

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 399 PUBLISHED ON 6 AUGUST 2023

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 29 July to 5 August 2023 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

At least nine (9) people were killed and nine (9) others seriously injured during this period in clashes between elements of the Burundi National Defence Force (FDNB) and fighters of a rebellion of Rwandan origin based in the Kibira natural reserve in the commune of Mabayi of the Cibitoke province.

The report also deplores the deplorable conditions of detention of the journalist Floriane Irangabiye, who is particularly deprived of her right to health and is subjected to security threats from her place of detention.

1. Violation of people's safety

- On the night of Friday 4 August 2023, clashes broke out between Burundian soldiers and a rebel group of Rwandan origin that had been living in the Kibira natural forest for some time, on the Kivogero sub-hill of the Mukoma hill, in the commune of Mabayi of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, these clashes with heavy and light weapons broke out just as the rebels were coming out of the forest to forcibly refuel in the households along the Kibira, causing the local population to move towards the main town in the commune of Mabayi. As a result of the intense fighting, 6 rebels were killed and 3 seriously injured on the rebel side, while 3 soldiers were killed and 6 seriously injured in the ranks of the FDNB. The same sources said that the rebels killed were buried on the spot by Imbonerakure, while the wounded were taken to the economic capital Bujumbura for questioning.

According to sources in Cibitoke, people living on the edge of the Kibira National Reserve are afraid because they are increasingly the target of violent incursions by these rebels into households in search of food.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling on the government to continue to ensure the safety and security of the people affected by these attacks, while making sure not to involve Imbonerakure civilians in these military operations, of which they are sometimes the victims¹ because they are not incorporated into the defence and security forces.

2. Violation of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty: violation of the right to health and harassment of journalist Floriane Irangabiye

- Since around 1 a.m. on Monday night 25 July 2023, the health of Floriane Irangabiye, a journalist, columnist and presenter on *Radio Igicaniro*², has deteriorated further following the refusal of the prison authorities at Muyinga prison to guarantee her easy access to the appropriate care required by her acute respiratory problems linked to her chronic asthma. The prisoner had nevertheless reported the worsening of her condition to the prison management in Muyinga, where she is currently being held in alarming conditions, to no avail. According to a member of her family, Floriane Irangabiye has suffered from recurrent asthma attacks since she was very young. They have been exacerbated by the poor conditions of detention, which include overcrowding, poor ventilation in the dormitory and unbearable heat from the fumes given off by the firewood in the immediate vicinity of the community kitchen.

Floriane Irangabiye also suffers from dental problems that are not properly treated due to the delaying tactics used by the prison management in her place of detention

¹ For more details, see the article by SOS Média Burundi available on the website: <https://www.sosmediasburundi.org/2023/05/16/cibitoke-deux-imbonerakure-tues-dans-la-kibira-par-des-rebelles-rwandais-a-mabayi/2>

² An online media outlet run by Burundian refugees that mainly broadcasts programmes and debates on Burundian politics and culture.

when transferring her to the appropriate health facilities outside the prison. For example, she was discriminated when she was transferred by the prison dispensary to Muyinga hospital for dental treatment on 1 June 2023, where she had to wait two months while other inmates were transferred the day after the transfer. She now has a well-founded fear that the final check-up at the dentist's scheduled for 10 August will not be possible, since the provincial chief of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Muyinga, police colonel Félix Havyarimana, and a policewoman named Goreth who accompanied her the last time, have stated that going to the hospital is a pretext for carrying out her other duties.

In addition to the poor conditions of detention, which pose a constant risk to her health, the safety of journalist Floriane Irangabiye is not guaranteed within Muyinga prison. For example, on 16 May 2023, Floriane Irangabiye was physically and verbally assaulted by the prison director, who was accompanied by four police officers and two people in civilian clothes with cameras to record the scene.

SOS-Torture Burundi recalls that Floriane Irangabiye was arrested on 30 August 2022 in Matana, in Bururi province (southern Burundi), by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR), she entered the country from Rwanda, where she had been living for more than ten years, to attend a funeral. She was subsequently taken to SNR headquarters in Bujumbura, where she was interrogated for a week before being placed under arrest warrant on 8 September 2022 and transferred to Mpimba prison in Bujumbura. On 22 September 2022, Floriane Irangabiye was transferred for no specific reason to Muyinga prison, 200 kilometres from Bujumbura where her family lives.

SOS-Torture Burundi expresses its deep concern at the deterioration of Floriane Irangabiye's health in detention in Muyinga prison and calls on the Burundian authorities to guarantee her access to adequate health care by transferring her immediately to Bujumbura prison where conditions of detention and access to appropriate care are guaranteed.



It also calls on the Burundian authorities to ensure Floriane Irangabiye's physical and psychological safety by putting an end to all forms of harassment to which she is subjected from her place of detention.

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.