



SOS – Torture/Burundi

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

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 441 PUBLISHED ON 26 MAY 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 18 to 25 May 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least four (4) people were murdered in the provinces of Bubanza, Bururi, Cibitoke and Gitega.

The report also deplors the cases of five (5) people who were beaten by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR), the police and the Imbonerakure in the provinces of Cakunzo, Gitega and Rutana, as well as four (4) others who were abducted in the province of Ruyigi and in Bujumbura city.

1. Violations of the right to life

- According to information received by SOS-Torture Burundi, on the night of Friday 17 May 2024, unidentified individuals murdered a man known as Ezéchiel Bigirimana, aged 36, near his home on the hill of Rukoba, in the commune and province of Gitega (central Burundi).

According to local sources, Ezéchiel Bigirimana was on his way home from a bar in the locality when individuals who had ambushed him some ten meters from his home beat him to death with a large stone.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling for a thorough investigation to identify the perpetrators of the crime and punish them in accordance with the law.

- On the night of Sunday 19 May 2024, unidentified assailants murdered an unidentified young teenager selling groundnuts after having been robbed of his money, on the Mubere sub-hill in the Rugajo hill and zone, in the commune of Mugina of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to local sources, the young man's body was discovered the following morning, lying in a gutter.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the persistence of cases of targeted killings in the province of Cibitoke and calls on the administrative, police and judicial authorities to act appropriately to put an end to this criminal phenomenon, which is at the top of the list of factors jeopardising security in the province.

- On the night of Monday 20 May 2024, at around midnight, the lifeless body of Jean Niyonkuru alias Kabodoro, a shopkeeper in the centre of Kiryama in the commune of Songa of the Bururi province (southern Burundi), was found in a 3.50 metre deep pit not far from his bistro.

According to the testimony of two girls who were staying with him in the same house, Jean Niyonkuru went out at around 10 p.m., but they waited in vain for him to return. They then put out an alert in the neighbourhood to start looking for him, and he was finally found in this pit, lying under three cans of at least twenty litres, filled with petrol.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling for a credible investigation into the cause and circumstances of Jean Niyonkuru's death.

- On the morning of Wednesday 22 May 2024, the body of Emmanuel Hakizimana, aged 40, was found in a palm grove in the Musenyi zone of the Mpanda commune, in the province of Bubanza (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, unidentified individuals strangled Emmanuel Hakizimana to death.

SOS-Torture is calling on the police to open a thorough investigation to identify the perpetrators of Emmanuel Hakizimana's murder with a view to punishing them in accordance with the law.

2. Infringements of the right to physical integrity

- On the night of Saturday 18 May 2024, at around 10 p.m., a CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party activist known as Nestor Ndarusihire was seriously injured with machete blows by three Imbonerakure who found him at his home on the Rusigabangazi sub-hill on the Bumba hill, in the Camazi zone of the Gisagara commune, in the province of Cankuzo (eastern Burundi).

According to witnesses, three Imbonerakure, Innocent Ciza, Séverin Hakizimana and Gervais Miburo, burst into the victim's home, armed with clubs, spears and machetes. After simply asking him how much he had sold his groundnuts for (5,000 Fbu per kilo), they began hitting him violently with their clubs and then wounded him in the fingers with their machetes.

The same sources said that neighbours were able to intervene in time after hearing Nestor Ndarusihire's cries of distress. They took him directly to a local health facility where he is receiving treatment.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that the three perpetrators of the intentional bodily harm inflicted on Nestor Ndarusihire remain free. It calls for an investigation to be opened to arrest the three clearly identified Imbonerakure and punish them in accordance with the law.

- On 20 May 2024, Melchiade Kabura, a CNL party youth leader in the hill and commune of Giharo, in the province of Rutana (south-east Burundi), was tortured by the head of the SNR in this commune, whose first name is Amos, accusing him

of having refused to join the CNDD-FDD (Council for the Defence of Democracy- Forces for the Defence of Democracy) party.

According to witnesses, Melchiade Kabura was first taken to the dungeon of the local police station in Giharo, where he spent his first night. The following morning, at around 9 a.m., this SNR official brought Melchiade Kabura out of the police cell for torture sessions that lasted almost 3 hours. With his head pointing downwards, resting on his arms and his legs in the air against the wall, Melchiade Kabura was violently beaten and accused of refusing to join the CNDD-FDD party.

- On the night of Wednesday 22 May 2024, at around 11 p.m., Jean-Noël Manirakiza, correspondent for the Journal Iwacu in Gitega (central Burundi), and his two friends, journalist Bienvenu Nziguye of RTNB¹ and Gilbert Niyongere, head of communications for the Senate, were molested in the Yoba district of the commune and province of Gitega by police colonel Evariste Habogorimana, provincial police commissioner for the province.

According to witnesses, police colonel Evariste Habogorima, accompanied by several agents in his service pick-up, burst into the bar where the three men were quenching their thirst and began threatening the journalist Jean-Noël Manirakiza, saying: "*We are following you closely and we know everything you write, you'll see*". He then started punching and slapping them, causing the other two to flee, leaving their friend alone to face the fury of the provincial police commissioner. The same sources confirmed that it was clear that the correspondent of the newspaper Iwacu in Gitega was the one who was most targeted (see his photo below).

¹ Radio-Télévision Nationale du Burundi.



In the end, police colonel Evariste Habogorimana ordered his agents to confiscate his bag which, according to the victim, contained his work tools, namely a laptop, including cables and chargers, a camera, a recorder, memory cards and a power bank.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that journalist Jean-Noël Manirakiza was able to recover his confiscated equipment the following afternoon following the intervention of Chanel Sabimbona, Executive Secretary of the National Communication Council (CNC).

However, it regrets that no action has been taken to bring police colonel Évariste Habogorimana before the courts to answer for his actions, which are punishable by administrative and criminal penalties.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On 20 May 2024, two CNL activists (loyal to MP Agathon Rwasa, recently ousted as party president), Ezéchiel Ndayisenga and Rémégie Gahungu, were abducted by police and Imbonerakure in the commune of Nyabitsinda of the Ruyigi province (eastern Burundi).

According to witnesses, Ezéchiel Ndayisenga, a 45-year-old agricultural instructor from the Mureba hill, was abducted at around 3 p.m. in the afternoon in a locality called Mumburamazi by a group of six police officers who were waiting for him in a black Toyota Hilux double-cabin van with tinted windows and number plate C051A IT. He was riding his bicycle in the company of three other agricultural instructors who were returning from a service meeting in the main town of the commune of Nyabitsinda. The same sources said that after arresting Ezéchiel Ndayisenga, the same police officers returned to extort the other three monitors from their phones to prevent them from reporting the abduction.

Local sources have also stated that on the night of the same day, police officers burst into Rémégie Gahungu's home. They immediately beat him severely before taking him away, in a critical condition, to an unknown destination. The same sources revealed that on the morning of the same day, Rémégie Gahungu had gone to the office of the Nyabitsinda local administrator to alert him to suspicious movements during the night by Imbonerakure armed with clubs.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the increase in kidnappings, mainly by members of the Burundi National Police (PNB) and the National Intelligence Service (SNR).

It is calling on the President of the Republic, Evariste Ndayishimiye, to take urgent and appropriate measures to put a stop to this criminal phenomenon, which only serves to tarnish the image of the government, already tarnished by a series of human rights violations committed on an almost daily basis.

- On 21 May 2024, two Imbonerakure, Eric Dusengimana (aged 27) and Diomède Bankuwunguka, were abducted by SNR agents in the Carama district of the Kinama zone, in the Ntahanga commune of the Bujumbura city (western Burundi).

According to witnesses, Eric Dusengimana was stopped at around 8 a.m. by SNR agents in a white Toyota Hilux double-cabin van with tinted windows, registration number D3986A, while queuing at the Carama station. After demanding that he hand over documents and the key to the car waiting to be refuelled, these men, some in police uniform and others in civilian clothes, pulled out Eric Dusengimana (see photo below) from the car before taking him to an unknown destination, leaving the car he was driving at the pump station.



Other sources revealed that Diomède Bankuwunguka was arrested later at around 11.45 p.m. at his home in the same district of Carama. Uniformed police officers from the Support for the Protection of Institutions (API) unit, led by police colonel Eliphaz Niyongabo, head of the SNR in Bujumbura city, first climbed over the fence to enter the courtyard, before rushing into the house, weapons in hand. They searched the house from top to bottom before finding Diomède Bankuwunguka (see his photo below) in his bedroom. He was taken to an unknown destination in a white Toyota Hilux double-cabin van with tinted windows, after confiscating all the phones they found in the house to prevent Diomède Bankuwunguka's family from raising an alarm.

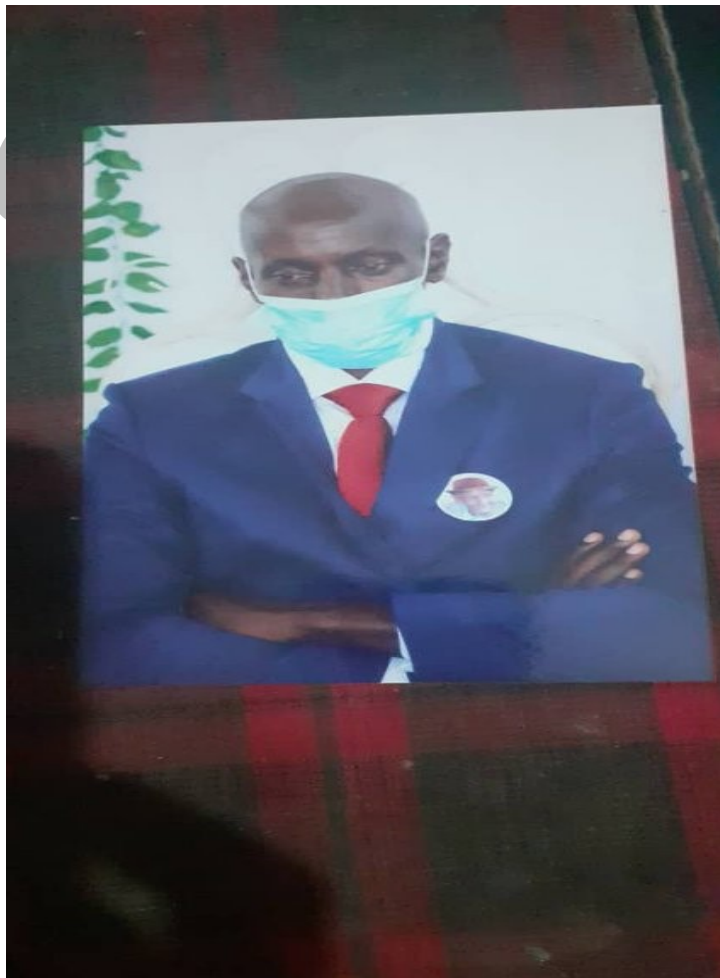


SOS-Torture Burundi once again denounces the practice of arbitrary arrests, which are carried out as if they were kidnappings, even though the strict rules of the Code of Criminal Procedure govern the procedure to be followed when depriving people of their liberty in accordance with the law. While it is normal for

people suspected of having committed crimes to be arrested and prosecuted, it is equally absurd for these arrests to be carried out as if they were abductions, in violation of the relevant rules of the Code of Criminal Procedure. If these arrest procedures are not respected, this often paves the way for people to disappear.

- On the night of Thursday 23 May 2024, at around 8 p.m., a retired soldier known as Édouard Barasukana was abducted by police agents from the Mayuyu brigade on the Nyarumanga hill of the Mayuyu zone, in the commune of Mukike of the Bujumbura province (western Burundi).

According to witnesses, Édouard Barusukana (see photo below) was taken to an unknown destination without being told why he had been arrested.





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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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