

REPORT NO. 495 OF SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI PUBLISHED ON JUNE 8, 2025

This report by SOS-Torture Burundi covers the period from 31 May to 8 June 2025 and documents cases of human rights violations committed on Burundian territory.

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

The report also notes the arbitrary arrest and detention of two (2) activists of the Council of Patriots (CDP) party, respectively in the province of Bubanza and in the town hall of Bujumbura, as well as the kidnapping of the director of the communal high school of Ruseseka in the province of Cibitoke.

1. Violation of the right to life

- On Saturday, May 31, 2025, the lifeless body of Leonidas Ncamihigo was found floating on Lake Cohoha, showing signs of atrocious mutilation: his tongue severed, his eyes gouged out, and his genitals torn off.

According to witnesses, on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, Leonidas Ncamihigo, in his fifties, was violently beaten by members of the Imbonerakure militia at the Rukuramigabo trading center, in the Cewe area of Kirundo commune and province. This violence took place in the presence of the head of the hill of Rukuramihigo and his deputy. The Imbonerakure accused him, without any evidence, of raping a woman living with a disability. Afterwards, they took him to the shores of Lake Cohoha, where they murdered him in a particularly barbaric way.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for an impartial investigation to identify, arrest and bring to justice the perpetrators of this heinous crime, whose identity is already known.

- On Sunday, June 1, 2025, in the morning, fishermen discovered the lifeless body, in an advanced state of decomposition, of a man identified as Joseph Kariyo, 38 years old, on the hill of Mparambo I, commune of Rugombo, province of Cibitoke, a hundred meters from the Rusizi River, which marks the border between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

According to the testimonies of residents of the hill of Mparambo I, the body was quickly identified as that of Joseph Kariyo, a well-known farmer in the locality, who has been missing for more than a week. These residents suspect the involvement of some young people affiliated with the Imbonerakure militia of the ruling party, the CNDD-FDD (National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy), believing that the victim would have been perceived as an inconvenient witness to the smuggling activities often attributed to these young people.

The same sources said that the body of Joseph Kariyo was buried the same day on the order of the communal administrator of Rugombo, Gilbert Manirakiza, who cited public health reasons.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for a rigorous and impartial investigation to identify the perpetrators of this murder and bring them to justice, in accordance with the law.

- On Sunday, June 1, 2025, in the morning, the lifeless body of an unidentified man, about thirty years old, was discovered in a savannah, near the Muslim cemetery, in the Shatanya neighborhood, in the city of Gitega.

According to eyewitnesses, the body, already in an advanced state of decomposition, was transported to the morgue of the regional hospital of Gitega, pending the identification of the victim.

SOS-Torture Burundi is sounding the alarm to the police and administrative authorities of Gitega in the face of the worrying recurrence of the discovery of bodies abandoned in the wild, a phenomenon that has become particularly worrying, like the situation observed in the province of Cibitoke.

The organization is calling for a thorough and impartial investigation to clarify the circumstances of his death, identify the perpetrators of the crime and bring them to justice in accordance with the law.

2. Violation of the right to freedom of movement: arbitrary arrests and detentions in the context of the elections

- On Wednesday, June 4, 2025, three members of the Imbonerakure militia, identified by the first names Emmanuel and Eric, as well as a third named Kayoibona, violently assaulted Joas Niyonkuru, representative of the Council of Patriots (CDP) party in Mpanda commune, Bubanza province, before taking him to the cell of the Mpanda police station.
- On Thursday, June 5, 2025, Éric Ingabire, CDP candidate in the legislative elections in Bujumbura, was arbitrarily arrested and detained for simply claiming the legal right of his proxies to access polling stations.

3. Cases of abduction or enforced disappearance

- On Tuesday, June 3, 2025, around noon, unidentified individuals, aboard a jeep without license plates, kidnapped Théophile Niyimbona, director of the municipal high school of Ruseseka, on the premises of the school located in the commune of Mabayi, province of Cibitoke, before taking him to an unknown destination.

According to members of his family, Théophile Niyimbona, a former MP elected under the banner of Agathon Rwasa's National Congress for Freedom (CNL) party, who recently joined the ruling party, the CNDD-FDD was abducted for political reasons, in a context of repression targeting former CNL members.

SOS-Torture Burundi calls for the immediate opening of an independent, impartial and effective investigation in order to shed light on the circumstances of this abduction, identify the alleged perpetrators and bring them to justice in accordance with the law.

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.