

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 429 PUBLISHED ON 3 MARCH 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 24 February to 2 March 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least sixteen (17) people were murdered in the provinces of Bubanza and Gitega, including 15 who died in an armed attack claimed by the Resistance Movement for the Rule of Law (RED-Tabara), while ten (10) others were seriously injured in the same attack, which also caused enormous material damage.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) Mabayi zone chief who was arbitrarily arrested by agents of the National Intelligence service (SNR) in the province of Cibitoke.

1. Violations of the right to life and physical integrity

- SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that on Tuesday 20 February 2024, a young boy known as Audifax Nahimana, aged 17, was brutally murdered and decapitated by a group of Imbonerakure on the Kabungo hill in the Gihamagara zone of the Itaba commune, in Gitega province (central Burundi).

According to witnesses who witnessed the horrific scene, Imbonerakure led by two local councillors, Côme Nahimana and Prosper Maniratunga, who are also members of the ruling party's youth league, rushed at the young boy, whom they accused of stealing maize from a field on the Kabungo hill. They tied him up and beat him severely before cutting off his head with a machete in the presence of local residents, including children.

According to the same sources, Audifax Nahimana was buried directly in a field on this hill by his executioners on the orders and under the supervision of these elected hill officials, who also ordered that a banana tree be planted on the victim's grave.

Although the victim's relatives insisted that the administrator of the commune of Itaba, Domitien Nyandwi, authorise the exhumation of Audifax Nahimana's body so that he could be buried with dignity in an official cemetery, they met with his categorical refusal, given that, according to local sources, he himself was the author of the public call for the lynching of the alleged thieves apprehended in his commune.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplors the inertia of the Burundian justice system in the face of the crimes committed by the Imbonerakure, who now believe they can do whatever they like as long as they are encouraged by senior members of the ruling CNDD-FDD¹ party, including the Head of State, Evariste Ndayishimiye. It calls for all those responsible for the horrible and infamous murder of young Audifax Nahimana to be arrested and brought to justice so that they can be punished in accordance with the law.

- On the night of Sunday 25 February 2024, at around 10 p.m., an armed attack subsequently claimed by the Resistance Movement for the Rule of Law (RED-Tabara) on its official X account (@Red_Tabara) the day after the attack, killed at least fifteen (15) people, including 10 civilians and 5 soldiers, in the village of Buringa of the Gihanga commune, in Bubanza province (north-west Burundi), on the edge of the Rukoko nature reserve, close to the border with the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo).

According to local sources, ten (10) other people, including 4 soldiers and 6 civilians, were seriously injured in the attack, in addition to material damage consisting of two vehicles and two motorbikes set on fire, as well as a CNDD-FDD party office where a soldier had taken refuge, which was destroyed by rocket fire.

¹ Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie.

However, the Burundian government spokesman, Jérôme Niyonzima, announced in a press release issued the following day that 9 people had died, including six women and a soldier, and agreed on the material damage caused by the attack.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the fact that the lives of peaceful citizens have been snuffed out by armed men in this murderous attack in the village of Buringa, and expresses its solidarity and compassion to the victims and their families, who no longer know which way to turn in a country where the authorities constantly proclaim that peace and security reign throughout the country. It calls on the State of Burundi to genuinely protect its population and to engage in genuine negotiations with all the political players in order to restore peace and security throughout the country.

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

- On the morning of Friday 1st March 2024, Mozair Bazirutwabo alias Mazahari, head of the Mabayi zone in the same commune of Mabayi of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi), was arrested by agents of the SNR on charges of collaborating with the Rwandan rebel group FLN (National Liberation Forces), which has been operating for more than a decade in Burundi's Kibira nature reserve.

According to local sources, SNR agents accused Mozair Bazirutwabo, alias Mazahari, of supplying these Rwandan rebels with food and other household items in exchange for gold mined illegally in the Kibira Park, in collaboration with a group of Imbonerakure that he himself had set up.



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.