

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 447 PUBLISHED ON 6 JULY 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 29 June to 6 July 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

During this period, at least one (1) person was seriously injured in the province of Gitega.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) journalist who was arbitrarily arrested in the province of Gitega and that of two (2) people who were abducted in the province of Cibitoke.

1. Infringement of the right to physical integrity

- SOS-Torture Burundi has received information that on 27 June 2024, a man known as Asmani Rwaswa was severely beaten by Imbonerakure led by Jimmy Kwizera, the leader of the Yoba district, in the commune and province of Gitega (central Burundi).

According to witnesses, Jimmy Kwizera, accompanied by Imbonerakure, broke into Asmani Rwaswa's home and forced him to follow them. They then took him to Gitega airfield and beat him severely with sticks, particularly on the buttocks.

Subsequently, under the pretext of illegal possession of weapons, Jimmy and these Imbonerakure took Asmani Rwaswa back to his home for a search, but found nothing incriminating. They did, however, steal a sum of one million seven hundred thousand Burundian francs (1,700,000 BuF) and his two telephones.

SOS-Torture Burundi is calling on the judicial police to open an investigation into the abuses committed by Jimmy Kwizera, head of the Yoba district and secretary

at the Regina Pacis High School in Gitega, so that he can be brought to justice and punished in accordance with the law.

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

- On the afternoon of Sunday 1 July 2024, at around 12.30 p.m., the correspondent of Radio-Télévision Isanganiro, Gérard Nibigira, was arrested at a petrol station in the Shatanya district of the commune and province of Gitega (central Burundi) by Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Prime Ndikubwayo, the local police commissioner in Gitega, and then taken to a cell in the provincial police station.

According to witnesses, journalist Gérard Nibigira (see photo below) was arrested and roughed up as he tried to take photos of the disorder caused by policemen showing favouritism in managing queues during fuel distribution at the Murisanze service station, commonly known as “Chez Filipo”.



The same sources said that the journalist was released the same day, after being held for a brief period of 3 hours, while his telephone was confiscated by the police for no valid reason.

SOS-Torture Burundi condemns acts of intimidation and harassment of journalists that are taking place under the complacent silence of the country's authorities.

2. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On Saturday 29 June 2024, two young motorbike taxi drivers, Justin Nirema and Yves Nsanzurwimo, were abducted and taken to an unknown destination by the provincial chief of the SNR (National Intelligence Service) in the province of Cibitoke (north-west Burundi) as they were about to cross the Rusizi river to bring supplies to their brothers studying in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

According to witnesses, the two young men, from the hill of Mparambo 2 in the commune of Rugombo in Cibitoke province, were arrested on the banks of the Rusizi River by young Imbonerakure¹, under the orders and supervision of police colonel Félix Havyarimana, the new head of the SNR in the province of Cibitoke. The same sources said that the two young motorcyclists were carrying sacks of beans, the cause of the SNR official's suspicions that they might be supplying Burundian rebel groups based in the DRC.

According to the same sources, Justin Nirema and Yves Nsanzurwimo were taken directly aboard the vehicle of the head of the SNR to an unknown destination. Since that day, the relatives of the two young men have searched for them in all the official dungeons in Cibitoke province, without success, and are worried for their safety.

SOS-Torture Burundi fears that the abduction of these young people will later turn into their enforced disappearance, given that police colonel Félix Havyarimana has an infamous reputation for murder and abduction, particularly in the province of Muyinga where he worked before his new assignment.

¹ League of young people affiliated to the CNDD-FDD party (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the defense of Democracy).



SOS – Torture/Burundi

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

It is calling on the SNR authorities to reveal the fate of Justin Nirema and Yves Nsanzurwimo and to disclose where and why they are being held.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was set up to inform 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 provide information on the realities of the country followed the carnage of around a hundred people killed on 11 December and 12 December 2015 by police and soldiers on the pretext of pursuing rebels who had just attacked military camps on the outskirts of the capital.

The areas affected are said to be those contesting President Nkurunziza's third term in office, namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga and Jabe, the last two being located in the centre of Bujumbura city.