

## **SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 392 PUBLISHED ON 17 JUNE 2023**

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 10 to 17 June 2023 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least sixteen (16) activists of Agathon Rwasa's National Congress for Freedom (CNL) party, victims of arbitrary arrest and detention, were documented during this period in the provinces of Gitega and Makamba.

### **1. Violations of the right to freedom of movement: arbitrary arrests and detentions**

- SOS-Torture Burundi has received information that Serges Yamuremye, Jackson Ntakirutimana and Samuel Rudi, three activists of the CNL opposition party in the commune of Kayogoro, have been arbitrarily detained for over a week in the dungeon of the local police station in this commune of the province of Makamba (southern Burundi).

According to witnesses, Serges Yamuremye, a member of the party's committee in the Makamba-Kayogoro sector, was arrested on 7 June 2023 by the police on a false charge of raping a girl-mother from the Sampeke hill (in the same commune of Kayogoro) at the instigation of Elysée Kadoyi, head of the CNDD-FDD<sup>1</sup> party in the commune of Kayogoro, as a way of settling scores in the dispute between him and the victim. Even a medical report drawn up for this purpose, which invalidated the facts, did not persuade the police to release Serges Yamuremye, who is simply being held in prison out of a sense of pure revenge fuelled by this CNDD-FDD communal leader.

According to local sources, two other CNL activists from the Nkaramanyenye hill in the same commune of Kayogoro, Jackson Ntakirutimana (CNL leader on the hill)

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<sup>1</sup> National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy.

and Samuel Rudi (in charge of the party's ideology), were arrested last week by the CNDD-FDD hill secretary and Imbonerakure leaders, who accused them of holding an illegal meeting in a local bistro.

- On Sunday 11 June 2023, thirteen (13) CNL party activists were arbitrarily arrested at the Butare trading centre in the commune of Itaba in Gitega province (central Burundi) by local administrative officials and the local police, who took them to the dungeon of the communal police station where they are being arbitrarily detained on spurious charges of holding an illegal meeting.

According to witnesses at the scene, these members were sharing a glass of beer in a bar in Butare's trading centre and were selected on the basis of their political affiliation from among the other customers who were quenching their thirst. They were Suavis Ntakarutimana, Anselme Ntibansiga, Sylvestre Mwafrika, Léon Ntahomvukiye, Célestin Hatungimana, Émile Macumi, Sylvestre Ndabanirwa, Émile Nyawenda, Nestor Ntahondi, Édouard Ntacyampaye, Sylvestre Nzeyimana, Martin Nzeyimana and Pierre Rusage.

The same sources said that a motorbike and one hundred and twenty-three thousand Burundian francs (123,000 BuF) belonging to Martin Nzeyimana, as well as six mobile phones belonging to some of the CNL members arrested, were seized and confiscated by the police.

SOS-Torture Burundi denounces the persistence of acts of political intolerance committed by members of the ruling party, the CNDD-FDD, against activists from opposition parties, always with the complicity of an unprofessional police force. The current situation has worsened, particularly since the recent measure<sup>2</sup>, as illegal as it is unjust, to interfere in the internal workings of the CNL party, taken by Martin Niteretse, the current Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security, after having previously "retracted the decisions taken at the last

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<sup>2</sup> This measure was taken on 2 June and made public on 6 June (see Iwacu at <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/suspension-des-activites-du-cnl-cest-de-larbitraire-dixit-agathon-rwasa/>).

two congresses held in last March and April<sup>3</sup> ", which had enabled Agathon Rwasa in particular to oust from the political bureau a group of around ten rebel leaders who were challenging his leadership. It urges the government in power to unlock the political and civic space to enable all Burundian citizens, without distinction, to freely exercise their constitutional and fundamental rights, namely freedom of expression, association and assembly<sup>4</sup> .

SOS-Torture/Burundi was initiated with the aim of informing national and international opinion about the serious human rights violations taking place in Burundi through monitoring reports on torture, arbitrary arrests, enforced 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 December and 12 December 2015 by police and military under the pretext of pursuing rebels who had just attacked military camps on the outskirts of the capital.

The affected areas are said to be contesting the third term of President Nkurunziza, namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga and Jabe, the last two being located in the centre of Bujumbura city.

<sup>3</sup> RFI, Burundi: opposition leader Agathon Rwasa's CNL suspended from all activities, 07/06/2023, available at <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20230607-burundi-le-cnl-de-l-opposant-agathon-rwasa-suspendu-de-toute-activit%C3%A9>.

<sup>4</sup> See articles 31 and 32 of the Constitution of Burundi.