

SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI REPORT NO. 282 PUBLISHED ON MAY 8, 2021

This report by SOS-Torture/Burundi covers the period from 1 to 8 May 2021 regarding cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least one (1) person was murdered, two (2) others were seriously injured by an angry population under the influence of witchcraft beliefs, while one (1) other has been missing for a month.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the morning of Wednesday, May 5, 2021, the lifeless body of an unidentified man was discovered lying near a road, not far from houses, of Kinyami quarter, in the town of Ngozi province (northern Burundi).

Sources on the spot revealed that the victim was strangled by unknown individuals and that he had spent Tuesday evening sharing a glass of beer with other individuals in a bar in Kinyami.

The same sources specify that the body of the victim was evacuated to the mortuary of Ngozi Hospital while waiting for its identification.

SOS-Torture/Burundi deploras the fact that the lifeless bodies of unidentified people are constantly being discovered, abandoned in public places or on the banks of lakes and rivers, without the administrative and police authorities taking appropriate measures to curb this criminal phenomenon, which has become increasingly recurrent since the CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defense of Democracy- Forces for the Defense of Democracy) party system came to power.

2. Violations of the right to physical integrity

- In the afternoon of Thursday, May 6, 2021, around 4:00 p.m., angry residents of Nyakeru hill, Mutoyi zone, Bugendana commune, Gitega province (central Burundi), seriously injured a married couple, Emmanuel Nzeyimana (46 years) and his wife Anatolie Nshimirimana (46 years), whom they accused of witchcraft practices.

According to local sources, a group of four young girls studying in the 7th grade at Nyakeru Basic School and two other young women from the same hill were caught up in a collective hysteria following rumors of witchcraft in the neighborhood, which provoked the anger and uprising of the population of this locality who believed that they were being attacked by "demons sent" by well-identified people in their community.

The same source indicates that the six young women suffering from collective hysteria were taken to the parish of Nyakeru for religious prayer sessions for healing and that the two seriously injured victims were evacuated to the Nyakeru health center for treatment.

SOS-Torture/Burundi has learned that, had it not been for the intervention of local administrative officials, another married couple, Simon Ndereyimana (70 years) and his wife Julienne Minani (68 years), were about to be lynched by the same inhabitants and that this couple was instead evacuated to the chief town of Bugendana for their protection.

The organization is concerned about a resurgence of criminality linked to the phenomenon of witchcraft, which is taking on alarming proportions, especially in the provinces of Cibitoke, Bubanza, Ruyigi, Cankuzo and Gitega, and this is taking place with almost absolute impunity for the perpetrators, who could nevertheless be identified, since targeted assassinations for this reason alone are always preceded by stigmatization of the future victims, often with the help of leaflets spread in public places.

3. Cases of enforced disappearance

- Since April 8, 2021, Martin Bashirahishize, a young salesman of telephone refill units, originally from Ndava commune, Mwaro province (central Burundi) and residing in Musaga zone, has been missing and unavailable in all the dungeons where his family members have searched for him in vain.

According to information from his family, the victim was abducted from his place of work in Musaga by agents of National Intelligence Service (SNR) who accused him of collaborating with rebel groups based abroad, notably by providing them with telephone recharging units and by making bank transfers or withdrawals on their behalf.



SOS-Torture/Burundi deplors the fact that cases of enforced disappearances regularly committed by SNR agents still go unpunished, while several reports by independent Burundian civil society organizations, international human rights organizations, and the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Burundi point the finger at certain well-identified agents as perpetrators.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was initiated with the objective of informing national and international opinion on serious human rights violations taking place in Burundi through monitoring reports, particularly 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 December 11 and 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 city.

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