

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 322 PUBLISHED ON 12 FEBRUARY 2022

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 5 to 12 February 2022 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least eight (8) people were murdered during this period in different localities of the country.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) young child who was tortured by a local leader in Giharo commune and two (2) young men who were abducted in Bujumbura by members of the Burundi National Police.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the afternoon of Sunday 6 February 2022, at around 2 p.m., a man who has not yet been identified died as a result of acts of torture inflicted on him at the National Intelligence Service (SNR) office in Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, on Sunday night at around 8 p.m., the wardens of Cibitoke hospital saw torches in the cemetery near the hospital and believed that SNR agents were burying the victim secretly, despite the presence of a military position near the cemetery.

The same sources revealed that the victim had been arrested on the evening of Wednesday 2 February 2022 in Murwi commune of the same province on suspicion of collaboration with Burundian rebels in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for an independent investigation to determine the identity of the victim and the perpetrators in order to bring them to justice, as well as the circumstances of his murder.

- On the night of Sunday 6 February 2022, a motorbike taxi driver known as Rénovat Ndikuriyo, aged 23 years, was murdered with machetes at the home of a customer he had just transported on his motorbike on Kivuruga hill in Gatara zone and commune of Kayanza province (northern Burundi).

According to local sources, Rénovat Ndikuriyo was murdered by Prosper Nezerwe, whom he had driven on his motorbike, in complicity with his brother Roger Habonimana. Their mother noticed several bloodstains on Prosper Nezerwe's clothes and alerted those around him. It was then that a lifeless body was discovered hastily buried in the vicinity of their home. The same sources said that Prosper Nezerwe had just been released from prison a few days earlier.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the two criminal brothers, Prosper Nezerwe and Roger Habonimana, from the same Kivuruga hill, were sentenced by the Intermediate Court of Kayanza for the murder of Rénovat Ndikuriyo to life imprisonment and to pay damages of twenty million Burundian francs (20,000,000 Fbu) to the victim's family and six hundred thousand Burundian francs (600,000 Fbu) to the owner of the motorbike she was driving.

- On 8 February 2022, a young girl from the Twa community known as Carine Niyonzima, aged 25 years, died in Bururi hospital (southern Burundi) as a result of the injuries she sustained after being raped on the night of Sunday 6 February 2022 by APC¹ Mohamed Rugamba, a policeman from the provincial police station in Bururi.

¹ Chief Constable (one of the ranks of policemen in the Agents category).

According to local sources, the policeman Mohamed Rugamba raped the victim on Myugaro hill in Bururi commune and province and, after the despicable act, he beat her several times until she lost consciousness. Carine Niyonzima was later evacuated in a very critical condition to Bururi hospital where she eventually succumbed to the wounds inflicted on her by her torturer.

The same sources say that Mohamed Rugamba was arrested on Wednesday 9 February by the police and is being held in Bururi central prison.

- On the night of Tuesday to Wednesday, 9 February 2022, at around 1 a.m., a man known as Grégoire Misago was killed with a spear by Adelin Ntibarikure on Ritendeye sub-hill of Shari 2 hill, in Bubanza commune and province (northwestern Burundi). Local sources state that the perpetrator and his victim are all Imbonerakure affiliated to the CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) party.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the perpetrator of the murder was tried in flagrante delicto and sentenced by the High Court of Bubanza to life imprisonment and to pay damages of ten million Burundian francs (10,000,000 FBu) to the victim's family.

- On the night of Wednesday 9 February 2022, a woman known as Jeannette Nibizi and her child were killed by her husband, Onésime Bucumi, on Kigabwe sub-hill, Nyamugari hill, Mabanda commune, in Makamba province (southern Burundi).

According to witnesses, an argument broke out between the two spouses and the husband then violently hit his wife with a club and she died immediately. One of their children was also beaten unconscious and died the next morning at a health facility where he had been evacuated.

The same sources reported that the criminal Onésime Bucumi, who had just been released from Rumonge prison where he was being prosecuted for assaulting his wife, was arrested by the police and taken to the police station in Mabanda for a judicial investigation.

- In the afternoon of Thursday 10 February 2022, a lifeless body of a young girl known as Emelyne Ndamuhawenimana and residing in Buhororo quarter of Bubanza city centre was discovered half naked in a bush located on Gahongore hill in Bubanza commune and province (north-west of Burundi).

According to the testimony of people who witnessed the gruesome discovery, Emelyne Ndamuhawenimana was killed on Wednesday night by unidentified criminals who half undressed and raped her before strangling her with a scarf that she normally wrapped around her head.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls on the police and judicial authorities to carry out impartial investigations to find the perpetrators and bring them to justice.

- On the evening of Thursday 10 February 2022, a member of the CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party known as Révérien Butoyi died in a health facility after being violently beaten by a group of Imbonerakure on Kibande hill in Giheta commune of Gitega province (central Burundi).

According to witnesses, Révérien Butoyi was quenching his thirst in a local bistro when one of the young Imbonerakure from the ruling CNDD-FDD party attacked him and other Imbonerakure, at the instigation of their hill leader named Ferdinand, violently beat him until he lost consciousness. The victim was then evacuated, in a very critical state, to a local health facility where he succumbed to his injuries immediately upon arrival at the emergency room.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the silence of the Burundian authorities regarding the recurrent exactions committed by the Imbonerakure against other militants of the opposition parties, a silence that can only be interpreted as an encouragement of their criminal acts.

2. Violations of the right to physical integrity (cases of torture)

- On 7 February 2022, a 12-year-old boy called Charles Ntirampeba was tortured at the collinar permanence of the CNDD-FDD party by Léonard Barakamfitye, leader of the Gatonga hill, Muzye zone, Giharo commune, in Rutana province (south-east of Burundi), who accused him of stealing his mobile phone, but which he ended up finding in another place.

According to witnesses, the young boy was detained at the CNDD-FDD headquarters in Gatonga and the torture was a pretext to make the father of this child, who is an activist of the CNL (National Congress for Freedom), suffer. The same sources reveal that the torturer was not worried despite the flagrant violation of the child's rights.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On Monday 7 February 2022, a young man known as Thierry Irakoze, 23 years old, was taken from the police cells of Musaga zone, in Bujumbura city, and was taken away in a vehicle from Ntakangwa commune to an unknown destination.

According to witnesses, Thierry Irakoze, a native of Nyakimonyi in Mugamba commune (Bururi province) and a public transport bus driver, was arrested on Monday 31 January 2022 at around 1 p.m. by Police Commissioner Pierre Claver Bigirimana (OPN 0414) nicknamed Rutuku when he had just arrived at the Musaga car park in a bus he drives. No reason for his arrest was communicated to

him or his family despite the multiple steps taken to be informed of the reasons for his arrest.

The same sources revealed that the people who came to take him to the dungeon told him that he was summoned by CP Pierre Claver alias Rutuku, but he has not been found since that day.

- On Tuesday 8 February 2022, a CNL party activist known as Cassien Bucumi was abducted in Mirama locality, Muyira zone, Kanyosha commune, in Bujumbura province (western Burundi), by two men armed with Kalashnikovs in Burundian national police uniforms, who took him away in their vehicle to an unknown destination.

According to witnesses, the two policemen carried Cassien Bucumi in a double-cabin vehicle with tinted windows and drove towards Bujumbura city. His family members searched in vain for him in the SNR and Bujumbura city police cells.

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 city.