

SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 457 PUBLISHED ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2024

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 7 to 14 September 2024 concerning cases of human rights violations in Burundi.

¹During this period, at least one (1) person was violently beaten and seriously injured by young Imbonerakure in the province of Gitega.

The report also deplores the case of one (1) detainee who was subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and at the same time a victim of a violation of the right to health, as well as the case of two (2) people who were abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in the provinces of Bubanza and Cibitoke.

1. Violation of the right to physical integrity

- On the night of Monday 9 September 2024, a man known as Sylvestre Niyomukiza was violently beaten by Imbonerakure youths on the hill of Rukoba, in the commune and province of Gitega (central Burundi) on the orders of the CNDD-FDD party secretary, Désiré Habimana.

According to local sources, Désiré Habimana and a group of young Imbonerakure burst into Sylvestre Niyomukiza's home and ordered him to open the door and leave immediately. As soon as he came out, he was violently beaten with sticks, without any explanation, to the point where he was unable to stand.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the impunity surrounding the repeated human rights violations committed by the Imbonerakure, who are supported or encouraged by the

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

deafening silence of the administrative, police and judicial authorities about their abuses.

It calls on the competent State authorities to take concrete measures to put an end to the human rights violations regularly committed by these youths of the ruling party, in order to restore and establish a climate of peaceful cohabitation between all citizens, without favoritism or discrimination of a political nature.

2. Cases of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and violation of the right to health of persons deprived of their liberty

- On the afternoon of Thursday 12 September 2024, at around 1 p.m., Dr Christophe Sahabo, former Director General of Kira Hospital and currently detained in Ruyigi prison, was snatched from his hospital bed and transferred *by force* to Ruyigi prison by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) while still on a drip at Kamenge University Hospital (CHUK) in Bujumbura city, commonly known as King Khaled, as part of the treatment for his serious pathologies of severe hypertension and chronic asthma, exacerbated by the deplorable conditions in which he had been detained for more than two years.

According to witnesses, Dr Christophe Sahabo was admitted urgently to CHUK on 10 September 2024 after his hearing was suspended by the Muha High Court following his collapse in front of the judges, although it was clear that his state of health was too weak even before the hearing began.

The same sources revealed that the cruel decision to violently remove Dr Christophe Sahabo, still on a drip, was orchestrated, outside any medical or human logic, by the General Administrator of the SNR, General Ildephonse Habarurema.

SOS-Torture Burundi has learned that Dr Christophe Sahabo finally arrived at Ruyigi central prison, more than 150 kilometers from Bujumbura, at around 4 p.m. on the

same day, after this long journey without any care or vehicle suited to his critical condition, and that he was taken straight back to his cell without any concern for his precarious state of health.

It reminds the State of Burundi that this treatment constitutes a flagrant violation of the international commitments to which it has subscribed, in particular article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits the use of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and article 10, which imposes an obligation to treat all persons deprived of their liberty with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Furthermore, the State of Burundi has an obligation to provide health care to detainees without discrimination, including in the case of Dr Christophe Sahabo.

It asks the country's authorities, in this case the President of the Republic, Evariste Ndayishimiye, to take a wise, urgent and rational decision with a view to the immediate transfer of Dr Christophe Sahabo to a suitable health facility in order to prevent the irreparable, since otherwise, if the worst were to happen in these conditions skillfully orchestrated to lead to his disappearance, they would bear full responsibility before history, the nation and the whole world.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On the morning of Monday 9 September 2024, at around 11 a.m., the 36-year-old chief of the hill of Kagwema I, Mélance Ndayizeye, was abducted by unidentified individuals from 5th Avenue Gihanga, at the junction with the RN5 ("National Road No. 5"), in the commune of Gihanga in the province of Bubanza (north-west Burundi), and has since been taken to an unknown destination.

According to witnesses, Mélance Ndayizeye had gone to the administrative center of the commune of Gihanga for a weekly meeting before receiving a call from

someone asking him to meet him at 5th avenue Gihanga to sign an "urgent" document.

According to the same sources, Mélance Ndayizeye was met by three men, suspected of being SNR agents, in a white Toyota Hilux double cab pick-up truck with tinted windows, who forced him into the vehicle. Two of the kidnappers were identified by the people of Kagwema I: a certain Lambert from Gihanga village II and Nestor Munezero alias Mbike, known as an SNR informer.

The same sources said that Mélance Ndayizeye had not been on good terms with the head of the Gihanga Imbonerakure, Olivier Nahimana, since his appointment as head of the hill, because he wanted his younger brother, third on the list of hill councilors, to be appointed to this position instead.

SOS-Torture Burundi deplores the upsurge in cases of abduction followed by enforced disappearance, particularly in the province of Bubanza since the beginning of this year, most often committed by SNR or intelligence agents from the ruling CNDD-FDD party.

It is calling for an end to this criminal phenomenon, which has become intractable, particularly since the socio-political crisis of 2015, when the late President Pierre Nkurunziza sought an illegal third term in office.

- On the night of Monday 9 September 2024, at around 7 p.m., a man known as Paul Uwitije, aged 48, was abducted by SNR agents in the center of Cibitoke in the commune of Rugombo, in the province of Cibitoke (north-west Burundi).

According to witnesses, Paul Uwitije was in a bistro called "chez Mwarabu" quenching his thirst with friends when men in uniform from the Burundi National Police (PNB) burst in and handcuffed him before taking him away to an unknown

destination in a white Toyota Hilux double-cabin van with tinted windows belonging to the head of the SNR in Cibitoke province.

The same sources said that members of his family searched all the dungeons in Cibitoke province without success and that all his telephones were switched off.

SOS-Torture Burundi subsequently learned that Paul Uwitije had been taken to the SNR dungeon in Cibitoke province and that he was released the next day after undergoing atrocious torture sessions.

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.