

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 303 PUBLISHED ON 2 OCTOBER 2021

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 25 September to 2 October s 2021 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least eleven (11) people were murdered during this period and twenty-two (22) others were seriously injured in different localities of the country during the explosions of grenades launched by Imbonerakure militiamen.

The report also deplores the cases of forty-nine (49) people who were arbitrarily arrested and three (3) others who were victims of abduction.

1. Violations of the right to life

- In the afternoon of Saturday 25 September 2021, at around 4 p.m., four lifeless bodies of unidentified men and 13 others seriously wounded were discovered close to the Kibira forest on Ruhembe and Nderama hills, in Bumba zone of Bukinanyana commune and on Gafumbegeti hill, in Butahana zone of Mabayi commune, in Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, the residents of these hills were the first to discover the bodies and quickly alerted the soldiers from a nearby position in the Kibira forest, who came to collect the wounded. The same sources reveal that the injured people were evacuated to the economic capital Bujumbura.

- On the morning of Monday 27 September 2021, an unidentified man, armed with a pistol and a Kalashnikov rifle, fired several bullets at a woman known as Chantal Hatungimana at the 8th Avenue of the Carama quarter, Kinama zone, Ntahangwa urban commune, in Bujumbura City Hall (western Burundi).

According to witnesses, Mrs. Chantal Hatungimana, Director of Repatriation at the Ministry of Interior, Community Development and Public Security, was shot several times in the belly as she was leaving her home to go to work and was immediately evacuated to the CHUK (Kamenge University Hospital), commonly known as Roi Khaled, where she succumbed to her wounds several hours later in the afternoon.

The same sources claim that the criminal abandoned his Kalashnikov at the scene of the crime before disappearing.

- On the night of Monday 27 April 2021, Pierre Claver Ntiranyibagira (37 years old) was shot dead by an unidentified criminal armed with a rifle as he was returning to his home on Shombo hill, in Muramvya commune and province (central Burundi).

According to local sources, Pierre Claver Ntiranyabigara, a goat seller, died on the way to a health facility in the economic capital Bujumbura after having been successively transferred to the health centre of Shombo and the provincial hospital of Muramvya. The same sources said that the victim had been robbed of all his money and that no suspect had been arrested.

- On the evening of Monday 27 September 2021, a grenade was launched in the locality of Bibembe, in Kizingwe-Bihara quarter of Kanyosha zone, in Muha urban commune, south of Bujumbura City Hall (western Burundi) and the explosion immediately killed a child and injured several other people, some of them seriously.

According to witnesses, the scene of the incident was surrounded some time later by police officers, SNR (National Intelligence Service) agents and Imbonerakure youths and, in the aftermath, a young man who is not known in the area was arrested and presented as the author of the grenade explosion. He was quickly

recognised after the diffusion of a video of his arrest as Dieudonné Habonimana, an Imbonerakure militiaman who is very active in the neighbouring Gisyo quarter, in the same Kanyosha zone.

The same sources revealed that Dieudonné Habonimana was later taken to the Kanyosha zone dungeon for interrogation, in the presence of SNR agents and several police officials including the municipal commissioner and the commander of the southern police zone, and that he was summarily executed with a fatal blow to the head when he vowed the crime and began to reveal the names of his fellow Imbonerakure militiamen involved in such crimes and attacks.

- On the evening of Tuesday 28 September 2021 at around 7:30 p.m., an Imbonerakure militiaman known as Nestor Ndagijimana alias Rasta threw a grenade into a bistro located on Vugizo wa Rubondo hill, in Gutumba zone of Mutimbuzi commune, in Bujumbura province (western Burundi).

According to witnesses, Nestor Ndagijimana alias Rasta threw the grenade after an argument with Joseph Banderekeye, the owner of the bistro, and the explosion resulted in the death of three people on the spot, namely Joseph Banderekeye, a motorbike taxi driver named Pascal and the second wife of the militiaman Nestor Ndagijimana, as well as three other people injured.

The same sources indicate that the police intervened just after the explosion and that they immediately arrested the perpetrator who will not have the chance to arrive at the police cell in Gatumba because he was executed with bullets on the way, allegedly for an escape attempt, according to a statement by Pierre Nkurikiye, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior, Community Development and Public Security.

- On the morning of Wednesday 29 September 2021, around midday, a grenade exploded on Kanombe hill of Mitakataka zone, in the commune and province of Bubanza (north-western Burundi) and killed one child and seriously injured another.

According to sources on the spot, the children were playing with two grenades that they had just found in a pigeon cage belonging to an Imbonerakure militiaman named Gérard Ndorambizi. The same sources said that the other grenade, which had not exploded, was handed over to the local police, while the militiaman Gérard Ndorambizi was arrested and taken to the provincial police station in Bubanza.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores a series of grenade attacks that have been perpetrated in various parts of the country since 19 September in particular, killing dozens of innocent people and injuring several others. It deplores the attitude of the police who hasten to execute Imbonerakure militiamen arrested after throwing grenades instead of carrying out real investigations to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice, an attitude that suggests that the Burundian police have a truth about these attacks that they want to hide from the public.

2. Violations of the right to liberty: arbitrary arrests and detentions

- Last Saturday, 25 September 2021, thirty-four young people whose names were not revealed were arrested in Rutegama commune of Muramvya province (central Burundi) by the administrative and police authorities and taken to an unknown location.

According to sources on the spot, these young people, dressed in civilian clothes and coming from Makamba province (southern Burundi), were on board two public transport minibuses and were suspected of intending to join armed

movements. The same sources revealed that these thirty-four young people had been denounced by the drivers of these minibuses after having suspected them.

- Since last Wednesday, 22 September 2021, a witch-hunt has been directed against recently repatriated persons in Busoni commune of Kirundo province (northern Burundi). According to sources from this commune, a joint search operation under the pretext of seeking for weapons in certain households of returnees settled in the sites of displaced persons in Rutabo and Rusarasi was carried out on the morning of Wednesday 22 September by police officers from Busoni communal police station, a communal SNR agent and the Imbonerakure. At the end of this operation, 8 returnees were arrested and detained at the Kirundo prosecutor's office on allegations of possession of weapons, including Innocent Ngabonziza (recently returned from the Mahama camp after having been accused of illegal possession of a Kalashnikov), Théogène Butera (teacher at the Rusarasi basic school) and Ali Hatungimana. All those arrested are accused of collaborating with Burundian rebel groups and providing information to the Rwandan intelligence services. The same sources reveal that returnees, mainly from Rwanda, are afraid of these persecutions and that some of them prefer to flee again.

SOS-Torture Burundi urges the authorities of the country to stop these persecutions based on tricks and to put their words into action, as President Evariste Ndayishimiye and even Minister Gervais Ndirakobuca alias Ndakugarika in charge of security and internal affairs keep calling the population and the authorities at the grassroots level to avoid any action that could lead to discrimination against returnees, a good speech that is not followed by concrete actions.

- Since last Sunday, 26 September 2021, Romuald Hankanimana, the representative of the party CNL (National Congress for Liberty) in Mugamba commune of Bururi province (southern Burundi), has been arbitrarily detained in police station in Mugamba on allegations of training and sheltering rebels.

According to sources on the spot, Romuald Hankanimana was arrested at his home on the hill and zone of Vyuya, in the same commune, after a search operation for firearms conducted by the provincial police commissioner in Bururi, OPC1 Dieudonné Maniragaba, accompanied by the communal police commander in Mugamba and young Imbonerakure, although no incriminating object was found in his home.

The same sources indicate that Romuald Hankanimana was arrested with his brother-in-law Déo Icoyitungiye who came to inquire about the situation at the time of the search and was released after two days of detention at the police station in Mugamba.

- Since last Saturday, 24 September 2021, four people from the same family, Juvin Ndabahinyuye and his three sons Enoch Nduwimana, Jean Claude Tuyubahe and Emmanuel Mugenzi, have been in arbitrary detention in various cells in the commune of Burambi and in the City Hall of Bujumbura instead and in place of a member of their family wanted for a murder he allegedly committed and who has been in exile since 2016.

According to sources on the spot, Juvin Ndabahinyuye was arrested last Saturday, 24 September, by the police at his home located on Gishiha hill in Maramvya zone of Burambi commune, in Rumonge province (southwestern Burundi) and is detained in the police cell in Murago, in Burambi commune, while one of her sons, Enoch Nduwimana (a policeman in service at the Buterere police station), is being held in the custody of Judicial General Police Station in Jabe while his two other sons, Emmanuel Mugenzi (a customs declarant) and Jean

Claude Tuyubahe (an employee of a service station located at the Ruvumera market in Buyenzi urban zone), are held in jail of the SNR in Bujumbura.

SOS-Torture Burundi urges the country's authorities, in this case the Head of the State, to end the persecution of members of this family who are languishing in jails in an abusive manner. It recalls that criminal responsibility is individual and that no motive can justify the prosecution of individuals in place of another wanted person for a crime she has personally committed.

- On the morning of Thursday, 30 September 2021, Marie Chantal Nijimbere, a nurse assigned to the emergency pharmacy of the Gitega regional hospital (central Burundi), was arrested by SNR agents in Gitega who accused her of denouncing, through online media broadcasting from abroad (Inzamba and RPA radios), the practices of bad governance attributable to the head of the hospital with regard to the assignments of nursing staff and caregiver in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic which is based on political affiliation and nepotism.

According to sources on the spot, Marie Chantal Nijimbere was forced to interrupt her annual leave by her hierarchy and as soon as she came to her service, she found SNR agents waiting for her and drove her in the police cell in Gitega after a brief interrogation.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On the night of Sunday 26 September 2021 around midnight, Fidèle Niyongabo, an employee of Brarudi (Burundi breweries and lemonade) and his driver whose name is not yet known were kidnapped at the 2nd Avenue in the Kanyosha zone of Muha commune, in Bujumbura City Hall (western Burundi).

According to sources on the spot, the two men were abducted not far from Fidèle Niyongabo's home by individuals believed to be agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) and were taken to an unknown location. The same sources specify that, despite cries of distress from the victims, no one was able to intervene.

- On the evening of Wednesday, 29 September 2021, at around 6:30 p.m., Sergeant Innocent Gashirahamwe (registration number 76743), a military medic of the 7th MINUSCA battalion (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic) and ex-FNL, was kidnapped at a place called "Kumayirabiri" in the Carama quarter in Kinama zone (north of Bujumbura city) by six unidentified men in a white Toyota Hilux double cabin van with tinted windows.

According to sources on the spot, the six men in civilian clothes, but armed with pistols, rushed on Innocent Gashirahamwe in full traffic and in the presence of the police who did not intervene and threw him into the vehicle, despite his fruitless resistance, to take him to an unknown destination.

SOS-Torture Burundi once again calls on the President of the Republic, Évariste Ndayishimiye, to order the cessation of the phenomenon of enforced disappearances perpetrated by certain state agents in charge of defense and security, instead of indulging in speeches denial of the existence of the phenomenon.

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 areas 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.