

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 325 PUBLISHED ON 5 MARCH 2022

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 26 February to 5 March 2022 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least five (5) people were murdered during this period in different localities of the country.

The report also deplores the cases of one (1) person who was injured in Cibitoke province, one (1) girl who was raped by a policeman in Rutana province and two (2) people who were abducted in Kayanza province.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the night of Sunday 27 February 2022, at around 8 p.m., a man called Ernest Bamvuninka, aged 67, was murdered with machetes by young Imbonerakure on the sub-hill of Kagengwa, Mugimbu hill, Ngoma zone, Murwi commune, in Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, several Imbonerakure broke into the home of Ernest Bamvuninka and killed him with machetes, accusing him of practising witchcraft. The Imbonerakure (a youth league of the CNDD-FDD [National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy]) had sworn to eliminate him on accusations of witchcraft and he had received several death threats through leaflets. Even the communal administrator of Murwi, Melchiade Nzokizwanayo, claims that he was aware of the macabre plan to assassinate Ernest Bamvuninka and that he had even asked him to leave his home following the death threats he was receiving daily.

SOS-Torture Burundi regrets that people continue to be murdered on the basis of suspicions, often ill-founded, of witchcraft despite the existence of warning signals that would have made it possible to protect the victims and to apprehend the perpetrators of the death threats that often precede this type of assassination. It calls for an independent investigation to identify the perpetrators of this murder and takes issue with the administrative, judicial and police authorities who do not take concrete action to curb this criminal phenomenon that is all too common in the province of Cibitoke, despite the existence of corroborating clues that could lead to the identification of the perpetrators if they were properly exploited at the appropriate time.

- On the night of Sunday 27 February 2022, a widow and businesswoman named Jeanne, with two children, was murdered, her throat slit by unknown individuals on her way back to the hill and zone of Muramba, in the commune and province of Bubanza (northwestern Burundi).
- On the morning of Tuesday 1 March 2022, the lifeless body of Salomon Niyomwungere was found in a gutter at the Jardin Sportif near the San Safari hotel in Rohero zone of Mukaza commune, in Bujumbura city (western Burundi).

According to witnesses, Salomon Niyomwungere, aged 32 and working at the Princes Regent Charles Hospital, was killed by strangulation by unidentified individuals and his body was wrapped in a bag.

The same sources revealed that Salomon Niyomwungere, a native of Kabimba hill in Nyarusange commune of Gietaga province, was visited by a man who introduced himself as his schoolmate at around 7 p.m. at his residence located in Bubanza quarter, Kinama zone, Ntakangwa commune, in the city of Bujumbura, and that the man accompanied him back home without ever returning.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for a thorough investigation to find the killers of Salomon Niyomwungere and bring them to justice.

- On Wednesday 2 March 2022, the lifeless body of Senior Sergeant Mevin Nduwimana, nicknamed Buregeya, was found in the morgue of the Prince Regent Charles Hospital in the town hall of Bujumbura (western Burundi). He was a native of Nyabisindu hill, Mungwa zone, Musongati commune, in Rutana province (south-east Burundi).

According to local sources, Mevin Nduwimana, who was assigned to the General Staff of the FDNB (Burundi National Defence Force) in the department in charge of personnel (G1), had been missing since Sunday 27 February when he was at the market called COTEBU in the city of Bujumbura.

The same sources say that the body of Senior Sergeant Mevin Nduwimana was discovered the day after his disappearance in the Ntakangwa river in the Buyenzi zone at the level of 26th Avenue and that the police have taken it to the morgue pending its identification.

- On the night of Wednesday 2 March 2022, at around 10 p.m., a young man known as Jean Claude Ciza, aged 32, was killed with machetes by unknown individuals on the Rutagara hill in the Mugendo zone, Ntega commune, in Kirundo province (northern Burundi).

According to local sources, the victim was ambushed by men suspected to be Imbonerakure from the same hill who patrol the area at night.

2. Violations of the right to physical integrity

- On the night of Sunday 27 February 2022, a man known as Jean Bosco Niragira, aged 35, was seriously wounded with machetes by unknown individuals who found him in his boss's fields on the Muzenga hill and zone in Murwi commune of Cibitoke province (northwestern Burundi).

According to local sources, Jean Bosco Niragira was the wrong target of this attack on his boss because of suspicions of witchcraft. Residents of the locality of Muzenga claim that Imbonerakure had sworn to eliminate the victim's boss, whom they accused of practising witchcraft. Jean Bosco Niragira was first evacuated to the hospital in Cibitoke before being transferred to a hospital in Bujumbura for intensive care due to the seriousness of his injuries.

According to the same sources, three Imbonerakure suspected of committing this crime were arrested by the police and detained at the provincial police station in Cibitoke for investigation.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- Since 24 February 2022, Yvan Ascension Ishimwe, a student at the Great Lakes University (UGL), has remained missing.

According to witnesses, he was arrested near the Rukago market by policemen from the Gahombo communal police station, in the company of two advisers of the communal administrator of Gahombo, in Kayanza province (north of Burundi), and was taken to an unknown destination.

The same sources stated that instead of communicating the place and reasons for the detention of Yvan Ascension Ishimwe, the head of the National Intelligence Service in Kayanza arbitrarily arrested his mother, Prisca Minani, who had come to enquire about the fate of her child, and detained her in an undisclosed location.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls on the Burundian National Police and the SNR to disclose the reasons for the arrest and the place of detention of Yvan Ascension Ishimwe and his mother and to put an end to the human rights violations attributable to these bodies.

4. Gender-based violence

- On the night of Sunday 27 February 2022, a policeman named Minani, assigned to the police station in Rutana, raped a maid in the capital of the Rutana province (south-east Burundi).

According to witnesses, the other policemen tried to prevent him from committing the crime but he threatened them with his service weapon.

The same sources indicated that the policeman Minani was tried in flagrante delicto on Tuesday 1 March by the High Court of Rutana, which sentenced him to penal servitude for life.

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.