

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 422 PUBLISHED ON 14 JANUARY 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 6 to 13 January 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

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

The report also deplores the cases of one (1) young man who was severely tortured by the hill leader and the Imbonerakure in Kirundo province, two (2) women who were arbitrarily arrested by the police in Bubanza province and one (1) young girl who was abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Bujumbura city.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On Saturday 6 January 2024, the lifeless body of an unidentified man was found, half-buried, at the former fishing port on Lake Tanganyika known as Kinani, on the Mwange hill of the Kivyuka zone, in the commune and province of Rumonge (south-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, the victim's body, in a state of decomposition, had been amputated from both legs at knee level and partially buried up to buttock level.

The same sources said that the body was buried on the spot on the orders of the local administration, without waiting for an investigation to identify the victim and those responsible for his murder.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the resurgence of targeted killings in the province of Rumonge, where the bodies of victims are hastily buried under the orders of administrative officials and without any investigations that might have led to the

discovery of the perpetrators. Since 26 December 2023, three lifeless bodies have been discovered in the commune and province of Rumonge, in the space of just two weeks.

- On the morning of Sunday 7 January 2024, the lifeless body of a 4-year-old child known as Bienvenu Nshimirimana was discovered in a woodland on the Nkero sub-hill, in the hill and commune of Matana of the Bururi province (southern Burundi).

According to local sources, the victim's tongue had been cut out by the perpetrators, who have not yet been identified.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling for a thorough investigation to identify the perpetrators of the victim's murder and bring them to justice.

- On the afternoon of Sunday 7 January 2023, the lifeless body of a 10-year-old child named Bruce Bikorimana was found in a ditch filled with water on the Rukana II hill in the commune of Rugombo of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, the child had disappeared the same morning. The circumstances surrounding Bruce Bikorimana's death have not yet been clarified.

- On the morning of Monday 8 January 2024, the lifeless body of an unidentified man in his thirties was discovered on the Kaburantwa hill in the commune of Buganda of in the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, the local authority hastily ordered the burial of the victim's body without identifying him or investigating the circumstances or the perpetrators of the murder.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplors the increasing number of lifeless bodies discovered in Cibitoke province, particularly in Buganda and Rugombo communes, which are

buried hastily and without investigation. It calls on the police and judicial authorities to carry out credible and thorough investigations whenever lifeless bodies are discovered, in order to identify the perpetrators and put them out of their misery.

2. Violationw of the right to physical integrity followed by arbitrary arrest and detention

- On Sunday 7 January 2024, a young man named Paul was violently beaten and seriously injured by the head of the Nyange-Bushaza hill, Elias Nkurunziza, and local Imbonerakure, including Emery Ndikumana, on the Nyange-Bushaza hill in the commune and province of Kirundo (northern Burundi).

According to witnesses, Paul was arrested at his home by his torturers who accused him, without proof, of having stolen fuel from Emery Ndikumana's vehicle. He was then taken to Emery Ndikumana's home to be tortured by the chief of the Nyange-Bushaza hill and his Imbonerakure, who also burnt him with petrol on his shoulders and armpits and cut part of his sex.

The same sources said that Paul was taken the same day to the Kirundo judicial police cell, where he has been held ever since, despite his deteriorating health due to the deprivation of the health care his condition requires.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that no legal action has been taken against Paul's torturers, who remain free. It calls for the immediate release of the victim so that he can receive appropriate health care, and for the torturers to be brought to justice, including the judicial police officer who took the decision to arbitrarily place him in police custody.

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

- On the evening of Wednesday 10 January 2023, two women of Rwandan nationality, Espérance Dusabe, aged around fifty, and Triphine, aged around sixty, were arbitrarily arrested by the Gihanga commune commissioner, Philippe Masabarakiza, in the company of Imbonerakure, on the Buringa hill in the commune of Gihanga of the Bubanza province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, the two women were taken to the police lock-up in the commune of Gihanga, where they spent the night.

The same sources said that the two women were questioned the next day by the same local commissioner about their origin and their recent trip to Rwanda, before being released the same day, after it was established that they had not committed any offence.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the fact that detention in Burundi always precedes an investigation to determine whether an accused person really deserves to be deprived of his or her liberty in view of the serious indications of guilt identified.

It calls on the police to always carefully examine the legal criteria for deprivation of liberty, which are clearly detailed in the Code of Criminal Procedure, in order to avoid placing innocent people in police custody.

4. Kidnapping or enforced disappearance

- On the night of Monday 8 January 2024 at 8.20 p.m., Corine Nizigama, a 23-year-old laureate of the general humanities, was abducted by agents of the SNR from the Gasenyi district of the Gihosha zone, in the urban commune of Ntakangwa of the Bujumbura city (western Burundi) and driven to an unknown destination in a grey Toyota TI car, registration number B0857A, with tinted windows.

According to witnesses who watched helplessly as she was abducted, the victim tried in vain to struggle and the intervention of the people present at the place where she was abducted, commonly known as "*Ku ma Salons*" (avenue Marembo), was dissuaded by a man in police uniform who threatened them with his Kalashnikov.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls on the SNR's General Administration to reveal Corine Nizigama's fate and order her immediate release. It is also asking the SNR to punish her kidnapers in accordance with the law.

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.