

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 314 PUBLISHED ON 18 DECEMBER 2021

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 11 to 18 December 2021 regarding cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least four (4) people were assassinated during this period in different localities of the country, including a leader of the CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party who died at the Clinique Prince Louis Rwagasore following horrific acts of torture at the SNR (National Intelligence Service).

The report also deplores the case of five (5) people who were victims of physical attacks, including four members of the same family who were injured in a grenade explosion in Rumonge province, as well as three (3) CNL activists who were arbitrarily arrested.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the night of Tuesday 14 December 2021, an 80-year-old woman known as Félicité Ndudo succumbed to her injuries after being stoned to death in the afternoon of the same day by an enraged population on the Nyabikaranga hill in Kabuye zone, in the commune and province of Kayanza (northern Burundi).

According to witnesses, Félicité Ndudo was attacked with stones by a crowd of people who accused her of witchcraft after she was found at the home of her neighbour named Jean Marie with a bag containing some objects that they took as grigris.

According to the same sources, the police and the local administration intervened late and found the victim in a ravine covered with stones and clods of earth before evacuating her to a nearby health facility where she died a few hours later.

SOS-Torture Burundi regrets the resurgence of cases of witchcraft-related killings where the lives of peaceful citizens are regularly taken with total impunity by the alleged perpetrators who are not difficult to identify. It calls on the Burundian authorities to take a serious look at the phenomenon of crime linked to superstitious beliefs in witchcraft and to initiate independent and impartial judicial investigations in order to discover the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

- On the afternoon of Wednesday 15 November 2021, Augustin Matata, treasurer of the CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party in the commune of Isale in Bujumbura province (western Burundi), died at the Prince Louis Rwagasore Clinic as a result of the atrocious acts of torture he had undergone at the SNR (National Intelligence Service), after having been hospitalised last week at the same hospital in the city of Bujumbura. One month before his death, on 16 November 2021, he was violently abducted and tortured on the 6th transversal of the hill and zone of Buringa, in the commune and province of Bubanza (north-western Burundi) by OPC1 Venant Miburo, the provincial head of the SNR in Bubanza, accompanied by police officers, and was taken away in a white double-cabin vehicle with the SNR registration number E0540A, towards an unknown destination.

According to family sources, Matata's relatives were not allowed to visit him during his hospitalisation, when he was in a coma and his hospital room was fiercely guarded by police officers. Furthermore, apart from the fact that the SNR refused the victim's family access to his remains, they were not informed of the place of his detention or of the offences against him.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the cases of abductions carried out by certain law enforcement officers, in this case those of the SNR who seem to be above the law, which are often followed by enforced disappearances and sometimes murders of the victims following sessions of atrocious torture. It calls for an immediate

investigation to identify the perpetrators of these acts of torture resulting in death with a view to bringing them to justice.

SOS-Torture/Burundi also denounces the fact that impunity for members of the defence and security forces has become endemic, which contributes to the proliferation of blunders within these institutions, which have become more instruments of repression for the ruling power in Burundi than instruments for the security of citizens.

- On the night of Friday 17 December 2021, at around 9.30 pm, a woman known as Jeanine Kabagabirwa and her little girl, whose name has not yet been revealed, were murdered with machetes by unidentified criminals on the Muzingi hill in the Gisanze zone, in Gashoho commune of Muyinga province (northeast of Burundi).

According to local sources, the executioners found the two victims in their house and slit their throats before fleeing. The motive for the double murder and its perpetrators remain to be elucidated.

2. Violations of the right to physical integrity

- On the evening of Sunday 12 December 2021, four members of the same family, namely Suzanne Bapfumukeko (aged around 60), her two daughters Clairia Kezimana (aged 9) and Ayisetu Nshimirimana (aged 13) and Emmanuel Ndayisenga (aged 25), were wounded in a grenade attack by unidentified criminals on the hill and zone of Gatete, in the Commune and Province of Rumonge (south-west of Burundi).

According to local sources, Suzanne Bapfumukeko and Ayisetu Nshimirimana were seriously injured and transferred to one of the hospitals in the economic capital Bujumbura, while two other people, Emmanuel Ndayisenga and Clairia

Kezimana, are being treated in Rumonge hospital. The perpetrators and the motive for the attack remain unknown.

- On the morning of Monday 13 December 2021, Jean Paul Nshimirimana, a judge of the Intermediate Court of Bujumbura based in Kabezi commune, in Bujumbura province (western Burundi), was beaten and ill-treated by police officers assigned to the Kanyosha zone, in Bujumbura town hall, when he was on his way to Mubimbi commune to check on the status of the execution of the judgments rendered.

According to local sources, the police officers demanded that he show them his identity documents and he showed them his service card. They then beat him up without any reason before detaining him for at least an hour.

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

- On the afternoon of Saturday 11 December 2021, an activist of the CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party in Kayogoro commune of Makamba province (southern Burundi) was arrested by police officers in complicity with the Imbonerakure and was taken to the dungeon of the communal police station in this commune. The motives for his arbitrary arrest were not revealed.
- On 12 December 2021, a representative of the CNL party on Ruveri hill, in Kinyinya commune of Ruyigi province (eastern Burundi), known as Emmanuel Bucingeza, was arbitrarily arrested by members of the ruling party, the CNDD-FDD, under the pretext that he was wearing a T-shirt of his party, while those who arrested him were also wearing the uniform of their party.
- In the afternoon of Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at around 5 p.m., Joris Bukeyenzeza, a CNL party activist and teacher at the Gatonde communal high school in Nyabikere commune of Karusi province (central-eastern Burundi), was

arbitrarily arrested by the head of the Imbonerakure youth league of the CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) party in Nyabikere commune.

According to witnesses, Joris Bukeyeneza was arrested on his way home from school and, after his arrest, he was handed over to the police for detention in the dungeons of the communal police station in Shombo.

The same sources reveal that this CNL activist was suspected of spreading false information on social networks and on the media in exile (African Public Radio and Radio Inzamba-Agateka kawe). In particular, he was suspected of having accused certain heads of services working in Shombo commune of forcing their staff to give contributions to take care of Imbonerakure undergoing paramilitary training in a forest located on the mountain range called Gihinga c'inka.

SOS-Torture/Burundi deploras cases of arrests carried out by CNDD-FDD activists who have no standing or competence, and a resurgence of political intolerance by CNDD-FDD members against activists of opposition political parties, in this case those of the CNL party. It calls on the police and the administration to show neutrality and impartiality in treating all members of political parties operating in Burundi on an equal footing.

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.