

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 305 PUBLISHED ON 16 OCTOBER 2021

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 9 to 16 October 2021 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least thirteen (13) people were murdered during this period in various localities throughout the country.

The report also deplores the cases of twelve (12) people who were abducted by military and National Intelligence Service (SNR) agents and two (2) people who were arbitrarily arrested.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the morning of Saturday, October 9, 2021, the lifeless body of a man known as Égide Bucumi, aged 41, was found at his home on 1st Avenue in the Magarama quarter of Gitega city (central Burundi).

According to local sources, the body of Egide Bucumi was found hanging from the ceiling with a piece of mosquito net wrapped around his neck inside the family home where he lived alone with the security guard. The same sources specify that the circumstances of his death have not been elucidated and that no investigation has been opened to determine the motives and perpetrators.

- On the night of Saturday, October 9, 2021, around 10:00 p.m., André Seruganda, aged 70, was murdered with a knife stuck in his throat on his sickbed at the Nyagatovu health center located in Tangara commune of Ngozi province (northern Burundi).

According to sources, André Seruganda, a native of the Mashitsi hill in the same Tangara commune, was first seriously wounded on his native hill by a certain Rémégie Nyabenda and then evacuated to the Nyagatovu health center where he found him to complete his evil deed. The victim was suspected by those around him of practicing witchcraft.

The same sources state that the criminal confessed to his crime after being arrested by the police and claimed that he acted to avenge his sister who had just been struck by lightning.

- On the morning of Sunday, October 10, 2021, the lifeless body of Élysée Niragira, a young student at the ITAB (Institute of Agricultural Techniques of Burundi) of Giharo in the province of Rutana (eastern Burundi), was found floating on the Maragarazi River, on the border between Burundi and Tanzania. According to sources on the spot, the students of this school went out the day before to do sports with their boarding director and arrived at the Maragarazi River before returning to school; but on the way back, the student Elysée Niragira, originally from the commune of Nyanza-Lac, was reported missing. The circumstances of his death have not yet been clarified.
- On the evening of Monday, October 11, 2021, around 7:00 p.m., a young man in his thirties named Haruna Ndayizigiye was shot and killed by an unidentified man on the Nyungu hill in the Bwasare zone, in Gasorwe commune of Muyinga province (northeast Burundi).

According to sources on the spot, a perpetrator who has not yet been identified took advantage of the darkness to shoot the victim before disappearing incognito. The same sources said that Haruna Ndayizigiye, a member of the Imbonerakure youth league, died of his wounds while being evacuated to the provincial hospital and that the motive for the crime has not yet been clarified.

- On the morning of Sunday, October 10, 2021, two soldiers of the 110th Reinforcement Battalion based in Bugarama, namely the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Marie Nkurunziza alias Matwi (reg. no. SS1300), an officer of the 34th promotion of the ISCAM (Higher Institute of Military Cadres), and his liaison agent, Corporal Fidèle Ndayitwayeko, were shot dead by unidentified individuals ambushed in the Teza forest on the Busangana hill in Bukeye commune, in Muramvya province (central Burundi).

According to sources on the spot, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Marie Nkurunziza, a native of Murago hill, Buziracanda zone, Ndava commune, in Mwaro province, succumbed to his wounds at Giko hospital in Bukeye where he had been evacuated, while Corporal Fidèle Ndayitwayeko, a native of Kibago commune in Makamba province, died on the spot.

- On the night of Tuesday, October 12, 2021, Jean Bizimana, a 70-year-old man who was working as a sentry in a rice storage shed located in the Mitakataka zone of Bubanza commune and province (northwestern Burundi), was murdered by unidentified criminals with stones at his workplace.

According to witnesses of the macabre discovery, the criminals broke the padlocks to gain access to the interior of the shed and smashed the victim's head with stones left near his body before taking away some 35 kg of husked rice, despite the large quantity of rice in the shed. The same sources state that Jean Bizimana was a survivor of the 1993 crisis that was triggered by the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye and that he lived in a site for displaced persons in Muyange in the same zone of Mitakataka.

- On the morning of Thursday, October 12, 2021, around 10:00 a.m., farmers discovered three decomposing bodies of unidentified men in a cassava field on the 6th transversal at the foot of the Ndava-village hill in Buganda commune of Cibitoke

province (northwestern Burundi), less than fifty meters from the Rusizi River on Burundi's border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

According to witnesses to this grisly discovery, the three bodies were bound, tied together and wrapped in a plastic sheet. The bodies were immediately buried under the supervision of the zone leader of Ndava on the orders of the Buganda commune administrator, Pamphile Hakizimana.

Sources from the locality suspect that members of the joint security committee (basically made up of young Imbonerakure from the CNDD-FDD) are in collusion with the perpetrators of these killings, whose bodies are constantly being discovered at this location. They base their suspicions on the fact that the people of the locality see vehicles going to the Rusizi River during the night and turning back some time later, without any concern, whereas normally these members of the joint security committee make patrols every night, without reporting on the origin and mission of these vehicles.

- On the night of Thursday, October 14, 2021, around 8:00 p.m., Anaclet Ntawumenya, 55 years old, was murdered with machetes by unidentified individuals on Ruziba hill and zone in Mugina commune of Cibitoke province (northwest of Burundi).

According to sources on the spot, Anaclet Ntawumenya was attacked by individuals armed with machetes on his way back from the administrative center of Mugina commune.

The same sources reveal that this man was suspected of practicing witchcraft and that he had been threatened for several days by certain residents of this locality who had even collected a sum of money to finance his assassination.

SOS-Torture is concerned about the resurgence of crime motivated by superstitious beliefs that have already caused several victims in the communes of Buganda and

Mugina alone. It calls on the administrative and police authorities to conduct credible and independent investigations in order to identify the perpetrators and bring them to justice and thus curb the phenomenon of witchcraft that has become endemic in the provinces of Cibitoke and Bubanza.

- On the night of Friday to Saturday, October 16, 2021, at around 1:00 a.m., Jean Nzoyihaya was killed by police officers providing security for a Russian gold and related mineral extraction company, Tanganyika Mining Burundi, on the Muhungu hill in the Butahana zone, in Cibitoke province (northwestern Burundi).

According to sources on the ground, Jean Nzoyihaya was killed by bullets to the head while attempting to steal sand that allegedly contained gold.

SOS-Torture Burundi requests that an independent investigation be conducted to determine the circumstances of the death and establish responsibility.

- On the morning of Saturday, October 16, 2021, the decomposing body of an unidentified woman was found in the Maragarazi River at the foot of the Buhemba hill in the Mugeni zone, in Kayogoro commune of Makamba province (southern Burundi).

According to local sources, the body of the victim was wrapped in a plastic bag and was buried the same day on the orders of the communal administrator of Kayogoro.

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

- On the night of Saturday, October 9, 2021, around 9:30 p.m., a widow known as Sylvie Bucumi and a man whose identity was not revealed were arrested on the Busangana hill in Bukeye commune of Muramvya province (central Burundi) and taken to the dungeon of the provincial police station of the same province.

According to witnesses, the two people were arrested during an operation to track down "criminals" that was jointly organized by grassroots administrators and members of the joint security committees, which are mainly made up of Imbonerakure affiliated with the ruling CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy) party, and were accused of collaborating with armed movements, particularly by collecting food for the fighters.

SOS-Torture Burundi is concerned about citizens being labeled as criminals without prior investigation and trial, and that the use of this concept will open the door to various abuses and persecution of anyone suspected of not supporting the current regime.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- Since the morning of September 5, 2021, five people, including Pastor Dominique Nduwimana, a postal worker from Kirundo (northern Burundi) and a native of the province of Karuzi (central-eastern Burundi), have been reported missing.

According to sources close to their families, Pastor Dominique Nduwimana, who was in his forties and had just returned from the Mahama camp in Rwanda, was arrested along with four other people who have not yet been identified in a hotel in the town center of Buhiga in Karuzi province by Samuel Destino Bapfumukeko, the head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in that province. The same sources reveal that on the morning of September 5, police officers who were with him covered their faces with bags and took them away in his service vehicle to an unknown destination.

- On the night of October 12 to 13, 2021, at around 2:00 a.m., Alexis Nimubona, two of his sons and their maid were abducted on the Midodo sub-hill of the Muhuzu hill in the Minago zone, Muhuta commune, in Rumonge province (southwestern

Burundi) by unidentified men in Burundian army uniforms who took them away in a van without license plates.

According to local sources, the kidnappers forced the head of the household, Alexis Nimubona, to open the door of his house and immediately jumped on him, his two sons and their servant and threw them into the van before speeding off. The same sources reveal that along the way, the same soldiers kidnapped another person whose identity remains unknown and that the vehicle headed for the economic capital Bujumbura.

- On the night of Tuesday to Wednesday, October 13, 2021, two men from Giteranyi commune in Muyinga province were abducted by unidentified men and taken to unknown locations. The first was Eustache Miburo, an agent of the NGO Caritas Burundi in Muyinga and a resident of the Kinyota hill in the provincial town of Muyinga, who was last seen at the bistro called Zigzag, which he left at around 11 p.m. and has not been seen since. The second is Joseph Sinzubwenge of the Burundian Baptist Church, who lives in the Ruzo zone in Giteranyi commune. He was abducted in front of his home by unknown individuals who took him away in an unidentified vehicle, covered with a tent.



SOS – Torture/Burundi

Monitoring sur les cas de torture, les arrestations arbitraires, les disparitions forcées et les exécutions sommaires au Burundi

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.