

## **SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 432 PUBLISHED ON 24 MARCH 2024**

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 17 to 23 March 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least seven (7) people were murdered in various parts of the country.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) Helena Hotel agent who was tortured by the Regional Commissioner of the Central Police Region in the town of Gitega, the case of two (2) people who were arbitrarily arrested and detained in Bujumbura city, and the case of two (2) people who were abducted in Bujumbura city and in the province of Cibitoke.

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

- On the morning of Sunday 17 March 2024, the lifeless body of a man known as Claude Nduwayo was found in a rice field on the Murengeza hill in the commune of Mpanda of the Bubanza province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, the circumstances and perpetrators of the murder of Claude Nduwayo, who sold samboussa and toffee in the commune of Mpanda, have not been identified.

- On the night of Sunday 17 March 2024 at around 11 p.m., a member of the Imbonerakure youth league<sup>1</sup> known as Claude Nahayo was strangled by other Imbonerakure on the Murengeza hill in the commune of Mpanda of the Bubanza province (north-west Burundi). He succumbed to his injuries an hour later after being evacuated to Mpanda hospital.

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<sup>1</sup> League of young people affiliated to the CNDD-FDD party (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy).

According to local sources, Claude Nahayo, a father of three, had spent the day at a CNDD-FDD party meeting in Mpanda before going to share a drink with his comrades in a local bistro. He was ambushed by other Imbonerakure as he was returning home.

- On the morning of Monday 18 March 2024, the lifeless body of a young girl known as Emelyne Nishimwe, aged 17, was discovered decapitated near a hotel on the Nyamyeha hill in the Bukinanyana commune of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, Emelyne Nishimwe was decapitated after being raped by her executioners, who are believed to be among the local Imbonerakure. The amputated body was buried the same day on the orders of the local administrator, after unsuccessful attempts to find the girl's head.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that four young Imbonerakure have been arrested as part of an investigation launched by the police to identify the perpetrators of this heinous crime.

- On the morning of Monday 18 March 2024, two lifeless bodies of unidentified men were found on the banks of the Rusizi River separating Burundi from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), at the foot of the Ruhagarika hill in the commune of Buganda, in the province of Cibitoke (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, the perpetrators and circumstances of the double murder remain unclear.

- On the night of Tuesday 19 March 2024, at around 11 p.m., a young man known as Thierry Ndayikeza, aged 24, was shot at close range by a group of police agents on the Gitora hill in the Mureha district, in the commune of Bugendana of the Gitega province (central Burundi).

According to witnesses, not far from a police position, the executioner forced Thierry Ndayikeza to kneel down with two other young men, David Baravuga and Fulgence Nkurunziza, as they were returning to their homes. He then immediately opened fire on the victim, who was hit in the stomach and died instantly, while his companions barely escaped.

The same sources said that angry residents rose up en masse and wanted to confront the three policemen from that position, who instead took refuge in a local savings cooperative.

- On Wednesday 20 March 2024, the lifeless body of Nestor Ntawunkiza was found in a latrine in the Ruziba district of the Kanyosha zone, in the Muha commune of Bujumbura city (western Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, the body of Nestor Ntawunkiza, a Probox taxi driver (number plate IA 5976) who had been missing since 14 March 2024, was found at the home of one of the suspects in an investigation into another taxi driver, Emmanuel Ndagijimana, whose body was also found in Ruziba on 11 March 2023, a few days after he had been missing since 7 March 2024.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplors the resurgence of targeted killings in several parts of the country, particularly in the province of Cibitoke. It is calling for thorough and impartial investigations to identify the perpetrators of these crimes and punish them in accordance with the law.

## **2. violationb of the right to physical integrity (torture)**

- On the morning of Monday 18 March 2024, Barcy Tazira, one of the staff of the Helena Hotel in the town of Gitega (central Burundi), was severely tortured by the police commissioner for the Centre region, police colonel Jérôme Ntibibogora.

According to witnesses, Jérôme Ntibibogora went to this hotel in the centre of Gitega to have breakfast and, after placing his order, he noticed a variety of juice set aside for participants in a seminar being held in one of the hotel's premises. Jérôme Ntibibogora then asked Barcy Tazira to bring him the juice in question. Barcy Tazira vainly explained that the juice he requested could not be served to him because it was already reserved for seminar participants.

According to the same sources, Jérôme Ntibibogora's self-esteem was wounded because he had not expected such an upset. In a fit of anger, he called his ATs (transmission agents) and ordered them to seize Barcy Tazira. They immediately tied him up and dragged him along the ground before taking him to the National Intelligence Service office in Gitega for atrocious torture sessions. He received several violent blows with a truncheon, particularly on his buttocks, so that he could no longer sit down.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the victim was released the same day at the instigation of the manager of the Helana Hotel, and that he was granted leave to seek medical treatment.

It deplores the criminal behaviour of police colonel Jérôme Ntibibogora, well known for his abuses wherever he has worked, who remains unpunished despite the existence of overwhelming evidence of the violations of which he is regularly guilty.

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

- SOS-Torture Burundi has received information that agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) arrested a Rwandan national known as Jean de Dieu Habiyaemye on Wednesday 13 March 2024 as he was entering Burundi from Kigoma in Tanzania, and has since been detained in the SNR cell. Jean de Dieu

Habiyaremye is an experienced solar energy technician who has carried out several contracts for the installation of photovoltaic panels in Burundi since 2014.

According to witnesses, on Sunday 17 March 2024, SNR officers took Jean de Dieu Habiyaremye back to his home in the Kinanira district to carry out a search before taking him back to prison.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for compliance with the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to the conduct of preliminary investigations and police custody.

- On Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 11.28am, SNR agents abducted Dr Patrick Bitangumutwenzi, a paediatrician at the “Maison Médicale<sup>2</sup>” in Bujumbura, on his way to his private practice in the Rohero area, below the Hotel Emeraude.

According to witnesses, a white Toyota Hilux van with tinted windows and number plate D3980A cut off the taxi in which Dr Patrick Bitangumutwenzi was travelling to his office. It was on the University Avenue at the Saint Michael the Archangel school in the Rohero zone of the Mukaza commune, in Bujumbura city (western Burundi). He was taken to the dungeon at SNR headquarters in Bujumbura.

Local sources said that Dr Patrick Bitangumutwenzi was arrested following a message sent to a WhatsApp group made up of doctors from both inside and outside the country, relating to the remains of the bodies of victims of the 1972 massacres, which aroused the anger of some members of the group.

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<sup>2</sup> Medical Centre.

#### 4. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On the night of Sunday 17 March 2024 at around 11 p.m., Melchior Ndikumana (aged 53), a teacher at the Basic School of Ndava located on the hill and in the Ndava zone, in the commune of Buganda of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi), was abducted from his home on the same hill by soldiers from the intelligence service (G2) who took him away in a double-cabin van belonging to the Burundi National Defence Force (FDNB) to an unknown destination.

According to witnesses, soldiers burst into the home of Melchior Ndikumana, a 53-year-old father of five, who was already asleep with his family, and forced him to open the door of the house. They then beat the wife and children before going to the bedroom to look for Melchior Ndikumana, whom they took away dressed only in his underwear.

SOS-Torture Burundi later learned that Melchior Ndikumana had been taken to the military intelligence cell (G2) in Bujumbura and that he was released in the afternoon of Thursday 21 March 2024.

It condemns the practice of arbitrary arrests in the form of abductions by State services and calls for the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure on deprivation of liberty to be respected at all times.

- On the morning of Wednesday 20 March 2024 at around 7.45 a.m., Emmanuel Niyongabo, an agent of the Burundi Revenue Authority (OBR) in the Burundi Development Agency (ADB), was abducted by SNR agents in Gasenyi in Bujumbura city, at a place called "Chez Johnson", above the Kamenge Neuro-Psychiatric Centre (commonly known as "Chez Le Gentil").

According to witnesses, Emmanuel Niyongabo was arrested just after dropping off his sick sister by uniformed Burundi National Police (PNB) officers and taken to an

unknown destination in a vehicle with registration number E0529A from the Gatumba police station in Bujumbura province. The kidnappers also took Emmanuel Niyongabo's vehicle.

The same sources said that Emmanuel Niyongabo was arrested because of his plea on behalf of more than 2,850 owners of plots of land in Gasenyi-Nyakabondo who had been expropriated by the State before fair and prior compensation had been paid.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the arbitrary arrest of Emmanuel Niyongabo and the excessive delay in allocating compensation that should have been paid since 2016. It calls on the Burundian government to resolve, in accordance with the law and as quickly as possible, the issue of compensation for the inhabitants of the Gasenyi-Nyakabondo district, who are living in unprecedented poverty.

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.