

## **SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 421 PUBLISHED ON 7 JANUARY 2024**

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 30 December 2023 to 6 January 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least five (5) people were murdered in various parts of the country.

The report also deplores the case of three (3) people who were arbitrarily arrested in the provinces of Bubanza and Gitega.

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

- SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that on Friday 29 December 2023, the lifeless body of a man known as Wilson Nduwimana was found floating in the waters of the Buzimba River, in the Gatete zone of the commune and province of Rumonge (south-west Burundi).

According to local sources, Wilson Nduwimana, a sentinel in the palm tree fields around the Buzimba River, had been missing since 23 December 2023. He was murdered by unidentified assailants.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling on the Rumonge police to conduct a thorough and in-depth investigation with a view to uncovering the perpetrators of Wilson Nduwimana's murder and punishing them in accordance with the law.

- On the night of Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, at 10.20 p.m., a woman known as Edith Nizigiyimana succumbed to her illness in Bujumbura Central Prison (western Burundi), commonly known as "Mpimba Prison", after three days of incarceration in a critical state of health by the Public Prosecutor at the Muha High Court, Albert Bucumi.

According to witnesses at the time of her arrest, Edith Nizigiyimana had been taken by force on Friday 29 December 2023 to Mpimba prison following a debt of sixteen million Burundi francs (16,000,000 Fbu) that she owed to four other women as part of their tontine known as "SILC". She had been arrested the previous day by the police on the orders of prosecutor Albert Bucumi, following a complaint lodged by the four women, and had spent the night in the police lock-up at Kinindo, in Bujumbura city.

The same sources said that the victim tried in vain to convince Albert Bucumi that she was unable to pay the debt in due time because of her chronic asthma illness. Her husband even offered the sum of four and a half million Burundi francs (4,500,000 Fbu) as partial payment of the debt and the family vehicle as collateral, but this did not prevent prosecutor Bucumi from deciding to remand the victim in custody, despite her visibly critical state of health.

SOS-Torture Burundi deploras the persistent violation of the rights of people deprived of their liberty by state officials in Burundi's various prisons. In this case, Prosecutor Albert Bucumi has deliberately violated the Constitution of Burundi (art. 19), which formally prohibits the detention of a person accused of a civil debt, given that there is no offence within the meaning of criminal law. Indeed, article 11 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Burundi Constitution refers, clearly states that "*No one shall be imprisoned merely on the ground of inability to fulfil a contractual obligation*".

It calls on the judicial authority, in this case the Minister of Justice Domine Banyankimbona, to ensure that the rights of detainees, including the right to health, are scrupulously respected, and to take exemplary administrative sanctions against the prosecutor Albert Bucumi, without prejudice to criminal proceedings being brought against him to be punished in accordance with criminal law.

- On the night of Tuesday 2 January 2024, at around 7.20 p.m., police Major Japhet Mukeshimana was murdered with machetes by unidentified individuals on the Nkanka hill in the Muzye zone of Giharo commune, in the Rutana province (south-east Burundi).

According to local sources, Japhet Mukeshimana was ambushed by unidentified individuals while in his recently purchased oil palm field. He succumbed to several machete blows to the head.

The same sources revealed that local residents suspect the Imbonerakure of being the perpetrators of the murder of police Major Japhet Mukeshimana, a former PALIPEHUTU-FNL rebel<sup>1</sup> led by Agathon Rwaswa, in revenge for three of their own whom he had just arrested as part of an investigation into the murder of a 23-year-old man, Josué Irangabiye, killed by these Imbonerakure.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the upsurge in crime attributed to the Imbonerakure in the commune of Giharo and is calling for a thorough investigation to identify the perpetrators of the murder of police Major Japhet Mukeshimana and bring them to justice.

- On the morning of Thursday 4 January 2024, the lifeless body of a young widow known as Eliane Kwizerimana, aged 30, was brutally murdered in her home after being gang-raped by unidentified individuals on the Rubuye sub-hill of the Mparambo I hill, in the commune of Rugombo of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, the slit body of the victim, who left behind three children, was lying in a pool of blood. The victim was naked, her underwear lying next to her bloodied body.

---

<sup>1</sup> Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People-National Liberation Forces.

- On the night of Thursday 4 January 2024, at around 9 p.m., a young man known as Alfred Mpawenayo was stabbed to death by unidentified assailants on Kabere hill, in the commune of Mabayi of Cibitoke the province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, Alfred Mpawenayo was stabbed in the chest as he was about to pass through the gate of his home on his way from a local bistro.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the upsurge in crime in several parts of the country, particularly in the province of Cibitoke, and calls on the judicial and police authorities to carry out thorough investigations to identify the perpetrators of these crimes and punish them in accordance with the law.

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

- On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024, two former refugees from Rwanda, Rémy Minani and Jérémie Nijimbere, were arbitrarily arrested in the province of Bubanza (north-west Burundi). They are also members of the MSD (Movement for Solidarity and Democracy) party, which has been suspended since 2017 after being accused of supporting the Resistance for the Rule of Law (RED-Tabara) movement.

According to witnesses, Rémy Minani was arrested in the commune of Bubanza, while Jérémie Nijimbere was arrested in the commune of Musigati. Both men had just spent a few months in Burundi after several years in exile in Rwanda.

The same sources state that, since their return to Burundi, the movements of these two men have been constantly monitored by the Imbonerakure, a youth league affiliated<sup>2</sup> with the ruling CNDD-FDD party<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the fact that the double arrest is part of the resurgence of political and diplomatic tensions between Burundi and Rwanda following the recent sulphurous speech by President Evariste Ndayishimiye accusing Rwanda, without proof, of supporting the RED-Tabara movement, after its recent attack claimed in the locality of Gatumba.

- On the morning of Thursday 4 January 2024 at around 11.45 a.m., Providence Ntirabampa, National Secretary in charge of security, communication and external relations for the National Congress for Freedom (CNL) party, was arbitrarily arrested by Venant Ndayishimiye, head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in the province of Gitega (central Burundi), who then took him to an unknown destination.

According to local sources, Providence Ntirabampa was arrested without a warrant at the office of the NGO JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). His arrest followed threats posted by anonymous people on his X account accusing him of slandering a faction of CNL members who rebelled against Agathon Rwasa's authority as party president.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that Providence Ntirabampa was released at dusk on the same day, after being questioned about an X account belonging to a certain Ruberitwari Melchior, which he had been suspected, without proof, of owning.



## SOS – Torture/Burundi

*Monitoring sur les cas de torture, les arrestations arbitraires, les disparitions forcées et les exécutions sommaires au Burundi*

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.