

SOS-TORTURE Burundi REPORT NO. 491 PUBLISHED ON MAY 11, 2025

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 3 to 10 May 2025 and documents cases of human rights violations committed in Burundi.

During this period, three (3) people were murdered in the provinces of Gitega and Muramvya.

The report also mentions the case of one (1) activist of the Sahwanya-FRODEBU party¹ who was seriously injured by Imbonerakure² in Makamba province, as well as that of two (2) people kidnapped in Bujumbura town hall.

1. Violation of the right to life

- According to information gathered by SOS-Torture Burundi, on Tuesday, April 29, 2025 at around 7 p.m., a 43-year-old street vendor of second-hand shoes, Damas Butoyi, nicknamed "Kondakonda Nyoro", succumbed to injuries inflicted on him on the same day by members of the Imbonerakure militia, in the Nyamugari neighborhood, city of Gitega.

According to eyewitnesses, Damas Butoyi was severely beaten after being accused of theft by an unidentified woman. She claimed to have lost a briefcase containing 100,000 Burundian francs as well as two phones, including a smartphone.

The same sources indicate that Damas Butoyi died a few hours later at his home, located on 1st Avenue in the Nyamugari district.

SOS-Torture Burundi demands the immediate opening of an independent and impartial investigation to identify the perpetrators of these acts of torture resulting in death, and to bring them to justice without delay.

¹ Front for Democracy in Burundi.

² Members of the youth league affiliated to the ruling CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy) party.

- On Tuesday, May 6, 2025, in the afternoon at around 2 p.m., members of the Imbonerakure militia, led by a certain Jodos Niyonkuru, nicknamed "Babu", hacked to death with machetes a man named Oscar Ndayisaba, 49 years old, on the sub-hill of Kivoga, hill of Murehe, commune of Mbuye, province of Muramvya.

According to eyewitnesses, Jodos Niyonkuru, an Imbonerakure leader on Murehe hill, along with other members of the militia, arbitrarily arrested Oscar Ndayisaba before taking him to a wooded area near a coffee dehulling factory on Taba hill. There they decapitated and mutilated him by cutting off his genitals, which they then took away.

The same sources report that the body of Oscar Ndayisaba was buried the same day on the orders of the local administration, without any investigation being opened to identify the perpetrators of this heinous act, who remain at large to this day.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for the immediate arrest of all those responsible for this murder so that they can be brought to justice and punished in accordance with the law.

- On Wednesday, May 7, 2025, in the afternoon, the lifeless body of Léopold Mbisamatore, 42 years old and from Ndava hill, was found floating on the Ruvyironza River, in the commune of Ryansoro, Gitega province.

According to eyewitnesses, Red Cross agents, alerted by workers from the company Songa Energy (in charge of a hydroelectric construction site), recovered the body of the victim, already in an advanced state of decomposition, before proceeding to his burial the same day.

SOS-Torture Burundi demands the opening of a thorough investigation in order to establish the circumstances of the murder of Léopold Mbisamatore, to identify the perpetrators and to bring them to justice in accordance with the law.

2. Violation of the right to physical integrity

- According to information gathered by SOS-Torture Burundi, on Friday, May 2, 2025, at around 9 p.m., members of the Imbonerakure militia, led by a certain Benjamin Niyoyankunze, seriously injured with clubs and stones an activist of the Sahwanya-FRODEBU party and active member of the "Burundi Bwa Bose" coalition, Jonas Niyomwungere. The incident occurred on the hill of Kabonga, Muyange area, Nyanza-Lac commune, Makamba province. According to the testimonies of members of his family, Jonas Niyomwungere was intercepted as he was returning home. He was urgently evacuated to the hospital in Nyanza-Lac in critical condition.

The same sources indicate that the police tried on May 5 to arrest the main suspect, Benjamin Niyoyankunze. However, Imbonerakure violently opposed the arrest, going so far as to try to disarm the police officers. Faced with the threat, the police were forced to retreat in order to avoid a direct confrontation.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls on the police authorities to actively engage in ensuring the arrest of all perpetrators of this violent attack, and to ensure that they are brought to justice and punished in accordance with the law.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On Tuesday, May 6, 2025, at nightfall, around 7 p.m., police officers, accompanied by an Imbonerakure identified as Claude Ndayisenga, kidnapped Jean-Marie Nizigiyimana, 61, an activist loyal to Agathon Rwasa. The kidnapping took place while the victim was in a bistro in the place called "Ku Kasoko", in the Buterere zone, commune of Ntahangwa, Bujumbura town hall.

According to eyewitnesses, the police burst into the establishment, threw themselves on Jean-Marie Nizigiyimana, hit him several times, before taking him on a motorcycle to a service station in Buterere. There, a Toyota Hilux van with double cabs and tinted windows was waiting for them. They threw the victim there before taking him to an unknown destination.

The members of his family undertook, in vain, searches in various police dungeons in Bujumbura town hall. This, even though hill and neighborhood chiefs were present at the time of the arrest, which reinforces concerns about complicity or impunity surrounding this disappearance.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls on the police authorities to immediately reveal the place of detention of Jean-Marie Nizigiyimana and to release him without delay.

- On Friday, May 9, 2025, in the morning, unidentified individuals kidnapped a soldier named Eric Nsabimana, assigned to the military intelligence service (G2), from his home located on Gasenyi hill, in the locality of Nyakararo, near the presidential palace of Gasenyi, in Bujumbura town hall. He was taken to an unknown destination.

According to some of his colleagues, Éric Nsabimana was kidnapped by elements of the G2, who suspected him of having transmitted information to external entities.

SOS-Torture Burundi urges the officials of the military intelligence service to reveal without delay the fate of Eric Nsabimana as well as the place of his detention.

The cases documented this week by SOS-Torture Burundi are further evidence of the persistence of a climate of impunity in Burundi, marked by killings, abductions, torture and enforced disappearances, most of which involve state agents or members of the Imbonerakure militia. These serious human rights violations take place against a backdrop of political repression and a clear lack of willingness by the authorities to impartially investigate and punish the perpetrators.

SOS-Torture Burundi reiterates its call on the national authorities to take urgent measures to put an end to these inhumane practices, to guarantee the safety of all citizens, and to ensure that justice is done to the victims.

SOS-Torture/Burundi was initiated with the aim of informing national and international opinion about the serious human rights violations underway in Burundi through monitoring reports, particularly on torture, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and summary executions.

This initiative to inform about the realities of the country followed the carnage of a hundred people killed during the day of December 11 and December 12, 2015 by police and soldiers under the pretext of pursuing rebels who had just attacked military camps located on the outskirts of the capital.

The affected areas are said to be protest areas of President Nkurunziza's third term, namely Musaga, Mutakura, Cibitoke, Nyakabiga, Jabe, the last two being located in the center of the Bujumbura City Hall.