



SOS - Torture/Burundi

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

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 428 PUBLISHED ON 25 FEBRUARY 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 17 to 24 February 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least one (1) person was murdered in Muramvya province.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) shopkeeper who was arbitrarily arrested by the police and unjustly sentenced by the Gitega district court, and that of one (1) CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party activist who was abducted in Bubanza province.

1. Violation of the right to life

- On Saturday 17 February 2024, Oscar Mbonihankuye was brutally murdered by a group of Imbonerakure who found him in his field on the Masama hill in the commune of Mbuye of the Muramvya province (central Burundi).

According to local sources, after community work organised by the Imbonerakure on Masama hill, in which all the residents of the hill were expected to take part, five of them - Eric Ndayizeye, Eraste alias Rasta, Aimable and Thierry, and Wariraye - set about tracking down anyone who had not been able to take part, in order to make them pay a ransom in the form of an eighteen thousand Burundian franc (18,000 Fbu) fine. The Imbonerakure went to Oscar Mbonihankuye's home, but he had left with his wife Judith Nijimbere to work in the fields in the marsh on the same hill. They then found him in his field and demanded that he pay a fine, but unfortunately he had no money at his disposal. The Imbonerakure then tied his arms and threw him alive into the Mubarazi River near their field, after beating him severely in presence of his wife.

The same sources said that residents of Masama hill tried to find the body of Oscar Mbonihankuye, who left behind his six children, but to no avail. They even tried to contact the local administrator in Mbuye, Evelyne Ndayisasirire, by telephone to help with the task, but she hung up on them and even refused to welcome them to her office. The same was true of the permanent secretary of the Mbuye commune, Pie Niyinkunda.

SOS-Torture Burundi once again deplores the impunity for crimes committed by the Imbonerakure, who often act with the complicity and support of certain administrative officials or leaders of the ruling CNDD-FDD party. It calls on the Muramvya judicial authorities to bring the perpetrators of this despicable crime to justice so that they can be punished in accordance with the law.

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

- According to information received by SOS-Torture Burundi, on Friday 16 February 2024, a shopkeeper by the name of Silas Gashirahamwe was arbitrarily arrested by the police in the Nyabiharage district in the commune and province of Gitega (central Burundi). He was initially taken to the solitary confinement of the Gitega police station before being transferred to the province's central prison.

According to local sources, Silas Gashirahamwe was arrested following his denunciation of irregularities in the lists of traders benefiting from the distribution of SOSUMO¹ sugar for retail sale drawn up by the head of the Nyabiharage district and CNDD-FDD² member, Jacqueline Ndayishimiye. On the evening of 8 February 2024, Silas Gashirahamwe noticed that he was not on these lists, despite his status as a well-known trader in the district. He was surprised to find the names of people who were not traders on these same lists and denounced these irregularities in a message he sent to a WhatsApp group (with more than 400 members) made up of

¹ Moso Sugar Company.

² National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy.

people living in the Nyabiharage district, including the head of the district, Jacqueline Ndayishimiye. He couldn't understand why people who weren't traders were on traders' lists when some real traders weren't on them.

The same sources said that before his arrest, Silas Gashirahamwe appeared at the office of the provincial governor's socio-economic adviser for clarification of his message, and that he ended up being arrested after threats were made in several WhatsApp messages accusing him of tarnishing the image of the district and its manager.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that Silas Gashirahamwe was sentenced on Wednesday 21 February 2024 in flagrante delicto proceedings by the Gitega local court to one year and three months' imprisonment and ordered to pay a fine of fifty thousand Burundi francs and three hundred thousand Burundi francs in damages to Jacqueline Ndayishimiye. He was accused, without providing any evidence, by the public prosecutor of having provided information to Radio Haguruka and King Umurundi through his X account, two media operating in exile.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the unjust and illegal conviction of Silas Gashirahamwe, which is part of a pattern of abuse of power by certain administrative officials who have resorted to acts of intimidation through shameless judicial manipulation, and calls for the immediate release of the victim.

3. Kidnapping or enforced disappearance

- On the night of Wednesday 21 February 2024, at around 9 p.m. and 20 minutes, a CNL party activist known as David Bamporiki was abducted from the hill of Kagwema, in the Gihanga zone and commune of the province of Bubanza (north-west Burundi) and taken to an unknown destination by individuals in police and civilian clothing in a Hilux double-cabin van with tinted windows and no number plates.

According to witnesses who watched helplessly as he was abducted, David Bamporiki was sharing a drink with a group of people that included the head of the Imbonerakure (youth league affiliated to the CNDD-FDD) in the commune of Gihanga, Olivier Nahimana. At that point, men in police and civilian uniforms arrived in a hurry and rushed David Bamporiki, who tried to resist without success. He was ruthlessly bundled into the vehicle and driven to an unknown destination in the city of Bujumbura.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the resurgence of kidnappings of CNL party activists in Bubanza province, particularly in the locality of Buringa, where the case of David Bamporiki brings to three the number of party activists kidnapped in less than a month, namely Georges Nimbona alias Manyenye kidnapped on the night of 28 January and Désiré Bizimana kidnapped on the night of 8 February.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was set up to inform 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 provide information on the realities of the country followed the carnage of around a hundred people killed on 11 December and 12 December 2015 by police and soldiers on the pretext of pursuing rebels who had just attacked military camps on the outskirts of the capital.

The areas affected are said to be those contesting President Nkurunziza's third term of office, namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga and Jabe, the last two being located in the centre of Bujumbura town hall.