

## **SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 415 PUBLISHED ON 26 NOVEMBER 2023**

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 18 to 25 November 2023 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least four (4) people were murdered in different parts of the country.

The report also deplores the case of a young girl (1) who was gang-raped by a group of three young men in Rumonge province, as well as six (6) people who were arbitrarily arrested and detained by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Cibitoke and Gitega provinces.

### **1. Violations of the right to life**

- At around 5am on Saturday 18 November 2023, the lifeless body of an unidentified man was found in the Ntawangwa River, in the industrial district of the Ngagara zone, in the commune of Ntawangwa, north of the economic capital Bujumbura (western Burundi).

According to witnesses to the grisly discovery, the body of the victim, dressed only in his underwear, was floating in the waters of the Ntawangwa River, not far from the COTEBU market<sup>1</sup>. The same sources said that the body was fished out an hour later after police intervention and taken to the morgue of the Kamenge university hospital (commonly known as "Roi Khaled").

- On 18 November 2023, the lifeless body of a woman known as Marie Ndayisenga, aged 29, was found on the banks of the Gikoma River at the foot of the Gasenyi hill, in the zone, commune and province of Muyinga (north-east Burundi).

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<sup>1</sup> Former Burundi Textile Complex.

According to sources on the scene, the body of the victim, from the hill of Karugunda in the commune of Gashoho in the same province, showed signs of violence at throat level, proving that she had been strangled by as yet unidentified individuals.

- On the morning of Monday 20 November 2023, the lifeless body of a little girl known as Kelsey Iteriteka, aged 5, was discovered in a house under construction in the Nyarumanga district of the Butere zone, in the Ntakangwa commune of Bujumbura town hall (western Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, including Diane Izacahinyeretse, the victim's mother, Kelsey Iteriteka was raped by an unidentified man before being strangled to death.

- On the morning of Monday 20 November 2023, the lifeless body of an unidentified man was discovered close to the fence of the Lycée Don Bosco, commonly known as the Lycée Burengo, lying on the road leading to the hill of Gahwazi, in the capital of the province of Ngozi (northern Burundi).

According to witnesses to the gruesome discovery, the victim had wounds on his head and arm. The same sources stated that the mortal remains of the victim had been evacuated to the morgue of the Ngozi Autonomous Hospital on the orders of the administrator of the Ngozi commune, and that no investigation had been opened to identify the victim and discover the perpetrators of the crime with a view to bringing them to justice.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the resurgence of cases of targeted murders, whose bodies are abandoned in the wild by their executioners. It calls on the police and judicial authorities to open thorough investigations to identify these criminals with a view to punishing them in accordance with the law and putting an end to this recurring criminal phenomenon.

### 3. Rape and gender-based violence

- On Wednesday 22 November 2023, M.N., a young domestic worker aged 17, was gang-raped by a group of three young teenagers, Rodrigue Irakoze (18), Fiacre Irakoze (18) and Bonfils Cubahiro (15), in the Kanyenkoko district in the commune and province of Rumonge (South West Burundi).

According to local sources, the victim went to the home of one of these young men at his invitation, after he had pretended to be ill. In the end, the visit turned ugly as the three young men raped her one after the other, after having immobilised her and filmed the horrific scene, as evidenced by a video that has been circulating on social media.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that Rodrigue Irakoze and Fiacre Irakoze were sentenced by the Rumonge High Court on 24 November 2023 in a flagrante delicto trial to 30 years' principal penal servitude for rape and cybercrime committed against a young girl aged over 17. The two young men will also have to pay 10 million Burundi francs in compensation to the victim and pay a fine of 500,000 to the public treasury. Bonfils Cubahiro, for his part, benefited from a mitigating circumstance linked to his minority and was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for the same offences. He will have to pay 5 million Burundi francs in damages to the victim, in addition to a fine of 40,000 Burundi francs to be paid into the public purse. The mobile phone used by the perpetrators as a means of committing the cybercrime was seized, and the proceeds from its sale will be paid into the public purse.

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

- On the morning of Sunday 19 November 2023, three CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party activists known as Pascal Nyambere, Joselyne Dyna Vyizigiro and Epitace Ndayikengurukiye were arrested by SNR agents in the political capital of Gitega (central Burundi), near a hotel where a meeting was being held by two leaders of a rebel faction of the party, Immaculée Ntacobankimvuna and Thérance Manirambona.

According to witnesses, the three activists were taken to a cell at the provincial police station in Gitega where they were questioned about their attempt to disrupt a meeting, before being released the next day.

SOS-Torture Burundi denounces the political intolerance of the CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) party towards opposition parties, particularly in the run-up to elections. As in the past, the leaders of this presidential party continue to divide opposition parties into wings, a phenomenon known in Burundi under the neologism of "*Nyakurisation*", which has not spared any opposition political party.

It is calling on the President of the Republic to clean up the political climate and allow political parties to operate normally in accordance with the Constitution and the law on political parties.

- On the night of Tuesday 21 November 2023, at around 11 p.m., Gaspard Nizigiyimana (42), Aaron Twagirayezu (45) and Alexis Bukuru (39) were transferred in a critical condition to a cell in the provincial police station in Cibitoke (north-west Burundi) after four days of atrocious torture in the cell of the National Intelligence service (SNR) in the province of Cibitoke.

According to local sources, the three men were arrested in Bujumbura town centre by the SNR officer in charge in Cibitoke province on 17 November 2023 and, after being tied up, were taken away in an SNR vehicle to an unknown destination. The three men were atrociously tortured on charges of belonging to a rebel group opposed to the government in power.

However, policemen providing security at the police station revealed that the three detainees were extracted from the cell on the night of Friday 24 November 2023 at around 9 p.m. by the head of the SNR in Cibitoke province and taken away in his service vehicle to an unknown destination.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the acts of torture committed with impunity by SNR agents and fears that these three victims could be forcibly disappeared. It calls on the SNR's General Administration to guarantee the lives of victims and to put an end to these illegal practices, which are being used to extract confessions from people under interrogation.

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.