

SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI REPORT NO. 283 PUBLISHED ON MAY 15, 2021

This report of SOS-Torture/Burundi covers the period ranging from May 8 to 15, 2021 regarding cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least eighteen (18) people were killed, twelve (12) of whom were ambushed by a group of criminals armed with guns and grenades on the Bugarama-Gitega road. During the same ambush, five (5) other people were seriously injured.

The report also mentions two (2) young girls who were victims of arbitrary arrest and detention in the province of Rumonge.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the night of Sunday, April 9, 2021, around 7:30 p.m., on Bugarama-Gitega road, at the level of Burambana hill, Muramvya commune and province (central Burundi), very close to the Red Cross antenna, unidentified men, armed with guns and grenades, ambushed four vehicles, three of which were Toyota Probox and a bus belonging to Volcano transport agency, during which 12 persons were killed and five others were seriously wounded, while an unknown amount of money and cell phones were taken by the criminals.

According to witnesses, the gunmen had blocked the road with a stone barrier and the first two vehicles crashed into the barrier before skidding off and being fired upon before being completely burned along with four persons including a child.

Among those murdered were:

1. Colonel Onesphore Nizigiyimana, from Mwumba commune, a Burundian army officer assigned to the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF) in Addis Ababa (on leave) and his daughter Queytha Muco, who was burned alive in her father's Toyota Probox. His wife and two other children were wounded by bullets;
2. Engineer Canisius Ndayiragije, originally from Mugamba commune, a businessman working in construction and transport, who was burned alive in his Toyota Probox vehicle;
3. Vénérand Simbashizweko, an agronomist from Mugamba commune, also burned alive in the same vehicle;
4. Fidèle Yamuremye, an employee of the Bank of the Republic of Burundi (BRB) in Gitega;
5. Floribert Kwizera, an employee of Credit Bank of Bujumbura (BCB);

6. Dyna Révocate Habonimana, a young woman living in Gitega (her two children survived the attack);
7. Mia Maella Mushoboze, a baby who was wounded during the attack and who succumbed to her wounds while her mother is still being treated;
8. Ferdinand Munezero, a gospel musician at the Pentecostal Church of Maramvya, a nurse and journalist at the Christian radio station Ivyizigiro;
9. Anaclet Hakizimana, a young employee of the Senate in Gitega and originally from Gatumba;
10. APC Déo Nikobahoze, alias Abdallah, a police officer assigned to provide security for the second-in-command of the 4th GMIR (Mobile group for rapid intervention) who was in Volcano public transport bus at the time of the attack.
11. Oscar Sindayihebura, a Bac II student at the University of Burundi, Zege Campus, Gitega, in the Department of Environmental Science and Technology.

SOS-Torture/Burundi has learned that, since this attack, soldiers of the former Burundian Armed Forces (FAB) and retired police officers are being arrested in a cascade and taken to an unknown destination.

It deplores the recurrent targeted killings of peaceful citizens and calls for an independent and impartial investigation to identify the perpetrators of the attack in order to bring them to justice and recommends that the Burundian authorities always respect the principle of the presumption of innocence in the conduct of judicial investigations.

- On the morning of Monday, May 10, 2021, around 6:00 a.m., passersby discovered the lifeless body of a young man in his twenties known as Blaise Bangiricenge in a gutter, a few meters from his home, near Jehovah's Witnesses church, in Kizingwe-Bihara neighborhood of the Kanyosha zone, Muha commune, Bujumbura City hall.

According to witnesses, the victim was stabbed twice and then strangled.

The same sources claim that the arms and feet of the victim's body were tied together and believe that she would have been killed elsewhere since, in the place where the body was discovered, there are night watchmen who should have heard her cries of distress.

SOS-Torture/Burundi recommends that the country's authorities take the necessary measures to curb the criminal phenomenon of targeted killings in which

the bodies of the victims are left in public places in order to prevent any subsequent police investigation.

- On the night of Tuesday, 11 May 2021, unidentified individuals threw a grenade, the explosion of which took the life of a person known as Jason Nimbona, on Cunyu hill, Buganda commune, Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to sources on the spot, the victim was accompanied by his father Mossi Ndayavuge who narrowly escaped, when they were returning from a bistro. The same source believes that this grenade attack is related to witchcraft conflicts.

- On the night of Monday to Tuesday 11 May 2021 at around 2:00 a.m., Salvator Ndereyimana (67 years) and Isaac Habiyakare (48 years), two night watchmen in a local cooperative, were killed during a stabbing attack on Muzingi hill, Gashoho commune, Muyinga province (northeast Burundi).

According to sources on the spot, the perpetrators of this crime also stole a sum of money, the amount of which is not yet determined, a sewing machine, loincloths, seats, a mobile phone with electronic money and other items from a shop of this cooperative.

SOS-torture/Burundi has learned that six suspects have been arrested (some of them wearing clothes stolen from the cooperative) including two well-known criminals in this locality, Janvier alias Dumbe and Manirakiza, who had just been released from Ngozi prison as part of a presidential pardon, and that all the stolen items were found at the home of Janvier alias Dumbe, the leader of the criminal gang.

- On Wednesday, 12 May 2021, a lifeless body of an unidentified woman, in her thirties, was discovered floating on Ndurumu river, at the foot of Nyamabega hill, Buhinyuza zone, Buhiga commune, Karusi province (central-eastern Burundi).

According to witnesses, the victim was stabbed to death and his body was in a state of decomposition. The same source states that the body of the victim was buried on the same day on the order of the head of Buhinyuza zone, without having to first identify him and conduct an investigation to elucidate the causes and circumstances of this murder and identify its perpetrators.

- On the morning of Wednesday, May 12, 2021 around 11 a.m., a policeman assigned to the Musaga police station in position in the Gitaramuka neighborhood shot and killed, in the same place, a young drug dealer (hemp) nicknamed Messi.

According to witnesses, the young man was apprehended by police officers with a bag full of marijuana, together with three other young persons, and when he tried to flee, one of the police officers shot him.

The same source laments that the police did nothing to transport the victim to a health facility, yet very close to the crime scene, to be treated there.

SOS-Torture/Burundi has learned that these police officers come to collect money from drug traffickers and that the local police are accused by the population of Gitaramuka district of being the main cause of the proliferation of narcotics in that locality.

The organization deplors the police violence, which has become a cause for concern because the police authority does not take any measures to discourage the criminal behaviour of police officers, who act with impunity.

- On the afternoon of Friday, May 14, 2021, around 2 p.m., farmers discovered the lifeless body of a man named Onesphore (a man in his fifties from the Banyamulenge community) on the bank of Rusizi river, Mparambo Sector I, Rugombo commune, Cibitoke province (northwest Burundi).

Witnesses reported that the victim's body had several rib injuries.

The same sources reveal that Onesphore was returning from Kamanyola in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and that the young Imbonerakure savagely killed him after stripping him of his money amounted six hundred dollars (600 USD).

SOS-Torture/Burundi has learned that the victim was buried the same day and that no investigation has been carried out to arrest the perpetrators of this murder, while some of these alleged Imbonerakure were seen in possession of a large sum of money. The organization regrets that lifeless bodies are constantly being discovered in or on the banks of the Rusizi river and that the police authorities are taking no action to arrest the Imbonerakure who are always pointed at as the alleged perpetrators of these abuses.

2. Violation of the right to freedom: arbitrary arrest and detention

- On the afternoon of Wednesday, 12 May 2021, around 5 p.m., agents of National Intelligence Service (SNR) arrested a young girl, Belyse Dusabe, a senior student in the science section at Sainte Famille High School of Minago, Rumonge commune and province (south-west Burundi) and who is from Gishiha hill, Burambi commune, in the same province. Another girl working in a cafeteria in the town of Minago zone whose identity is not yet known was arrested the next day by the same officers.

Sources on the spot indicate that the motives for the arrest of these girls are not yet known and that they are incarcerated at the provincial police station in Rumonge.

SOS-Torture/Burundi condemns arbitrary arrests and detentions that are regularly attributable to SNR officers who appear to be above the law and recalls that all forms of arrest and detention must be based on legal authority and justified in accordance with the law, in this case, the law on the code of criminal procedure which gives details on the limiting conditions and circumstances under which a person may be deprived of his/her liberty.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was initiated with the aim of informing national and international opinion on serious human rights violations in progress in Burundi through monitoring reports, including on 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 December and that of 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 zones 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 Bujumbura Town Hall.