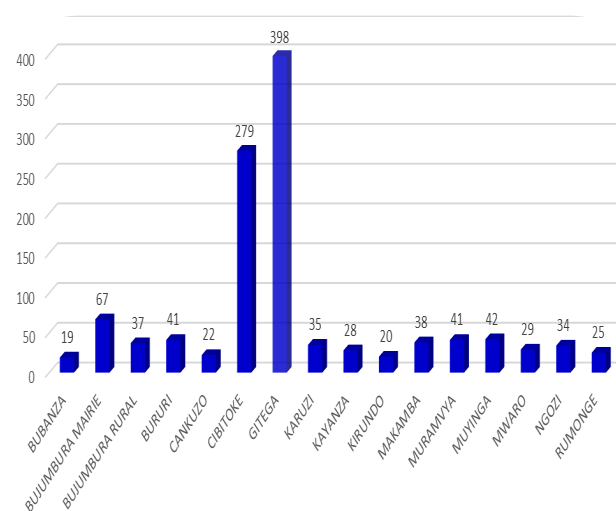




LIGUE BURUNDAISE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ITEKA



WOULD NOT A COVER-UP OF THE PERPETRATORS OF 1188 ASSASSINATIONS BE AN OPERATING MODE ADOPTED TO HIDE THE CRIMES FROM THE PRESIDENT EVA-RISTE NDAYISHIMIYE'S REGIME?



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I. INTRODUCTION

This report on the human rights and security situation in Burundi focuses mainly on the phenomenon of the bodies¹ of persons killed by unidentified people and buried without the least investigation under the orders of local administrative officials, SNR agents, the police and quite often in collaboration with the Imbonerakure, the CNDD-FDD ruling party youth, since President Evariste Ndayishimiye has ruled Burundi.

This report provides examples which would tend to indicate that this widespread practice of burying bodies found without the least investigation would be an operating method considered and implemented by agents of regime. Non-isolated examples of administrative and security agents including those of the SNR and the police who implement the plan are also given in this report. The report also includes a methodological approach used, an analysis and concludes with recommendations.

II. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Since President Ndayishimiye came to power in June 2020, many persons have lost their lives in different ways and in most cases, the government has not demonstrated its willingness to address these crimes. In some non-isolated cases, state agents are involved. In most cases, it is very difficult to know whether or not there is a hidden hand of regime, but the government is not fulfilling its responsibility to act on and prevent these repetitive and widespread crimes.

Furthermore, without claiming to be exhaustive, despite the challenges around the monitoring work in this situation where Gitega regime has pulled out all the stops to lock down the space and hide the crimes that are being committed, Ligue Iteka has documented 2,291 persons killed including [247 killed by state agents](#), [1188 by unidentified people](#), most of whom were buried under the orders of state agents without the least investigation, 176 during armed attacks, 82 in environmental incidents, 11 by mob justice and 149 by the settling of scores between individuals and 438 died following different reasons including infanticide, voluntary suicides, fights, self-defense, accidents, etc.

We should recall that the high number of victims of score-settling and mob justice are direct consequences of the impunity of the crimes committed.

¹These bodies have wounds or other signs of a violent death, indicating that they did not die of disease or natural causes.



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III. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH USED

Ligue Iteka publishes weekly Iteka n'Ijambo newsletters, monthly, quarterly and annual reports on the human rights and security situation which it shares with its different partners and primarily the government of Burundi and its different institutions.

This report is therefore the result of the synthesis and analysis of this information that it has already shared in its different productions on the phenomenon of bodies found and buried under the orders of local administrative officials without the least investigation. Examples to enlighten our readers on this phenomenon have been provided and the handout containing all the bodies and the description of the facts is also provided to allow our partners to better understand if necessary.

IV. SYNTHETIC ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON OF DISCOVERY OF BODIES DOCUMENTED IN BURUNDI SINCE JULY 1, 2020 TO APRIL 20, 2024

Since President Evariste NDAYISHIMIYE came to power in 2020, human rights violations have continued. In addition, the frequent phenomenon of discoveries of bodies worries many Burundians across the country.

These bodies of persons killed by unidentified people do not seem to worry Gitega regime and on the other hand, the same procedure of burying the latter without the least investigation has been adopted throughout the territory.

Given the relentlessness of Gitega regime against institutions that could publish independent reports on the human rights situation, including the United Nations special rapporteur² on Burundi, its inaction on any request for the reopening of civic space made by Burundian organizations operating from exile, and the Independent National Human Rights Commission (CNIDH) which does not dare to demand real actions despite the very worrying scale of this phenomenon, Ligue Iteka is tempted to say that it would be a disguised strategy of Gitega regime to hide these repetitive and widespread crimes.

Indeed, since July 2020 to April 20, 2024, despite the challenges linked to the above mentioned conditions Ligue Iteka is facing like other organizations or institutions working in the field of human rights in Burundi, it has documented 1188 bodies of persons killed by unidentified people and most of whom were buried immediately without the least investigation.

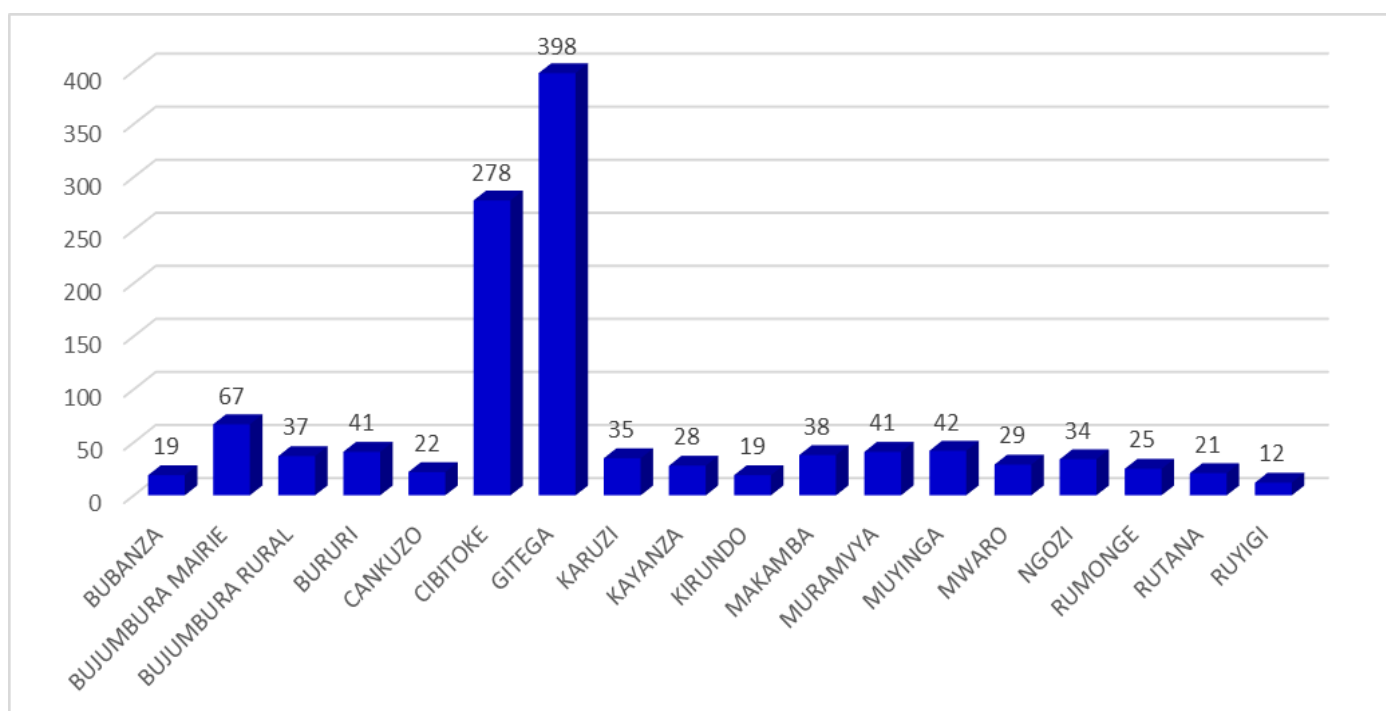
²The mandate of Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burundi was created by the Human Rights Council at its 48th session in October 2021 by resolution 48/16. Since his appointment, the Burundian Government has always refused him to travel to Burundi in order to closely monitor the human rights situation.



LIQUE BURUNDAISE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ITEKA

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◇ **An illustrative graph showing the extent of this phenomenon per province for the whole period of this term of President Evariste NDAYISHIMIYE**



As illustrated by the graph above, persons killed by unidentified people have been documented in all provinces of the country since the installation of President Evariste Ndayishimiye to power and the situation seems widespread. The provinces of Gitega and Cibitoke were the most affected with 398 and 278 cases respectively.

The very high number of victims in Gitega province is due to the fire which consumed at least 345 inmates in December 2021 at Gitega prison.

For Cibitoke province, Ligue Iteka had always alerted³ that it risks being considered a cemetery for bodies given the high number of bodies found in this province. Most of the victims were found around the Rusizi River, particularly on the riverside part of Buganda commune, sometimes tied up in two or more. In this commune, most of the bodies found were buried hastily on the orders of the communal administrator, Pamphile Hakizimana, often in collaboration with the police and members of the Imbonerakure militia. We should note that all the documented cases of persons killed by unidentified people during this period share one thing in common: absence of investigations to identify the victims and the perpetrators.

³<https://ligue-iteka.bi/wp-content/uploads//2022/09/RAPPORT-BILAN-30-JUIN-2020-AU-30-AOOUT-2022.pdf>



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Who kills all these persons whose bodies are thrown in different corners of the country into gutters, streams, rivers or lakes? Why is the burial of these bodies organized spontaneously in the same way and by the same services without the least investigation?

Burundi has the institutions capable of carrying out investigations to enlighten the national and international community on these crimes which continue to become widespread. Civil society organizations and the media have continued to alert on a phenomenon of bodies which are discovered almost across the country with a worrying extent but very unfortunately, the response of the government of Burundi is manifested through the same operating procedure: faced with a body found in any corner of the country, the local authorities give the order to "bury the body found immediately without the least investigation"».

Everywhere in the country, it is as if a national order has been given, if a body is found, the urgency is to bury it. His identity? Who assassinated him? Why was he assassinated? All these questions are not concerns of Gitega regime although it is the guarantee of the security⁴ of everyone on its territory.

On the other hand, the local administration, the security agents including those of the police, the SNR, the army and generally with the ruling party youth are all mobilized to proceed with the immediate burial of any body. Community members who dare try to report what they saw are terrorized by the local administration and security agents on site.

This example, which is not isolated, shows how it happens:

On March 26, 2024, around 7:00 a.m., on Kaguhu hill, Kabanga zone, Giheta commune, Gitega province, along Kibimba-Bugendana road, a body of Apollinaire Nduwimana, aged 45, ex- teacher at ECO-FO Gaterama, DCE Bugendana, 3 months ago, was found in a toilet of the Adventist church.

According to eyewitnesses, the victim had spent the evening in one of the bars located in Kibimba (Kwibubu) 200 meters from the palace of the President of the Republic, Evariste Ndayishimiye. Around 8:00 p.m., the victim left this bar heading to the path passing very close to the presidential palace. Passersby saw a jacket and a shirt next to a toilet behind the Adventist Church built on Kibimba-Bugendana road 1.5 km from the palace. As they approached this toilet, they saw a lot of blood next to it and a body in the toilet.

⁴ Constitution of the Republic of Burundi, article 14



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According to the same sources, Pascasie, head of the hill, was alerted as well as the surrounding population and then the Kibimba police, came to remove this body from this toilet and transported it to Kibimba hospital mortuary. The body of the deceased had many wounds on the face and in the back and the tibia of the right leg was removed. A local resident said that he saw, around 11:00 p.m., a Hilux vehicle, which came to the place and parked for almost 15 minutes, suggesting that it had broken down. Immediately, this witness was intimidated by this hill head and the police officers from the presidential palace who had come to evacuate the body, telling him that he was not before the Judicial Police Officer. The body was buried by his family on March 30, 2024, at Murayi cemetery.

The administrator of Buganda commune in Cibitoke province, Pamphile HAKIZIMANA who ordered the burial of at least 29 bodies and Gilbert MANIRAKIZA, administrator of Rugombo commune in the same province who ordered the burial of at least 19 bodies in this period of Evariste Ndayishimiye's mandate are other examples which are not isolated.

Such administrative officials have never been worried about these despicable acts of burying any body found in their constituencies without the least investigation, which suggests Ligue Iteka to think that they are implementing a pre-established plan of the regime for unknown reasons.



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V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The law guarantees the right to life. Human dignity must be respected and protected by the State and, in the event of violation, sanctions should be applied against the alleged perpetrators.

Given that the phenomenon of bodies of persons killed by unidentified people continues across the country, the inaction of the Burundian authority to stop this crime and the inhuman and deplorable practice adopted by the local administration to proceed with the burial of any body found without the least investigation, Ligue Iteka recommends the following:

To the Burundian Minister of Justice

- ⇒ To carry out investigations on the identities of the victims, the reasons for these assassinations and the perpetrators of the 1,188 bodies of persons killed by unidentified people who were found in different corners of the country and most of whom were buried under orders state agents since President Evariste NDAYISHIMIYE is on power;
- ⇒ To bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes and the state agents who ordered the burials without carrying out investigations which would even be at the origin of this increase in this phenomenon;
- ⇒ To support the families of victims to bury their loved ones with dignity and give them access to reliable information on the circumstances of the death of their loved ones

To the Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security

- ⇒ To guarantee the right to life and preserve peace and security for all;
- ⇒ To raise awareness among the local administration and security agents on the obligation to protect and carry out investigations in the event of the discovery of a body in their constituency in order to fight against impunity which is the source of repetitive crimes ;
- ⇒ To immediately stop the intimidation, pressure and harassment by some administrative officials and security agents against the population, the media, civil society organizations and any other institutions seeking to know the truth about these cases to restrict their right of expression.

⁵Constitution of the Republic of Burundi, article 21



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To the European Union and countries accredited to Burundi

- ⇒ To use their influence to force the Burundian Government to play its role of protecting and enforcing the right to life of all citizens;
- ⇒ To support organizations, institutions and human rights mechanisms operating in Burundi, in particular to shed light on cases of bodies discovered across the country.