

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 452 PUBLISHED 11 AUGUST 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 3 to 10 August 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

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

During the same period, one (1) person was seriously injured by policemen in Bujumbura city, before being arbitrarily placed in police custody in the Kinama zone.

The same report deplores the cases of four (4) people who were abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Bujumbura town.

1. Violations of the right to life

- On Monday 5 August 2024, the lifeless body of an unidentified woman was found on the Rugunga hill in the commune of Musongati of the Rutana province (south-east Burundi).

According to witnesses to the gruesome discovery, the naked body of the victim bore several wounds indicating that she had been stabbed to death.

The same sources stated that the victim's body was buried on the spot on the same day on the orders of the Musongati commune administrator, Claudine Niyoyitungira, without waiting for an investigation into the identity of the victim and the perpetrators of this despicable crime. According to the same sources, the victim was buried in inhumane conditions because, instead of looking for clothes to cover her body, she was covered in grass before she was buried.

- In the twilight of Monday 5 August 2024, two lifeless bodies of unidentified men were discovered on transversal 7 of the Nyamitanga hill, in the commune of Buganda of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi), not far from the Rusizi river separating Burundi from the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo).

According to witnesses to the macabre discovery, the two bodies were already decomposing. Residents of Nyamitanga point the finger at the provincial head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Cibitoke province, who is said to be the one bringing these bodies to the various places where they are regularly discovered, because his vehicle is often seen in these places and at late hours of the night. The next day, lifeless bodies were discovered there and hastily buried by young Imbonerakure¹ on the orders of the Buganda communal administrator, Pamphile Hakizimana.

- On the morning of Wednesday 7 August 2024, the lifeless body of an unidentified man in his thirties was found on transversal 3 of the Nyamitanga hill in the commune of Buganda of the Cibitoke province (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the grisly discovery, the young man's body was decomposing.

The same sources revealed that the Buganda communal administrator, Pamphile Hakizimana, had ordered the Imbonerakure to bury the body at the place where it was found.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the persistence of the phenomenon of the lifeless bodies of well-targeted people who are most often murdered by SNR agents and whose bodies are then dumped in the wild, far from relatives, to cover up any possibility of identifying the victims and, consequently, their executioners.

¹ *Members of the youth league affiliated to the ruling CNDD-FDD party (National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy).*

2. Infringement of the right to physical integrity and the right to freedom of movement

- On the night of Thursday 8 August 2024, at around 9 p.m., Gabriel Banzawitonde, president of the APDR (Alliance for Peace, Democracy and Reconciliation) party, was severely beaten and seriously injured by a group of police agents stationed near the Gikoma bridge on the RN 9 Bujumbura-Bubanza road (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses to the horrific scene, Gabriel Banzawitonde, who is also an executive at LONA (Burundi National Lottery), was attacked as he tried to defend a taxi driver in an altercation with policemen on the Gikoma River. The driver had taken on a few passengers too many in his vehicle and was trying to explain himself to the police, who wanted to extort money from him by way of bribery in the form of a transactional fine without a receipt.

According to the same sources, when Gabriel Banzawitonde suggested that the driver be punished in accordance with the law and that he pay a fine to the Burundi Revenue Authority (OBR), the police jumped on him and beat him with their belts, boots and rifle barrels, after tearing up his national identity card, which they had just asked him to produce. Fortunately, passers-by and onlookers intervened, and the policemen decided to take the victim to the Kinama zone dungeon, where he spent the night in arbitrary detention, despite bruises on his face, shoulders and back (see below for some images of the violence he suffered).



SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that Gabriel Banzawitonde was finally released the following morning, after asking for the reasons for his deprivation of liberty and the identity of the police agents who beat him.

It is calling for an investigation to be launched to identify all the policemen involved in the violence, so that they can be punished in accordance with the law.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On Friday and Saturday 3 August 2024, three men known as Jean-Marie Ntezimana, Ezéchiel Bukuru and Anicet Nkurunziza (see their photos below) were abducted by agents of the SNR in Bujumbura town (western Burundi) and taken to an unknown destination.



Jean-Marie Ntezimana and Ezéchiel Bukuru come from the Ruyaga hill in the commune of Kanyosha of the Bujumbura province (western Burundi) and are friends who are tailors. Their friend Anicet Nkurunziza, on the other hand, is from Kabumba hill in the same commune of Kanyosha and is a member of the CNDD-FDD party.

According to information from family members, Jean-Marie Ntezimana, an activist with the pro-Agathon Rwasa CNL (National Congress for Freedom) party, was abducted on the afternoon of Friday 2 August 2024, when he had spent the day at a burial ceremony for someone at the Mpanda cemetery. To make matters worse, his widowed mother, Capitoline Ndimurusaku (see photo below), died the same day of a heart attack she suffered just after learning the bad news of the disappearance of her son, who was taking care of her entirely.



The same sources revealed that Ezéchiel Bukuru (no political affiliation) and Anicet Nkurunziza were abducted in front of “Le Parisien” on Saturday 3 August 2024 by SNR agents in a Toyota Hilux double-cabin van with tinted windows and driven to an unknown destination. They had gone down to Bujumbura to try to find their friend Jean-Marie Ntezimana, who had disappeared the previous day. Since then, their families have been searching for them without success in various dungeons in Bujumbura city and Mutimbuzi commune in Bujumbura province.

SOS-Torture Burundi is deeply concerned about the exponential increase in cases of abduction by SNR agents, particularly since the beginning of this year, and deplores the passive attitude of the President of the Republic, Evariste Ndayishimiye, who never ceases to assert in his media appearances that respect for human rights has become a reality in Burundi.

It is calling on the SNR authorities to reveal the fate of these three men and to bring them to justice if they are accused of any crimes.

- On the afternoon of Friday 9 August 2024, at around 6 p.m., a 38-year-old man known as Jean-Claude Niyuhire, alias Magenge, was abducted by SNR agents in front of Kamenge military hospital as he was returning to his home in the Ngagara zone of Ntahangwa commune, in Bujumbura town (western Burundi).

According to witnesses to his abduction, Jean-Claude Niyuhire (see photo below), originally from Mushonge hill in Tangara commune, in Ngozi province (northern Burundi), was abducted with the complicity of a certain Saidi Habarugira (SNR informer) who called the SNR official in Bujumbura town, police colonel Eliphaz Niyongabo, to tell him that he had just seen the victim in front of Kamenge military hospital. Subsequently, a white Toyota Hilux double-cabin van with the registration number E0519A arrived at full speed, in which police officers rushed out and ruthlessly took Jean-Claude Niyuhire away to an unknown destination.





SOS – Torture/Burundi

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

SOS-Torture Burundi later learned that Jean-Claude Niyuhire had been taken to the dungeon at SNR headquarters, where he is being arbitrarily detained because of his civil disputes with certain individuals.

It condemns the use of the SNR to serve the private interests of certain crooked individuals and calls on the authorities of this service, which reports to the President of the Republic, to order the unconditional release of Jean-Claude Niyuhire, who is only subject to the civil courts in relation to any disputes he may have with certain individuals.

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.