



LBDH/006/2020

Alert of Ligue Iteka on the impending explosion of the coronavirus in Burundi

1. For several months, the coronavirus pandemic known as Covid-19 has hit almost all the countries of the world. The numbers of people infected and dead as a result of the pandemic exceed 5 million and 350,000 people respectively. New cases and new deaths are still recorded daily despite the decline of trends observed in countries which have taken solid and consistent measures to fight against the pandemic.
2. Burundi is not spared from the pandemic. Official figures indicate that, as of May 27, 2020, the country has already registered 42 cases of people infected and one death. However, no credit can be given to these figures as many sources indicate many people who died after showing typical symptoms of the coronavirus, but which the government refused to test or of which it did not want to disclose the test results. Our information indicates that the virus has already spread to at least 10 of the 18 provinces in the country. Still, no center in the country has the capacity to test people for symptoms and is not even authorized by the government to do so, which is very opaque on the prevalence level of the pandemic.
3. As in previous epidemics, particularly malaria which at times affected almost three quarters of the population and killed thousands of people, the government of Burundi has remained largely insensitive to the plight of a population subjected to its violent dictatorship since several years and more particularly since President Pierre Nkurunziza's third illegal and illegitimate term. It continued its policy of denial of evidence and did not adopt a coherent strategy to fight against the pandemic. It purposely limited access to tests. It allowed electoral campaigns to be organized without implementing plans to minimize the risk of contamination by the coronavirus. It has done little to mobilize the necessary resources to effectively implement the few measures it has announced, in particular in terms of organizing the lockdown of travelers arriving in the country, intense awareness of the population for washing hands and social distancing, as well as capacity building in hospital care for infected people across the country.
4. The organization of unnecessary and dangerous electoral campaigns took precedence over the protection of the population. Useless insofar as, as was inevitable in a regime which reigns in terror, the results were known earlier and were obtained by and in violence, as well as in the falsification of the truth of the ballot as announced by the only independent national observation mission constituted by the Catholic Church. Dangerous since huge gatherings of populations have been organized nationwide without real measures



LIGUE BURUNDAISE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

"ITEKA" association sans but lucratif

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to minimize the risks of contamination by the coronavirus. It is therefore to be feared that, after the elections which have just taken place, the number of cases of infections will rise exponentially.

5. Furthermore, the regime still does not show any willingness to collaborate actively and sincerely with other of sub region countries, as well as with the international community to fight effectively against the disease. On the contrary, it is conspicuous by its absence in meetings, yet held on TV or video conference, with other sub-region countries to find concerted answers. And above all, repeating the strategy it applied to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner to avoid its monitoring of the violation of human rights, the regime has just expelled the WHO Representative and three of its experts who were particularly responsible to support it in the fight against the coronavirus.
6. The expel of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner has enabled the regime to continue killing, raping, abducting, torturing and imprisoning thousands of Burundians. With the neutralization of the WHO and, beyond it, of international cooperation in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, twelve million Burundians and other people living in the country are facing possible death.
7. The fact that the worst-case scenario often announced for Africa has not yet occurred does not mean that the international community should remain silent on the accelerated "burundicide" organized by an erratic regime which currently has no equivalent in the world, death by the virus coming to add to that due to the generalized and trivialized violence which is the lot daily inflicted on the population, misery, hunger and various diseases that its policy generates or maintains.
8. More than ever, the saying that "better is to prevent than to cure" applies literally and figuratively. Ligue ITEKA has already integrated monitoring of Covid-19 cases into its activities and is ready to join its efforts with those of other civil society organizations to develop and disseminate prevention messages. But it expects the international community to put solid pressure on the government of Burundi and support civil society in its efforts to disseminate information enabling the population to respect the preventive gestures and attitudes necessary to minimize the expansion of the pandemic.

Done in Kampala, 29 May 2020

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