

## **SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 440 PUBLISHED ON 19 MAY 2024**

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 11 to 18 May 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least two (2) people were murdered in Bujumbura city and Kayanza province.

The report also deplors the case of four (4) people who were arbitrarily arrested in Bujumbura city and in the province of Makamba and that of five (5) others who were abducted in the provinces of Bubanza, Makamba and in Bujumbura city.

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

- On the night of Saturday 11 May 2024, a CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party activist known as Épipode Yamuremye, aged 35, was clubbed to death by a group of Imbonerakure<sup>1</sup> who ambushed him on his way back to his home in the locality of Kigarama on the Busokoza hill in the zone and commune of Butaganzwa, of the Kayanza province (northern Burundi).

According to local sources, Épipode Yamuremye had spent the day taking steps at the registry office for his wedding, which was due to take place in July. His killers then waited for him on his way home and robbed him of his money before clubbing him over the head, as they knew that the deceased would be returning late at night after closing his bar.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that five Imbonerakure from the same hill - Ndyabona Léonard, Claude, Onias, Ezéchiél and the nicknamed Mamberesi - have been arrested as part of an investigation into traces of blood found on their

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the Youth League affiliated to the CNDD-FDD party (National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy).

clothes. After committing their crime, they moved the victim's body and abandoned it not far from his home.

It calls for a thorough investigation to identify all those responsible for the murder of Épisode Yamuremye and punish them in accordance with the law.

- On the morning of Thursday 16 May 2024, the lifeless body of Brice Irakoze was found in a ravine on avenue Gishurushuru, in the Carama district in the north of the Bujumbura city (western Burundi), when his vehicle was parked next to the body.

According to witnesses to the gruesome discovery, Brice Irakoze's body bore several wounds indicating that he had been stabbed to death.

Sources in his family said that Brice Irakoze, from the commune of Rango in Kayanza province, had just returned from the hospital where his wife had given birth, leaving behind two orphans.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the resurgence of violence in Burundi and wonders how such crimes continue to be committed when police officers and Imbonerakure are tirelessly scouring the hills and districts of the country. It calls for a thorough and credible investigation to identify the perpetrators of this crime and punish them in accordance with the law.

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

- Information reaching SOS-Torture Burundi has revealed that Ahmadi Radjabu, technical director of the online newspaper Akeza.net, spent two whole weeks in arbitrary detention in the dungeon of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Bujumbura (western Burundi), before finally being released on the afternoon of

Thursday 16 May 2024, at around 5 p.m., without informing his family or his department of the reasons for his arrest.

According to local sources, Ahmedi Radjabu was arrested on the evening of Thursday 2 May 2024 by SNR officers as he was taking pictures of a fire that had just broken out at the Ruvumera market in the Buyenzi zone of the Mukaza commune, but which was quickly brought under control by the fire brigade.

SOS-Torture Burundi deploras the unpunished violation, which has become a habit, of the rules of the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to deprivation of liberty. It calls on the public prosecutor's office to carry out regular checks in police cells and to initiate criminal proceedings against those responsible for violating these rules of procedure.

- On the morning of Monday 13 May 2024, at around 9 a.m., three leaders of the CDP (Patriots Council) party in Makamba province (southern Burundi), namely Adrien Sibomana (communal representative in Nyanza-Lac), Francine Nindorera (representative of the Women's League in Makamba) and Bertille Iradukunda (representative of the Youth League in Nyanza-Lac), were arrested by the police and taken to the communal police station in Nyanza-lac.

According to local sources, the three party officials were questioned for more than two hours about their role in mobilising the population of Nyanza-Lac to join the CDP party in mass, before being released the same day.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling on the government of Burundi to resolve the tense political climate and allow all political players to prepare freely for the forthcoming elections in 2025 and 2027.

### 3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On the afternoon of Tuesday 14 May 2024, at around 1 p.m., a man known as Dieudonné Gahungu was abducted from his home behind the offices of the Gihanga commune, in the province of Bubanza (north-west Burundi) by individuals in military uniform who drove him to an unknown destination in a red Toyota Carina with tinted windows.

According to local sources, Dieudonné Gahungu had lived in Rwanda for some time before deciding to return to Burundi.

- On the afternoon of Wednesday 15 May 2024, at 5.30 p.m., a man known as Christian Mupenzi was abducted from 6<sup>th</sup> avenue in the Bwiza zone of the Mukaza commune, in Bujumbura city (western Burundi) by individuals in police uniforms, who drove him to an unknown destination in a white Toyota Probox.

According to witnesses, at the time of his abduction, Christian Mupenzi was with friends when those men apprehended him and forced him into their vehicle, before storming off again.

The same sources said that members of his family searched for him in several dungeons in Bujumbura city, without success.

- On the afternoon of Saturday 18 May 2024, at around 1.15 p.m., Thierry Munezero, Firmin Nzeyimana and Oscar were abducted from their respective homes by uniformed police officers on the Kabondo hill in the commune of Nyanza-Lac of the Makamba province (southern Burundi).

According to witnesses, police officers arrived in a white Toyota Hilux double cab with tinted windows and arrested the three men. They then tied their feet and arms



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

before loading them, sitting on them, into their vehicle and heading for the provincial capital of Makamba.

The same sources revealed that all three victims had been accused, without proof, of collaborating with the RED<sup>2</sup>-Tabara movement.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns the upsurge in kidnappings in various parts of the country and is calling on the Head of State, Evariste Ndayishimiye, to become personally involved in putting an end to this criminal phenomenon, which has become intractable particularly since the socio-political crisis of 2015.

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.

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<sup>2</sup> *Resistance for the Rule of Law in Burundi.*