

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 410 PUBLISHED ON 22 OCTOBER 2023

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 14 to 21 October 2023 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least three (3) people were murdered in the provinces of Bururi and Cibitoke.

The report also deplores the illegal detention of the President of the Council for Democracy and Economic Development of Burundi (CODEBU).

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the night of Saturday 14 October 2023, Protais Niyongabo was clubbed to death by unidentified individuals who had ambushed him on the Sakinyonga hill in the commune of Matana, in Bururi province (southern Burundi).

According to local sources, Protais Niyongabo was with his wife at the time of the attack as they returned to their home on Sakinyonga hill.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling on the judicial and police authorities in the commune of Matana to open an investigation to identify the perpetrators of the crime and punish them in accordance with the law.

- On the morning of Wednesday 18 October 2023, at around 9 a.m., two lifeless bodies of men were found hanging from a tree by farmers on their way to their fields in the Buzirasazi hill and zone, in the commune of Murwi of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to these witnesses to the macabre discovery, the two bodies had many gaping wounds, proving that the two men had been severely tortured before they died.

Local sources said that the bodies of the victims were buried immediately after their discovery by the Imbonerakure on the orders of the local administrator, without deigning to wait for an investigation to identify the perpetrators of this double crime.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the haste with which the administrative authorities bury the bodies of people found in the wild or on wasteland, instead of ordering investigations to identify the perpetrators of these targeted killings and the circumstances in which these heinous crimes were committed.

2. Violation of the right to freedom of movement: arbitrary arrest and detention

- On the morning of Tuesday 17 October 2023, Kefa Nibizi, president of the CODEBU party, was arrested after a brief interrogation by the Public Prosecutor General, Léonard Manirakiza, and was taken directly to the central prison in Bujumbura (western Burundi), commonly known as Mpimba prison.

According to sources from the Supreme Court, Kefa Nibizi has been charged with undermining the internal security of the State, a generic offence levelled at anyone who dares to criticise the totalitarian power in place embodied by the CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) party. According to corroborating sources, Kefa Nibizi is being prosecuted for comments he made on the CODEBU party's X account on 13 October 2023, on the occasion of the commemoration of the 62th anniversary of the assassination of Burundi's independence hero, Prince Louis Rwagasore, in which he criticised the "failing leadership" of the CNDD-FDD. In essence, the message invites Burundians not to give in to resignation in the face of the catastrophic management of the country: *"At a time when Burundi is languishing in*

unprecedented misery because of failing leadership, the CODEBU party invites the population not to give in to resignation and to take the example of Prince Louis Rwagasore to rectify the situation, which is only getting worse".

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the shrinking civic space in Burundi, which is reflected in recurrent violations of the right to freedom of expression, including the right to freedom of association and assembly. Since the CNDD-FDD party came to power in 2005, Burundian citizens and civil society organisations have no longer the right to interact with each other, to say what they think and discuss with others, to demonstrate against things that are not in their interests, or to meet within citizens' organisations or associations. Yet these fundamental rights that make up civic space are intimately linked and are at the heart of any democracy.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that Kefa Nibizi was finally released in the afternoon of Saturday 21 October 2023 after five days of illegal 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.