamen. Another form of repression concerns the arrests of those suspected of having sensitized to the vote of no in this referendum (their cases are found in point 3 of this report).

- The headmaster of Gakome Basic School, Musongati Commune, Rutana Province (south-east of the country) ordered the payment of three thousand Burundian francs (3,000 Burundian francs) for the 2020 elections by each teacher of this public school on February 9, 2018. These charges levied in hand under duress and threats are in addition to other sums directly deducted from the salaries of all public servants by the public treasury following decision of the Government for the same purposes.

SosTorture Burundi learned from some victims that the director of this establishment is also the representative of the imbonerakure militiamen of the CNDD FDD ruling party in Musongati

commune. The names of teachers reluctant to contribute doubly were annotated on a list with their numbers by the same head of establishment, who also published this list officially; despite the fact that those concerned already contribute to these elections by a deduction at source of their salaries. These are serious threats that may endanger the lives of the teachers concerned.

The case of this basic Gakome School is not unique, but common to all schools in Rutana province. Witnesses report that the order to collect these amounts was given by the provincial education officer, Simeon Ngenzebuhoro. It has fixed scales ranging from three thousand Burundian francs (3,000 fbu) to ten thousand Burundian francs (10,000 fbu) according to their position (teacher, prefects and directors of establishments).



The list of teachers and their numbers (blurred for their safety) and indexed as having refused to contribute, as well as the stamp of the School and the official signature of the director

- The similar case of double contribution is noted in Schools of the Ruyigi province (East of the country). These amounts are collected in hand and are added to the deductions already made by the public treasury on the salaries of all civil servan :



A copy of a statement from the person in charge of a school in Ruyigi calling his staff to deposit their 'contributions' in hands from February 10, 2018 in addition to a deduction at source.

- Members of the Imbonerakure militiamen forced the closure of the main market of Makamba Commune, Makamba province (south of the country) on February 12, 2018 in order to require merchants and customers to enlist for the constitutional referendum of May 2018. Witnesses reported that each merchant had to present a receipt stating that he had registered as a voter before his stand was open; as well as buyers who have come to the market today.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes the use of force and threat to compel residents to enlist, at the risk that their only source of income will be denied access. These threats and intimidations are made with the complicity of the local authorities, because the witnesses report that the order to close the market was given by the administrator of Makamba commune Japhet Ntanzwenayo.

- The same market closure was imposed on the center of Rumonge commune and province (south-west of the country) on February 13, 2018. Witnesses reported that



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imbonerakure militiamen controlled the possession of registration receipts as electors on the side of each merchant and customers; at each point of market access.

The members of the Imbonerakure militiamen and police agents extended the operation to the Rumonge fishing port market (port overlooking Lake Tanganyika) on February 15, 2018. The militiamen controlled all entrances to the port to verify that the traders and the customers have in their hands a receipt attesting their registration on the list of electors. The victims could not carry out any activity without this piece of paper. Burundian law, however, does not oblige to enlist as an elector, this being the choice of each individual of voting age.

- In Ruyigi province (East of the country), twenty-one (21) agricultural workers were denied access to their workplace on Ruyagira hill, Bweru commune on 12 February 2018. These employees had to present beforehand a receipt attesting that they have registered on the list of electors for the constitutional referendum of the Burundian government.

-SOS-Torture Burundi also received several testimonies of threats received by high school students in Makamba province (south of the country) to register as voters during this week. The pupils of Nyanza-lac commune were dismissed from the school, with the obligation to return with their registration receipts as electors. Witnesses report that these orders come from the directors of the institutions as well as the administrative officials and sometimes from the Makamba governor himself (Gad Niyukuri).

At the communal high school Gahosha, Gitaba zone in Makamba commune, the zone leader introduced himself into each class accompanied by a police officer to order students to register as voters, after having identified those who did not, had not done. In the same province, the authorities of different institutions have made threats to dissuade teachers from being enlisted; otherwise they will suffer the consequences. According to local sources, school principals ask them to present receipts to their directions and they record their registration numbers.

SOS-Torture / Burundi is worried about the final destination of these registration numbers and notes however that registration on electoral lists is not mandatory at all in the country and yet many Burundians have been forced to do so .

- Members of the Imbonerakure militiamen arrested Noëlla Igirimbabazi on Rubaragaza hill and Mathias Hatungimana on Bwagiriza hill, Butezi commune, Ruyigi province (East of the country) on 14 February 2018. Relatives report that Ms. Igirimbabazi was at her home, and Mr. Hatungimana was at his place of work during the arrests.



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Sos-Torture Burundi notes illegal and arbitrary arrests. Both people are accused by the imbonerakure militiamen of having sensitized the legitimate right to vote "no" in the constitutional referendum. They are detained by the police in Bwagiriza jail, without any record or specific charges. Members of the imbonerakure militiamen closed all primary schools and Kigarama communal high school in the Biyorwa zone, Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province (eastern part of the country). February 15, 2018. These young affiliates of the ruling CNDD FDD party required teachers and students of voting age to present their voter registration receipts before entering the classrooms.

Sos-Torture Burundi also learned from several sources that the same operation was carried out in schools in the Rugongo, Mugege and Muriza zone in the same municipality.

Members of the imbonerakure militiamen went door-to-door in Gisuru Commune (Ruyigi Province), warning anyone who had not yet registered as a voter. These are threats that provide no guarantee of a democratic process.

- The head of Maramvya health center, Burambi commune, Rumonge province (south-west of the country) Kennedy Habimana, banned access to health care for any patient who did not present a registration receipt as a voter on 15 February 2018. Witnesses report that patients had to borrow this piece of paper from relatives, but many have turned back unless they have this receipt and no right to receive care.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes an exaggerated and zealous politicization that affects crucial areas like the health sector. Patients have no choice but to submit to their burdensome need to receive appropriate care.

- School officials closed the basic schools of Gakana, Kabuyenge, and Rukuramigabo in Kirundo and Bwambarangwe communes, Kirundo province, in the north of the country, on 16 February 2018. Witnesses report that they forced students and teachers to go to the voter registration centers, with the obligation to enlist and present a receipt for the resumption of classes next Monday.

Sos-Torture Burundi also learned that imbonerakure militiamen beat anyone who failed to show them a receipt attesting to this listing in the urban center market of Kirundo.

These increasing repressions reserves the worst as the date of the constitutional referendum is approaching, which the government is considering in May 2018. The Burundian authorities are themselves inciting repressions, explaining that the "no" is not allowed in this referendum to allow the Burundian president to lift the presidential term.



## 2. Violations of the right to life and to physical integrity

- Unidentified individuals attempted to murder Dancile Ndagijimana and her husband Louis Ntemere on Mburi Hill, Gisagara Commune, Cankuzo Province (north-east of the country) on February 9, 2018 in the evening. Witnesses report that the victims were seriously injured.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes that the police have announced the arrest of a suspect.

- A group of young imbonerakure militiamen tortured Jean Citegetse nicknamed Mai-Mai on Ruharo hill, Nyabitsinda commune, Ruyigi province (East of the country) on February 9, 2018 in the evening. Relatives report that the victim was returning home at the time of his assault by this group of militiamen on patrols.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes that the group of militiamen was led by Ferdinand Kanani, quoted in our previous reports as the author of several cases of torture and enjoying complete impunity on the part of the police and judicial bodies (see **Sos-Torture report Burundi N ° 99**: <http://sostortureburundi.over-blog.com/2017/11/report-n-99-of-sos-torture/burundi-published-on-4-november-2017.html> and report N ° 86 <http://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SOS-Torture-Burundi-nume%CC%81ro-86-en-Fr-1.pdf>). Mr. Citegetse was left in a very critical state of health after the beatings.

- Unidentified individuals murdered Jean Uwimana in Kabondo quarter, Rohero zone, Mukaza commune (Bujumbura city center) on February 12, 2018 in the evening. Witnesses report that the victim was shot in his vehicle.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes that police have not identified any suspects to date.

## 3. Violations of the right to liberty and physical security

- A representative of the CNDD FDD ruling party Vianney Karenzo has threatened to kill anyone considering voting for the "no" on May 2018 constitutional referendum. Witnesses report he made the threats at a meeting to the inhabitants of the Nyaruganda, Ruharo and Nyakiyonga hills in Nyabitsinda commune, Ruyigi province (East of the country) on February 7, 2018. This political representative of the CNDD FDD promised to 'throw in the river' those who are considering rejecting this draft constitutional revision.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes that this is a case of recidivism, since the same political representative had made similar threats a few days earlier on 3 February 2018.

Witnesses at both meetings report that the threats are becoming clearer given the dominance of the Amizero y'Abarundi opposition coalition in the region since 2015.

- Unidentified individuals abducted Aimée Ncuti and Rehema Kaneza in the center of Bujumbura city on February 8, 2018 in the evening. Relatives report that the two women were returning from their workplace (a hair salon) at the time of their abduction.



**Aimée Ncuti (left) and Rehema Kaneza (right), abducted by strangers in the center of the city Bujumbura**

- Unidentified individuals kidnapped Pascal Bigirimana in Musaga zone, Muha commune (south of Bujumbura town) on February 10, 2018. Relatives report that the victim was not far from his home. Mr. Bigirimana is a retired Burundian police. Sos-Torture Burundi notes that no investigation has been conducted to determine the circumstances of this abduction. Relatives of the victim suspect an abduction orchestrated by agents of the national intelligence service, who often operate in this way in several other cases.



### **Pascal Bigirimana, retired policeman kidnapped in Musaga**

Police agents arrested Oscar Nkurunziza in Bubanza commune and province (west of the country) on February 12, 2018. Witnesses report that Mr. Nkurunziza is the victim of commenting on the process of enlisting voters for the constitutional referendum of the current government, and was denounced by members of the local imbonerakure militia.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes that Mr. Oscar Nkurunziza was arrested at his workplace in front of students, the victim being a supervisor at the Bubanza II Basic School. Relatives also report that the victim is a member of the FNL opposition party faithful to Agathon Rwaso, and that his arrest is politically motivated. Sos-Torture Burundi also notes that the police have not determined to date the prosecution of the man.

- Policeagents also arrested Emmanuel Nkomerane on Kinyinya hill, Kinyinya commune, Ruyigi province (East of the country) on 12 February 2018. Relatives report that this man was accused of having sensitized the vote of the "no" the constitutional referendum of the Burundian government of next May.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes an arbitrary arrest, consistent with the repressive movement against anyone who does not show support for the CNDD FDD ruling party. Mr Nkomerane was subsequently released by the Ruyigi public prosecutor's office on 15 February 2018.

- Members of the Imbonerakure militiamen arrested Diomede Ndabacekure on Nyakiyonga hill, Muhwazi zone, Nyabitsinda commune, Ruyigi province (East of the country) on 14 February 2018. Witnesses report that the victim was in a local bistro, and has expressed its intention to vote "no" in the constitutional referendum next May.

Sos-Torture Burundi notes an illegal and arbitrary arrest, which aims among others anyone who expresses his opinion against the revision of the Constitution. The members of the imbonerakure militiamen have no prerogative to carry out arrests, but they are increasingly



in the forefront for the repression of those suspected of wanting to vote against this constitutional amendment. The police agreed to put Mr. Ndabacekure in jail, without a record and without charges against him.

#### **4. Cibitoke Province Police Cell Overflows**

Sos-Torture Burundi has learned from several witnesses that eighty-two (82) detainees are being held in the same cell of the police station in Cibitoke province (north-west of the country). Inmates are crowded together with men, women and minors in the same cell (there are at least 15 minors among these detainees). They are forced to take turns to rest, for lack of space, during the day and the night.

The cell of the police station has a capacity of 30 prisoners, but more than twice are currently held in very precarious health and safety conditions. Relatives of the detainees report that several of those concerned have been detained in this cell for nearly two months, in total violation of the law and the procedure.

#### **5. A young student detained without cause was released**

Sos-Torture Burundi learned of the release of Philbert Ninganza in Bujumbura town on February 15, 2018. This one is a student who was arrested on February 6, 2018 by soldiers on Mukara Hill, Nyagasasa zone, Mugamba commune. , Bururi province (south of the country). He had transited through 3 different cells: Mugamba police cell, Bujumbura army headquarters and national intelligence service in Bujumbura, and accused of being part of a rebel group based in Rwanda (see **Sos-Torture Burundi reportN°113**: <http://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/SOS-Torture-Burundi-num%C3%A9ro-113-in-Fr.pdf>).



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SOS-Torture / Burundi was initiated with the aim of informing national and international opinion about the serious human rights violations under way in Burundi through monitoring reports, particularly on torture, arbitrary arrests, forced 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 December 11 and 12, 2015 by the police and soldiers on the pretext of pursuing rebels who came to attack military camps on the outskirts of the capital City.

The affected zones are said to be contesting President Nkurunziza's third mandate namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga, Jabe, the last two being located in the center of Bujumbura City Hall.

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