

SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI REPORT N° 279 PUBLISHED ON 17 APRIL 2021

This report of SOS-Torture/Burundi covers the period from 10th to 17th April 2021 regarding cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least eleven (11) persons were murdered and eight (8) others were seriously injured during the period in different localities of the country.

During the same period, three (3) people were victims of arbitrary arrests and detentions and one (1) case of rape committed against a young minor girl was recorded.

1. Violations of the right to life

- During the night of Saturday 10th April 2021 at around 10 pm, a woman known as Béatrice Ndayishimiye (29 years old) was murdered at her home located at 4th Avenue in village 4 of Gihanga commune, Bubanza province (north-west of Burundi).

Sources on the spot reveal that this married woman of 6 months pregnant was murdered by her husband, Abel Biberubusa, who violently beat her to death.

SOS-Torture/Burundi has learned that the alleged perpetrator of the crime was arrested by the police and placed in custody at the Gihanga commune police station for investigations, while the victim's body was evacuated to the morgue of Mpanda hospital.

- In the night of Tuesday 13th April 2021 at around 8:30 pm, a soldier of the 212th Commando Battalion known as Corporal Fidèle Kwizera shot and killed Jean Marie Nshimirimana (33 years old), the owner of a bar located at the 9th Avenue of Buringa hill and zone, Gihanga commune, Bubanza province (north-west of Burundi).

According to witnesses, a disagreement related to the purchase of a memory card that the soldier had sold to the victim was at the origin of this murder where the soldier fired three bullets into the chest of the victim who immediately died.

The same sources state that the body of the victim was evacuated to the mortuary of the Kamenge military hospital and that the perpetrator of the murder was arrested and taken to the dungeon of the Gihanga communal police station for the preparation of his judicial file.

SOS-Torture/Burundi deplores the indiscipline of members of the defence and security forces who have been at the origin of several blunders recorded in recent days and recalls that the impunity and politicisation of these forces incite some of their members to consider themselves as if they were above the law; in this case, those who killed demonstrators in 2015 were rewarded instead of being punished according to the law.

- In the afternoon of Wednesday 14th April 2021, a lifeless body of a child aged about one year was discovered in the toilet of a household located on Shari 2 hill, Ruvumu district in Bubanza commune and province.

Sources on the spot said that the head of the household and his wife were arrested and are being held at Bubanza provincial police station for investigation.

- In Kinindo zone located in Mukaza commune, Bujumbura town hall, a lifeless body of an unidentified man was discovered at Ndamukiza Avenue close to the conference hall called King's Conference.
- On the night of Friday 16th April 2021 at around 8.30 pm, two men armed with guns burst into a bar located in Rusaka commune centre in Mwaro province (central Burundi) and opened fire on people who were quenching their thirst, killing seven of them on the spot and injuring four others, two of them seriously.

According to witnesses, during this attack, Égide Kwizera (communal accountant of Rusaka commune), Claudine Ndayishimiye, his wife, Éric Ndayizeye (principal of studies at the communal high school of Rusaka), his wife who answers to the name of Fidès and at the same time director of the communal high school of Rusaka, and their child named Liesse (a schoolgirl in the 6th grade at the communal high school of Bukwavu), Astère Simbananiye (a tax collector in Rusaka) and Ferdinand, who works at the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Bukwavu, were shot dead, while four other as yet unidentified people were injured and evacuated to Kibumbu hospital.

SOS-Torture/Burundi deplores the targeted attacks that continue to take the lives of peaceful citizens with total impunity for the perpetrators.

2. Arbitrary arrests and detentions

- A communal advisor in charge of economic issues in Gisuru commune, Ruyigi province (east of Burundi), Norbert Rizukundi, was arrested by the police on Saturday 10 April 2021 during community work carried out on the construction site of a building that will hold Ruyigi provincial offices and was taken *manu militari* to a police cell in the town of the same province.

According to sources on the spot, he was apprehended "on an order from above" and is accused of having held a meeting during which he allegedly hurled insults at the Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security in reaction to a measure suspending all communal accountants in the country.

SOS-Torture/Burundi deplores a violation of the laws of the Republic (in this case the law on criminal procedure) which has become a calamity for the country as the administrative authorities interfere in the functioning of the justice system by ordering abusive arrests of citizens, which has a negative impact on the normal functioning of the institution of justice, which has been lacking independence for a long time.

- On Sunday, 11 April 2021, the police arbitrarily arrested Savin Ndayizamba at the public transport bus park in Rumonge province centre (south-western Burundi) on the orders of the head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Rumonge and took him to the police dungeon in that province where he is still being held at the time of writing of this report.

According to sources on the spot, Savin Ndayizamba is the president of the office of the general assembly of the Burundi Scouts and at the same time president of the youth movement affiliated to UPRONA party (pro Abel Gashatsi) in the province of Makamba, JRR (Rwagasore Youth Revolutionary). He is allegedly accused of having held a clandestine night meeting on Saturday to Sunday night, 11 April 2021.

The same sources reveal that Savin Ndayizamba is rather a victim of the abuse of power by some administrative officials who want to politicise the elections within this vast youth movement.

SOS-Torture/Burundi condemns the interference of the ruling power in Burundi in the management of non-profit organisations and its intention to politicise all private organisations working in Burundi.

- On the morning of Wednesday 14 April 2021, elements of the police of the Mobile Rapid Intervention group (GMIR) assigned to Burambi arbitrarily arrested Gaspard Nzosaba, an old man aged more than 75 years, at his home during a search and seizure operation carried out on Mirwi hill, Mariza zone, Burambi commune, Rumonge province (south-west of Burundi).

According to witnesses on the spot, the police accused him of collaborating with rebel groups, even though nothing incriminating had been found in his house. The same sources reveal that he would rather be persecuted because of his children who have been forced to flee their country to Rwanda since the 2015 crisis.

SOS-Torture/Burundi denounces the persistent persecution of the population of Burambi commune under the pretext of collaboration with rebel movements, which persecution is reflected in multiple abuses committed by police officers and Imbonerakure: summary executions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, etc.

3. Violations of the right to physical integrity

- On the night of Sunday to Monday 12 April 2021 around midnight, the chief of Teza district, Kamenge zone, in Ntakangwa urban commune, north of the economic capital Bujumbura (western Burundi), Jean Népomucène Mbanzamihigo ordered the Imbonerakure to violently beat a widow known as Suzanne Minani, her son Simon Nshimirimana, her nephew Joseph Belavista and Côme Ndabirabe and seriously injured them to the point of being evacuated to a health care facility.

Sources on the spot indicate that this chief of Teza district and a group of Imbonerakure ensuring his security burst into the home of this widow located at 12th Avenue n° 216 and ordered her to open her bar and offer them beer. When she demanded that they pay cash before serving them, he ordered the Imbonerakure to beat her violently and when the above-mentioned members of her family came to her rescue, they were also violently beaten. They are currently in one of the health facilities in Bujumbura, Côme Ndabirabe was seriously injured in the head while Joseph Belavista had a broken leg.

SOS-Torture/Burundi has learned that the chief of Teza district and these Imbonerakure are still moving freely despite the crimes they have committed in full view of the local population.

3. Gender-based violence (rape)

- On 12th April 2021, the police of Bukemba communal police station arrested Eric Hakizimana (28 years) on Muyombwe hill, Butare zone, Bukemba commune, in the Rutana province (south-east Burundi) for having raped N. E., a minor girl aged 15.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was initiated with the aim of informing national and international opinion about serious human rights violations taking place in Burundi through monitoring reports, particularly on torture, arbitrary arrests, forced 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 12 December 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 zone affected are said to be those contesting the third term of President Nkurunziza, namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga and Jabe, the last two being located in the centre of the Bujumbura town hall.