

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 434 PUBLISHED ON 7 APRIL 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 30 March to 6 April 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least three (3) people were murdered in the province of Cibitoke.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) person who was seriously injured by Imbonerakure in the province of Ruyigi, the case of one (1) activist from Agathon Rwasa's CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party who was arbitrarily arrested and detained in a cell of the National Intelligence Service (SNR), and the case of one (1) person who was abducted by Imbonerakure in the province of Muyinga.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On the afternoon of Saturday 30 March 2024, at around 4pm, the lifeless body of an unidentified man in his fifties was discovered by fishermen in a cassava field on transverse 7 of the Kaburuntwa hill, in the Buganda commune of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi), less than 500 metres from the Rusizi river separating Burundi from the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo).

According to witnesses to the gruesome discovery, the victim's body had several wounds and his arms and legs were bound with rope up to the neck.

The same sources stated that the victim's body was hastily buried without investigation on the orders of the administrator of Buganda commune, Pamphile Hakizimana.

- On the afternoon of Monday 1 April 2024 at around 5pm, farmers discovered the decapitated body of an unidentified man in his forties in a palm grove belonging to

the former RUGOFARM agricultural company on the Gabiro-Ruvyagira hill in the commune of Rugombo of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to this dismal discovery, the victim's body was lying in a pool of blood and was taken to the morgue at Cibitoke hospital on the orders of the administrator of Rugombo, Gilbert Manirakiza, pending the organisation of a funeral.

- On the morning of Monday 1 April 2024, the lifeless body of Lin Nshimirimana, aged 37, the head of the health centre at the Cishemere transit camp for Congolese refugees in the commune of Buganda of the province Cibitoke (north-west Burundi), was found near the Nyamagana river in the commune of Rugombo of the same province.

According to local sources, Lin Nshimirimana, an employee of the Italian NGO GVC¹, had been abducted the previous day by people identified as members of the Imbonerakure militia, a league of young people affiliated to the ruling CNDD-FDD party², as he was returning from his shop near the Cishemere transit camp. The same sources revealed that Lin Nshimirimana's beating was ordered by one of his colleagues, who had long coveted the post of head of the health centre. The victim's body was taken to the morgue at Cibitoke hospital pending burial.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the persistence of the now intractable phenomenon of lifeless bodies abandoned in the wild in the province of Cibitoke and which have so far not been investigated, thus leading to impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes. To this end, communal administrators continue to order the immediate burial of these unidentified bodies, making any subsequent investigation impossible.

¹ *Gruppo di Volontariato Civile (Civil Volunteering Group).*

² *National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy.*

It is calling on the government of Burundi to take the initiative and demand credible and independent investigations to identify the perpetrators so that they can be punished in accordance with the law, thereby curbing this highly recurrent phenomenon.

2. Infringement of the right to physical integrity

- On the night of Tuesday 2 April 2024 at around 10pm, a drinks trader known as Benoît Ndiokubwayo, nicknamed Bigohe, aged 27, was severely beaten by four young Imbonerakure who found him in his bar on the Senga hill in the commune of Butezi of the Ruyigi the province (eastern Burundi).

According to local sources, Benoît Ndiokubwayo was seriously injured by blows from sticks all over his body, particularly on his head, neck, back and hands.

According to the same sources, the victim was admitted to a local health facility for treatment.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that all four assaulters managed to flee following an alert issued by some members of the joint security committee, which was convened urgently to decide on the fate of the young aggressors.

It calls for a thorough and impartial investigation to be launched in order to arrest all the perpetrators and punish them in accordance with the law.

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

- On the morning of Monday 1st April 2024, Jean Cléophas Ntibanyiha, leader of the CNL party devoted to Agathon Rwasa in the Ntakangwa commune of Bujumbura city (western Burundi), was arbitrarily arrested by the police at his home located at

2nd avenue in the Gituro district of the Kamenge zone, in the same commune of Ntahangwa.

According to witnesses, Jean Cléophas Ntibanyiha was arrested after a police search, although no suspicious objects were found during the operation, which was carried out without a search warrant.

The same sources said that Jean Cléophas Ntibanyiha was initially held all day on Monday in a cell in the Kamenge zone before being transferred to the cell at SNR headquarters.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplors the persistent political intolerance of members of Agathon Rwasa's CNL and other people considered a threat by the authorities, who are still being targeted by the authorities' repressive bodies, namely SNR and police officers, as well as elements of the Imbonerakure militia and, increasingly, other local CNDD-FDD leaders.

4. Kidnapping or enforced disappearance

- On the evening of Monday 1st April 2024 at around 6.30pm, Apollinaire Bashirahishize, aged 39, was abducted by Imbonerakure led by a certain Idrissa Ndayishimiye at the Kobero border post in the province of Muyinga (east of Burundi), on the border with the United Republic of Tanzania, while coming back to Burundi from Uganda.

According to family sources, Apollinaire Bashirahishize called a member of his family on Idrissa Ndayishimiye's telephone, registered under number 66 428 880, to tell him that he was already on Burundian soil and asked him to send the sum of thirty thousand Burundian francs (30,000 FBU) to this number in order to continue his journey to Bujumbura. Subsequently, one of Apollinaire Bashirahishize's family members called Idrissa Ndayishimiye's number again, first at around 10 p.m. and

then again at around 11 p.m., and was told that he had just been questioned by the police and had been released to go home. Since then, however, the phone has been switched off immediately.

SOS-Torture Burundi fears that the abduction of Apollinaire Bashirahishize could turn into an enforced disappearance like several other cases that have been committed with impunity in this province. It is calling on the administrative, judicial and security authorities to break their usual silence and order an investigation, based on the information already available, to find out the fate of Apollinaire Bashirahishize, identify his kidnappers and punish them 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.