

REPORT N° 248 OF SOS-TORTURE/BURUNDI PUBLISHED ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2020

This SOS-Torture report covers the period from 05 to 12 September 2020 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least eight (08) persons were murdered during the period in different localities of the country mainly in clashes between security forces and groups of armed men.

The report also reported twelve (12) persons seriously injured in different localities of the country.

Finally, the report notes fifteen (15) cases of arbitrary arrests against persons suspected of collaborating with the armed groups that attacked several localities in the country.

1. Violations of the right to life and physical integrity

- One (01) unidentified person was murdered during the night of Saturday, 05 September 2020 on the Kagano hill, Rusarendu zone, in Bukeye commune of Muramvya province. According to witnesses, it was during clashes between a group of unidentified armed men and a group of Imbonerakure on patrol.
- During the night of Sunday, September 6, 2020, at about 9:00 pm, Léonidas Nibayubahe and his wife Thérèse Hagabimana as well as Frédance Nahimana, a teacher at the basic school of Gisagazuba, were killed during an attack by a group of yet unidentified armed men on the Gisagazuba hill, Maramvya zone, Burambi commune, Rumonge province (southwestern Burundi).

According to local sources, the director of the basic school of Gisagazuba, husband of Frédance Nahimana, who was assassinated, and his child were also injured during the attack and evacuated to a local health care facility.

- Two (02) lifeless bodies were discovered Tuesday, September 08, 2020 around 4:00 p.m. in Lake Rweru on the side of Masaka zone, Giteranyi Commune, Muyinga province by soldiers of the Military Marine Unit who were patrolling in Lake Rweru. According to a local source in Masaka, there is no information on the identity or provenance of these two lifeless bodies.

SOS-Torture Burundi notes that local administrative authorities hastened to bury the remains without concern for prior identification.

- During the night of 9 September 2020, a lifeless body of Ngendakumana Bupenda was discovered hanging to a rope in the commune center of Musigati, Cibitoke Province. According to sources on the spot, the circumstances of the death and its motive are not yet known.
- Early morning of Thursday, September 10, 2020 at about 2:45 a.m., Jean Marie Mbonihankuye was murdered in a grenade attack launched by an unidentified person in his household located at 2nd Avenue No. 63 of Buyenzi district, in the locality called Kigaramango, Buyenzi zone in Mukaza commune, Bujumbura town.

SOS Torture Burundi learned that the police arrested 3 persons among the neighbors of the place of the crime for investigative reasons.

- During the night of Thursday, 10 September 2020 at about 08:30 p.m., on Nyarumanga hill, Matongo commune, Kayanza province (northern Burundi), six (6) unidentified persons including 4 men and two minors were killed in an attack by a group of armed men. According to witnesses on the spot, three (3) unidentified persons were also injured during this attack by these men in military uniform of the Burundian army.

2. Violation of the right to physical security

- In the early morning of Thursday, September 10, 2020 at about 2:45 a.m., Innoncent Nininahazwe, Patrick Niyonkuru, Adelin and Nduwimana were seriously injured in a grenade attack thrown by an unidentified person in a household located in Buyenzi Quarter, 2nd Avenue No. 63 in the locality called Kigaramango, Buyenzi zone, Mukaza commune, Bujumbura town. According to witnesses, these victims were evacuated to hospitals in Bujumbura.
- In the morning of Saturday, September 12, 2020 on Mataba sub-hill, Nyarusebeyi hill, Butahana zone, Mabayi commune, Cibitoke province, a grenade exploded in a gold mine and seriously injured three gold planners who were evacuated to the hospital for emergency care.

According to witnesses, the grenade was trapped by criminals following conflicts between gold planners in this locality.

3. Arbitrary arrests

- Sunday evening, September 6, 2020, on Mubarazi hill, Bugarama zone, Muramvya commune and province, the provincial intelligence officer, OPC1 Havyarimana Félix, arrested without warrant Alexis Bigirimana, member of Murambi hill council on Murambi and activist of the party National Council for Liberty (CNL). According to local reports, the motive for his arrest was not disclosed.

SOS Torture Burundi notes a case of arbitrary arrest and has learned that the victim was taken to the cell of Muramvya police station where he joined two other members of the CNL, Pasteur Nduwimana and Ernest Hatungimana, arrested on September 1, 2020 on Murambi hill, Gatabo zone, Kiganda commune, Muramvya province for collaboration with armed groups.

- On Sunday, September 6, 2020, on Gakaranka hill, in Kivumu zone, Mugamba Commune, Bururi Province (southern Burundi), the police arrested Albert Ndekatubane at his home without a warrant. According to relatives of the victim, the police did not provide any explanation for his arrest or his place of detention.
- On Monday, September 7, 2020, seven (07) persons were arrested by the police and Imbonerakure in Burambi and Bugarama commune, Rumonge province. According to testimonies on the spot, they are the nicknamed Kidede from the locality of Mikinya, the prenamed André, Claver, Alexis and Dieudonné nicknamed Mapengu from Gisagazuba sub-hill, Nkunuzimana from Bambo hill and Cyriaque from Zingi-Nyaruyaga hill. The same testimonies reveal that they were arrested on the orders of Maramvya chief zone, Prime Niyongabo, and that the list of those arrested was drawn up before the attack.

SOS Torture Burundi has learned that the arrested individuals were loaded into two vehicles, one of the police and the other of Diomède Niyonsaba, head of National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FD party in Rumonge province, and driven to a not yet known destination.

It also notes that all of those arrested are all political opponents.

- On 31 August 2020, three (03) young men from Namande hill, Rusaka commune, Mwaro province, namely Hugues Bukuru, Fabrice Nduwimana and a certain Pacifique, were arrested by the police led by the provincial commissioner of Mwaro, Agathon Kasa, and subsequently handed over to the head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Mwaro province, Gérard Ndayisenga. According to sources on the spot, since this arrest, no one knew the place of their detention until September 8, 2020, the day they were presented to the public prosecutor's office in Mukaza for a hearing before being transferred the same day to the central prison of Mpimba, after 9 days of incarceration in a clandestine cell. The same sources reveal that these three young men would have spent these days in the cells of the National Intelligence Service located near Regina Mundi Cathedral.

On the other hand, two other young people, Bienvenu Ndacayisaba (who is the older brother of Hugues Bukuru) and Jérôme Ntakarutimana, from the same Namande hill, who were arrested in the centre of Muramvya province on September 1, 2020, remain untraceable since the day of their arrest. According to sources on the spot, just after their arrest, they passed into Muramvya Brigade before being handed over to the intelligence officer in Muramvya, Felix Havyarimana. Since that time, no one knew the whereabouts of these two young people.

SOS Torture Burundi requests the Burundi National Police and the National Intelligence Service to communicate the place of detention of these two young men.

- On Tenga hill, Rubirizi zone, Mutimbuzi commune, Bujumbura province, two Imbonerakure known under the pseudonyms of Mango and Mandela arrested on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 Jean Bosco Ndayiragije, head of CNL on Tenga hill and took him to the cell of Rubirizi zone.

Sources on the spot indicate that these Imbonerakure accused him of collaborating with armed groups.

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 persons 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.

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.