

REPORT N°247 OF SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 05, 2020

This SOS-Torture report covers the period from 29 August to 05 September 2020 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least twenty-one (21) persons were killed during the period in different localities of the country mainly in clashes between law enforcement and a group of armed men.

The report also lists ten (10) seriously injured persons in different locations across the country.

Finally, the report notes ninety-six (96) cases of arbitrary arrests including fifty-six (56) persons suspected of collaborating with the rebel group that attacked several localities in the country and forty (40) young people arrested in Buganda commune of Cibitoke province during a search carried out by the defense and security forces.

1. Violations of the right to life and physical integrity

- On the night of Saturday, August 29, 2020 at around 10 p.m., a group of armed men in military uniforms of the Burundian army killed Vital Nsengiyumva and wounded two others on Busimba hill, Bugarama zone in Muramvya commune and province (central Burundi). According to testimonies, those armed men passed near the Busimba site of disabled demobilized and shot people who were trying to identify them.

SOS-Torture Burundi has been informed that the police in Muramvya arrested seven (7) persons accused of collaborating with these armed groups after the passage of these men and took them to the police cell in Muramvya.

SOS-Torture Burundi is concerned about the complete silence of the government and law enforcement agencies over these recurrent attacks across several localities of the country and fears that this situation hides a sneaky willingness of these authorities to arrest or kill anyone suspected of not supporting the government's policy.

- During the night of Friday to Saturday, August 29, 2020, on Nyakerera hill, Cankuzo commune and province (eastern Burundi), a soldier whose name has not been identified from the Mutukura camp shot a certain Mashaka Emmanuel, in a bar located near the camp, he was seriously injured and evacuated to Cankuzo hospital for first aid, and then transferred to Hope Hospital in Kibuye for intensive care. According to witnesses on the scene, after this shooting, the other people who shared a drink with the victim did not digest this injustice and did themselves justice by killing this soldier with clubs.

SOS-Torture Burundi notes that the sense of mob justice that haunts the Burundian population is rooted in the impunity enjoyed by some members of the defense and security forces who believe that everything is allowed to them.

- In the morning of Sunday, August 30, 2020 at about 6:00 a.m., the commander of the 1st Military Region (western Burundi) and his guard were ambushed by a group of armed men in the locality of Ruhororo, Mukike commune, Bujumbura province. According to witnesses on site, during this attack, a soldier named Sabimbona Egide died immediately and six other soldiers were wounded. The same sources said that the commander of the 1st Military Region, coming from the camp of Mujejuru (Mugongo-Manga commune), was on his way to the town of Mukike commune to assess the security situation after the attack by unidentified armed men last Saturday in Ndayi, Bikanka zone of the same commune.
- During the night of Sunday, August 30, 2020, around 11:00 p.m., unidentified criminals murdered with machetes an old woman named Régine Ndabazi (75 years) at her home located on Rugondo sub-hill, Sehe hill, Masango zone, Bukinanyana commune, Cibitoke province.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the judicial police of Bukinanyana arrested two suspects for investigation.

- On Kayange hill, Musigati commune, Bubanza province (western Burundi), during clashes in the locality of Masare between security forces, supported by the Imbonerakure, and a group of armed men since Saturday, August 29, 2020 to Thursday, September 2, 2020, fifteen (15) people were murdered, according to the testimony of a local administrator.

SOS-Torture Burundi notes that, for most of these murdered persons, no identification procedure was undertaken to avoid blunders by the security forces.

- On the morning of Wednesday 2 September 2020, on Kivuzo hill, Makaba zone, Ngozi commune and province (northern Burundi), an unidentified lifeless body of an unidentified fifty-year-old man was discovered hanging from a tree with a rope. According to witnesses, the victim's body had injuries on the head, which proves that the perpetrators killed him elsewhere and decided to hang his body on a tree to simulate suicide.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the lifeless body of the victim was evacuated to the mortuary of the Ngozi hospital and that the police have opened an investigation in order to find out the motive for the crime and identify of the perpetrators.

- On the night of Friday, September 4, 2020 at around 7 p.m., on Mukenke hill in Bwambarangwe commune of Kirundo province, a CNL activist known as Macumi Juvénal was killed with clubs. The witnesses on the spot point to an Imbonerakure group made up of Sekamana Oscar, Nkurunziza Sylvestre and Misago Protais as the perpetrator of the murder. According to the same accounts, his body was discovered near the Budahunga Communal High School.

SOS-torture Burundi has learned that the Bwambarangwe police have arrested these Imbonerakure as well as his wife named Kandava Consolate and that they are being held in the jail of the communal police station for investigation.

2. Violation of the right to liberty and physical safety

- In the town of Rugombo commune, Cibitoke province around 5 p.m., the Imbonerakure led by their deputy leader, Nijimbere Évariste, arrested and violently beat an influential member of CNL party, Aloys Ngendakumana, resident on Rubuye sub-hill, Mparambo hill in the same commune, for refusal to join CNDD-FDD party. According to sources on the spot, the victim was taken to CNDD-FDD party offices around 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 3, 2020, was held there until 9:00 pm and was beaten from then on until 11:00 pm until he lost consciousness, after which he was locked up in the dungeon of the modern market of Rugombo.

SOS-Torture Burundi notes that the police did not open an investigation to punish the perpetrators of this barbaric act.

3. Arbitrary arrests

- Since the beginning of the clashes between a group of armed men and the police forces in Rumonge province in the communes of Muhuta, Bugarama and Burambi bordering with Mugamba commune, Bururi province, several young Tutsi students (about twenty) of Kivumu hill and zone, Mugamba commune, Bururi province, are tirelessly arrested in an arbitrary manner and taken to a destination hitherto unknown. According to witnesses on the spot, the Riot squad and the Regional Commissioner of the Southern police Region, PC Thaddee Birutegusa, as well as the infamous Chief police officer of 2nd Class (OPC2) Désiré Uwamahoro, landed in Kavumu zone last Friday in order to coordinate these arbitrary arrests.

SOS-Torture Burundi was able to know some names among these young people arbitrarily arrested by the police and taken to a place that remains secret, according to the relatives of these victims. These are (1) Ndabanogeye Eddy Moses (son of Nzosaba Dismas), (2) Nungi King Bruce (son of Masabo), (3) Agatore loved perfect (son of Ntahombaye Venus), (4) Tungatwese Donard (son of Tungatwese Eric), (5) Rukundo Albert (son Hakizimana Aloys), (6) Ndikumwenayo parfait (son of Hakizimana Aloys), (7) icyitungiye Sandrine (daughter of Hakizimana Aloys) and (8) Nungubumwe Aloys (son of Gaganiza).

Moreover, SOS-Torture Burundi fears that these arbitrary arrests made by well-known personalities in the annals of massive human rights violations will turn into enforced Disappearances, as has been demonstrated since the beginning of the political-security crisis linked to the third contested term of the late Pierre Nkurunziza in April 2015.

- On Mbizi hill, Kibago commune, Makamba province, local police arrested eight (8) domestic workers in the afternoon of Sunday 30 August 2020. According to local sources, all the arrested persons were suspected of belonging to an armed movement and are being held in the cells of the communal Police Station of Jimbi in Kibago commune.

SOS-Torture Burundi notes that these arbitrary arrests are part of a wave of arrests following clashes between a group of armed men and law enforcement officials, supported by Imbonerakure two weeks ago.

- On Muramba hill, Gatabo zone, Kiganda commune, Muramvya province (Central of the country), young Imbonerakure arrested around 3 a.m. on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 two members of the CNL Party (National council for freedom) at their homes, these are Pasteur Nduwimana and Ernest Hatungimana. According to a CNL official on Muramba hill, these young people of the ruling party accused them of complicity with the armed groups that passed in the locality during Saturday night, August 29, 2020. He further stated that these young people from CNDD-FDD handed them over in the morning to agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) who took them to the Provincial Police Station in Muramvya where they have been detained since that day.
- On the morning of Tuesday, September 1, 2020, on Kivumu hill and Zone, Mugamba Commune, Bururi province, the police arrested the new Kivumu hill leader, Ntaguzwa Boniface, his son, Irakoze Bruce and his two domestic workers, Ntihemuka and Bertrand Niyonzima. Sources close to the families of the victims were not informed of where they were taken. They denounce a witch hunt for ethnic motives since all the people arrested are of the same Tutsi ethnic group and they are outside the perimeter where the fighting took place.
- In the early morning of Tuesday, September 1, 2020, the police and the Army jointly conducted a search on crossroad 6 of Kaburantwa hill, Buganda commune, Cibitoke province and during which the provincial head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Cibitoke, the Chief police officer of 2nd Class (OPC2) Venant Miburo, kidnapped and drove to an unknown destination the named Nahigombeye aka Kigombo, accused of collaborating with rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Relatives of Nahigombeye fear an enforced disappearance since they searched for him in vain in official cells and that the head of the SNR in Cibitoke denies having kidnapped the old man. According to witnesses, this search was aimed only at Nahigombeye, whose dead son was a member of the former Burundian Armed Forces (FAB), although about forty other "irregular" persons were also arrested and taken to the communal police Station in order to pay each of them an administrative fine of five thousand Burundian francs (5,000 BIF) for lack of identification, before being released.
- In Rusaka commune, Mwaro province (central Burundi), police officers of the Support unit for the protection of institutions (API) arrested without a warrant ten (10) persons consisting mainly of retired soldiers of the former FAB (Burundian Armed Forces) and young people, between Saturday 29 August 2020 and

Monday 31 August 2020 in the localities close to the forest of Mpotsa. According to witnesses on the spot, all those arrested, including retired military Etienne Gahungu, are suspected of belonging to or collaborating with armed groups. Relatives of the victims claim not to know where they would be detained.

- Tuesday, September 1, 2020, on Mukungu hill and zone, Nyanza-Lac commune, Makamba province (southern Burundi), the defense and security forces in collaboration with the provincial head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Makamba province, in a joint operation, arrested Méthode Nyabenda, Venant Manirambona, Ferdinand Niyongabo and another man who has not been identified. A local source told SOS-Torture Burundi that these men were arrested after 12 unknown individuals passed by the night before in the center of Nyanza-Lac and allegedly headed Rukambasi forest, which extends

over Nyanza-Lac and Vugizo communes in Makamba and Vyanda provinces of Bururi province.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that these arrested persons are being detained at the home of the provincial head of SNR in Makamba, which he has turned into a cell in disregard of the relevant law and fears that these persons will be subjected to heinous acts of torture.

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