

## **Burundi: Civil society is concerned about the numerous cases of enforced disappearances in 2025**

30 August 2025. On the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, SOS Torture Burundi, the Women and Girls Movement for Peace and Security in Burundi and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) express their deep concern at the resurgence of cases of enforced disappearances in Burundi. These violations are part of a crackdown documented since 2015, marked by the systematic use of enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and State violence against members of opposition parties, political activists and citizens perceived as critical of the government.

Between January and August 2025, our organisations documented **26 cases of enforced disappearances**. Most of these disappearances took place in the context of the May-June 2025 parliamentary elections and were part of a strategy of repression aimed at silencing any dissenting voices. These acts mainly target members of the National Council for Liberty (CNL), the main opposition political party in Burundi. Most victims are arrested in the street or in public places and immediately transported in vehicles with tinted windows to an unknown destination. For example, on 2 April 2025, Fidèle NKUREMBONE, aged 46, a member of the CNL political party, was abducted not far from his home while on his way to work in the commune of Mutimbuzi, in the province of Bujumbura. SNR agents, led by a certain Athia NDUWIMANA, intercepted him and took him away in a white double-cab vehicle to an unknown destination.

In all these cases, the fate of the disappeared persons remains unknown to this day. Although agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) have been identified as the main perpetrators of these disappearances, no investigation or prosecution has been initiated to date by the competent authorities.

Our organisations reiterate that enforced disappearance constitutes a serious violation of human rights in that it removes the victim from the protection of the law and increases the risk of torture or execution with impunity. It also inflicts acute suffering on the families of victims who do not know the fate of their loved ones. Enforced disappearances are prohibited by several international instruments,

including the United Nations Convention against Torture, ratified by Burundi, as they may also constitute a form of torture.

Furthermore, during the same period, our organisations reported **60 arbitrary arrests and detentions**, mainly targeting members of opposition parties (CNL, Coalition Burundi bwa Bose, CDP, FRODEBU), as well as the arrests of numerous Congolese nationals in Cibitoke province, accused of complicity with the M23 movement. In addition to SNR agents, the Imbonerakure, acting as a paramilitary force parallel to the ruling party, are also responsible for serious human rights violations, often with the complicity or inaction of the authorities.

**65 cases of torture** were also recorded, mostly perpetrated in SNR cells or during interrogations. Detainees were beaten, handcuffed and subjected to violence for expressing opinions deemed critical or for belonging to the opposition.

These figures mark a **worrying deterioration in the human rights situation in Burundi** and reflect a strategy aimed at silencing the opposition, reducing civic space and creating a climate of fear. Impunity for these violations has become systematic, further undermining the rule of law. *'No lasting peace can be built on forgetting and impunity. Burundi must break with authoritarian practices and commit to respecting human rights, justice and democracy. The memory of the victims demands truth, justice and reparation. Silence and inaction cannot be tolerated'*, declared Armel Niyongere, Secretary General of SOS Torture Burundi.

On this International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, our organisations pay tribute to all those who have disappeared and reaffirm their unwavering solidarity with their loved ones in their quest for truth, justice and reparation.

Our organisations call on the Burundian authorities to:

1. Immediately end enforced disappearances and reveal the fate of those who have been abducted.
2. Release all those detained arbitrarily, including members of the opposition and Congolese nationals who have been unjustly accused.
3. Open independent and impartial investigations into all documented cases of enforced disappearances and torture, and prosecute the perpetrators regardless of their rank.
4. Ensure the right to truth for the families of the disappeared and grant full reparations to all victims and their families.

5. Regulate and dismantle the Imbonerakure militias, putting an end to their involvement in security and electoral matters.
6. Ratify and implement the International Convention against Enforced Disappearances, and cooperate fully with UN and African human rights mechanisms.
7. Guarantee the fundamental freedoms of expression, opinion, association and political participation for all citizens.

Our organisations also call on the international community to:

1. Exert increased pressure on the Burundian authorities to immediately end enforced disappearances and open independent investigations.
2. Make any diplomatic, financial or security assistance conditional on strict respect for human rights and cooperation with international mechanisms.
3. Strengthen protection and support for victims, human rights defenders and journalists, including through documentation, protection and asylum mechanisms.
4. Impose targeted sanctions against those responsible for serious violations.
5. Refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for them to examine the documented crimes and consider legal action.