

REPORT N° 253 OF SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 17, 2020

This SOS-Torture report covers the period from 10 to 17 October 2020 regarding cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least seven (07) persons were murdered during the period in different localities of the country and one (01) person was seriously injured.

This report also regrets thirty (30) cases of arbitrary and xenophobic arrests directed mainly against Banyamulenge refugees as well as seven (07) persons kidnapped by the head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Mwaro.

1. Violations of the right to life and physical integrity

- In the afternoon of Sunday, October 11, 2020, around 4:00 pm, five (05) Imbonerakure led by the chief of Gitwe hill arrested a young man named Jean-Paul Sibomana (26 years) on Kigoma hill, Kiyonza zone, Bugabira Commune, Kirundo province, and killed him with clubs for the sole reason that he had a Rwandophone accent, despite the fact that he had shown them his identity papers attesting to his Burundian nationality. According to witnesses at the scene, the victim, who lived on Muhero Sub-Hill, Yaranda Hill in Kirundo commune and province, had traveled to Kigoma to visit his mother-in-law and had recently repatriated from Rwanda.

SOS Torture Burundi condemns this kind of barbaric acts imputed to Imbonerakure which come just few days after the spokesman of the Ministry of Interior, Community Development and Public Security, OPP1 Pierre Nkurikiye, called on the airwaves in Gitega on 08 October 2020 the Burundian population to a witch hunt of anyone caught speaking Kinyarwanda.

- On the night of Sunday, October 11, 2020, as yet unidentified persons ambushed Ezéchiel Nduwimana (32 years) on Murara sub-hill, Muyange hill, Rusabagi zone, Burambi commune of Rumoge province (southwestern Burundi) and stabbed him in the throat. Local sources indicate that the motive and perpetrators of the murder have not yet been identified.

- On the morning of Monday, October 12, 2020, a lifeless body of a sexagenarian known as Anitha Bigirimana was discovered in Nyamugari quarter of Gitega city (central Burundi) not far from her home on 5th Avenue in the same district. According to witnesses on the scene, the victim was first raped and then had her throat cut.

SOS Torture Burundi notes that the motive for the crime and its perpetrators are not yet known.

- On the morning of Monday 12 October 2020, a person in custody at the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Mwaro named Mélance Ndikumana died in Kibumbu hospital, Mwaro Province (central Burundi) after having been evacuated there following atrocious acts of torture inflicted on him by SNR agents. According to sources on the spot, Mélance Ndikumana had been arrested by SNR agents in Mwaro on Saturday October 9, 2020 as part of an investigation into the murder of his half-brother Pavela Niyomwungere who was killed on September 23 where he was accused of having participated in the preparation of this crime.

SOS Torture Burundi has learned that after being informed of this blunder by SNR agents in Mwaro, the head of the Department of Internal Intelligence, Police Commissioner Emmanuel Ndayiziga, went to the scene of the crime where, even before meeting the staff assigned to the Provincial Directorate of Internal Intelligence in Mwaro to inquire about the situation, he immediately went to Kibumbu hospital to request Mélance Ndikumana's medical file, which raises fears that he could falsify certain elements of the victim's medical file, particularly those related to the cause of her death, which would compromise SNR agents.

- On the night of Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at about 11:30 p.m., on the hill of Mihigo, in the commune and province of Kayanza (northern Burundi), unidentified persons killed a night watchman on stores in the square named Zack Nzeyimana. According to witnesses, the victim was stabbed in the head and his body was lying in a pool of blood when it was discovered.

The same sources believe that the victim was murdered by burglars who robbed stores for fear that she might report them.

- On the night of Thursday to Friday 16 October 2020, a bandit named Désiré Minani (36 years old) living in the Mukoro quarter of Kayanza town was killed with machete blows by a night watchman in the new and still sparsely populated Muyange quarter of the same town. According to sources on the spot, two bandits stole a goat from a stable located a little far from the houses and, while they were cutting its throat, the watchman who had discreetly hidden himself approached them and macheted Désiré Minani, who died immediately while his companion quickly ran away.

SOS Torture Burundi notes that the resurgence of this banditry is the result of a judicial malfunction in the province of Kayanza where around thirty people accused of acts of banditry sometimes followed by assassinations have just been released without having been previously judged.

- At the foot of crossroad 3 of Mparambo 2 hill, Rugombo zone and commune, Cibitoke province (north-western Burundi), local officials of the Red Cross, officers of the Civil Protection Police and local administration have recovered the lifeless decomposing body of an unidentified man in Rusizi River Friday morning, October 16, 2020.

According to sources on the spot, the body was buried the same day on the river bank without any identification procedure.

2. Violation of the right to physical security

- On the night of Thursday, October 15, 2020 around midnight, a group of unidentified people attacked the High School Notre Dame de la Paix of Bubanza and seriously wounded in the head the sentry named Gabriel Barutwanayo who was evacuated to the hospital in Bubanza.

3. Arbitrary arrests

- In the centre of Gatumba, not far from the border with the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo), in the Mutimbuzi commune of Bujumbura province (western Burundi), the Burundian police on Wednesday 14 October 2020 carried out arbitrary arrests of thirty (30) refugees from the Banyamulenge community in operations to track down people speaking the Kinyarwanda language, in accordance with the slogan launched last Thursday by the spokesman of the Ministry of Interior, Community Development and Public Security, Pierre

Nkurikiye, to hunt down any Rwandophone person in order to alert the administration or the police.

SOS Torture Burundi condemns the arbitrary and xenophobic nature of these arrests which come on top of about a hundred cases of Banyamulenge refugees arrested Tuesday, October 6, 2020 in various districts of the commune of Gitega (central Burundi) as well as of Ngozi and Muyinga.

4. Kidnappings

- Seven men from Kiganda commune in Muramvya province, namely Gervais Nteziryayo, Martin Bukuru, Tite Nsavyimana, Sigismond Mpawenayo, the first names Eric, Philbert and Jean Marie (who used to be a police officer) were arrested without a warrant or summons on 8 October 2020 in the chief town of Mwaro province (central Burundi) by the Provincial Director of Internal Intelligence in Mwaro, Gérard Ndayisenga, and since that day, the relatives of these victims have lost track of them in the official dungeons in that province. Sources on the spot indicate that three of them, namely Gervais Nteziryayo, Martin Bukuru and Tite Nsavyimana, are CNL (National Council for Liberty) activists.

SOS Torture Burundi fears that this act of kidnapping could later turn into a case of enforced disappearance as Gérard Ndayisenga is widely cited in cases of enforced disappearances, notably by the Ndondeza Campaign of FOCODE (Forum for Conscience and Development).

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

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

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