

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT N° 430 PUBLISHED ON 10 MARCH 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 2 to 9 March 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least two (2) people were murdered in the provinces of Bubanza and Cibitoke and one (1) was seriously injured by bullets fired by a soldier in the province of Bubanza.

The report also deplores the case of seven (7) people who were arbitrarily arrested in Bujumbura city.

1. Violations of the right to life and physical integrity

- On the morning of Sunday 3 March 2024, the lifeless body of an unidentified man in his thirties was discovered not far from the administrative centre of the Rugombo commune in the province of Cibitoke (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, the victim's body showed many wounds, indicating that she had been killed with sticks and clubs.

The same sources said that the man killed was a well-known thief in the locality who was allegedly the victim of mob justice when he tried to steal household items on Munyika II hill.

- On the night of Saturday 2 March 2024 at around 9 .pm., a soldier from the Gihungwe position shot dead a young man known as Mpita alias Njonjo and seriously injured a man in his sixties called Pascal Mbonimpa in a bar located on the 1st transversal of the Gihungwe hill in the commune of Gihanga of the Bubanza province (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses, an argument broke out between the inebriated soldier and two men in the bar, and they disarmed him and took the rifle to his position in Gihungwe. The soldier then went to the military position to retrieve his weapon and, returning to the scene by stealth, began firing in all directions in revenge for the affront he had just suffered.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the soldier was arrested by his comrades-in-arms and taken to Bujumbura.

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

- On Saturday 2 March 2024, two members of the CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party, Claude Potipoti alias Mwarabu and Paul Miburo, were arbitrarily arrested by police Colonel Ildephonse Bivahagumye alias Swepa at the party's national headquarters in the Mutanga-Nord district of the Gihosha zone, in the Ntahangwa urban district of Bujumbura city (western Burundi).

According to local sources, police Colonel Ildephonse Bivahagumye, municipal police commissioner in Bujumbura city, went to the CNL headquarters and found the watchman Paul Miburo in the company of another CNL activist known as Claude Potipoti alias Mwarabu. Without any charges being brought against them, he loaded them into the police vehicle and drove them to the municipal police lock-up located in the former premises of the Special Research Office (ex-BSR).

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the two victims were released the following morning after no charges were brought against them.

It deplores the constant and unpunished violation of the rules of the Code of Criminal Procedure prohibiting arbitrary arrest and detention, and calls on the Public prosecutor to carry out regular checks in police cells in order to punish the perpetrators of abuses committed in police custody.

- On the afternoon of Thursday 7 March 2024, at around 5 p.m., police Colonel Serges Nibigira ailas Gikona, in charge of Bujumbura's central prison, commonly known as "Mpimba Prison", was arrested and taken to Bubanza central prison in north-west Burundi.

According to local sources, Serges Nibigira was arrested along with four other executives from the General Directorate of Penitentiary Affairs: Oscar Barankariza (adviser to the cabinet of the Ministry of Justice) who was arrested and taken to Mpimba prison on the morning of Thursday 7 March 2024 after responding to a summons from the Attorney General of the Republic, a woman named Odette (head of the Legal Department at the General Directorate of Prison Affairs), a woman named Rachel (head of the Legal Department at Mpimba prison) who was taken to Mpimba prison and a woman named Léoncie who was arrested and also taken to this prison.

According to the same sources, all these executives are being prosecuted on the same charge of having released a man named Célestin, who was being held in the Mpimba central prison, and for whom leading members of the CNDD-FDD party (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) had decided that he should die in prison. This was at a time when this man had been subjected to atrocious acts of torture by the National Intelligence Service (SNR), which led to his disability. In fact, he had just been released after a commission headed by Oscar Barankariza noted the after-effects of horrific acts of torture inflicted on him.

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.