

BURUNDIAN LIGUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS "ITEKA"

Approved by Ministerial Order n ° 530/0273 of 10 November 1994 revising Order No. 550 /029 of 6 February 1991



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Weekly bulletin « ITEKA N'IJAMBO » n°433 of the Burundian Ligue of Human Rights "ITEKA"

Week from 29 July – 4 August 2024



In memory of Madame Marie Claudette Kwizera, Treasurer of Iteka, reported missing since December 10 2015. From December 2015 to 4 August 2024, Iteka has documented at least 700 cases of enforced disappearances

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ACRONYMS

CNDD-FDD : *National Council for the Defense of Democracy*

CNL : *National Congress for Liberty*

COOPEC : *Savings and Loan Cooperative*

DRC : *Democratic Republic of Congo*

ECOFO : *Fundamental School*

GBV : *Gender Based Violation*

NIF : *Tax Identification Number*

OBM : *Burundi Mine Board*

UPRONA : *Union for National Progress*

WHO : *World Health Organization*

0. INTRODUCTION

This bulletin covers the health, governance, economic and security context that marked this period. It also deals with civil and political rights as well as categorical rights and ends with a conclusion.

Therefore, over this reporting period, the human rights and security situation was reported as follows: at least 7 persons killed, including 2 found dead and 2 victims of GBV. The victims included one soldier, one minor and a newborn.

Imbonerakure, administration officials and police officers are singled out as the alleged perpetrators of most of these human rights violations and assassinations.

1. HEALTH, GOVERNANCE, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONTEXT

1.1. HEALTH CONTEXT

Threat of monkeypox epidemic in Burundi

In a press release dated July 29, 2024, the Burundian Ministry of Public Health and Fight against AIDS announced the presence of a monkeypox epidemic in Burundi.

The disease, whose symptoms include fever, headache, backache, cough, throat abscess, joint pain, rash and swollen lymph nodes, is highly contagious and deadly, and has already spread across the country. According to the Ministry of Health spokesman, 22 cases had already been recorded up to August 1, 2024. A case of a deceased person with symptoms very similar to those of this epidemic was recorded in Bururi province on July 7, 2024.

As a preventive measure against this disease, the Ministry of Health has issued communiqués on precautionary measures to be taken, including regular hand-washing with soap and water or alcohol-based disinfectants, and avoiding contact with people showing signs of this epidemic.

In view of the seriousness and presence of this epidemic at regional level, on July 29, 2024, the Secretariat of the East African Community called on member states to sensitize their citizens on how to protect themselves and prevent the spread of monkeypox.

This communiqué follows WHO reports that the monkeypox epidemic is raging in Burundi and the DRC.

Considering the seriousness of this epidemic, the Burundian government, in particular the Burundian Ministry of Public Health and AIDS Control, and its health partners should take urgent measures to eradicate this disease, in particular by setting up screening and quarantine centers for suspected cases, mass screening sites and specific intensive treatment centers.

Blood shortage at the regional blood transfusion center in Bururi province

Since July 22, 2024, public and private hospitals in the south of the country (Makamba, Bururi, Rumonge and Rutana) have been experiencing a shortage of blood in stocks at Bururi regional blood transfusion center. Health professionals from the provinces of Bururi, Makamba, Rutana and Rumonge, who buy blood from the regional blood transfusion center, explain that anemic patients are unable to obtain blood for transfusion. Although they do not specify the number of people who have already died due to the lack of blood, they do explain that there have already been casualties in some health facilities.

At Makamba hospital, employees who requested anonymity told us that there are several cases of women who have given birth, children and other anemia sufferers who have not get blood.

Health officials are warning that the number of victims could exceed the current number if nothing is done immediately.

These health professionals are asking the national blood transfusion center to take precautions to prevent blood shortages during the student vacation period.

1.2. GOVERNANCE

Night and anticipated campaign, paralysis of other activities in Cankuzo province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on July 29, 2024 indicates that on July 22, 2024, at around 4 p.m., Révérien Ndikuriyo, General Secretary of CNDD-FDD party, arrived in Cankuzo province. On arrival, he was greeted a kilometer away by party officials, CNDD-FDD party members, party children commonly known as "*Ibiswi vy'inkona*" - *the eaglets* - and Imbonerakure youth. Marches, races and dances were organized to welcome the party's General Secretary. According to eyewitnesses, they chanted "*uragahora ku ngoma*", literally translated as "*stay in power*". All activities and services were suspended by the administrative authorities, and police officers forced the population to welcome him. Even motorcycle and bicycle cab drivers were forced to suspend their activities. Markets, restaurants and shops were closed. During the night of July 22, 2024, Révérien Ndikuriyo held a meeting on Gasenyi sub-hill, Camazi zone, Gisagara commune, Cankuzo province, attended by children commonly known as *ibiswi vy'inkona*, women of the party commonly known as *abakenyererarugamba*, young Imbonerakure and other members. On his return to Cankuzo center, activities were suspended throughout the commune of Gisagara from the morning until 9.30 a.m., and the population was forced to line up along the road to applaud him passing.

According to the same sources, on July 23, 2024, from around 2 a.m. until dawn, the Imbonerakure ran and sang CNDD-FDD party songs in the streets, heading to Buhumuza stadium, where Révérien Ndikuriyo held a meeting at around 5 a.m. for party members, including men, women, young people and children. The meeting was also attended by party executives and provincial authorities such as Gérard Barutwanayo, provincial secretary of CNDD-FDD party, Boniface Banyiyezako, provincial governor, Jeanne Hakizimana, provincial director of education, Melchiade Ntahondereye, provincial director of the environment, agriculture and livestock, and Chantal Irakoze, communal administrator.

The mobilization to welcome Révérien Ndikuriyo took place on July 21, 2024. Gabriel Toyi, provincial coordinator of the commission in charge of disarmament, small arms and light weapons among the population, moved a vehicle of Cankuzo hospital around Cankuzo town, especially around the market and in the quarters, passing messages through loudspeakers, insisting on punctuality and the massive participation of the population.

1.3. ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Abusive exploitation of gold in Cankuzo province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on July 30, 2024 indicates that in Cankuzo province, cooperatives are abusively exploiting gold, exceeding the limits set by the OBM up to the populations' properties. This is *Terimbere Rutoke* cooperative with Tax Identification Number 40023052295 and SC002295/23 as Trade Register exploiting gold at Nyarwana I site since January 22, 2024 and chaired by Senga Aflexon Léon; Mahango Rwizumwimbu cooperative, with NIF 4002309468 and SC002297/23 as Trade Register number which has been mining gold at Mahango I site since January 22, 2024, whose president is Marianne Kanyange; Dufatane munda Buhumuza cooperative, NIF: 4002028019 and Trade Register SC01510/2022 since July 21, 2022 headed by Kangere Sefu and Cankuzo mining cooperative which has been mining gold in Rutoke and represented by Manirambona Jean Luc.

According to the same sources, Boniface Banyiyezako, Governor of the aforesaid province suspended all gold mining activities in this disputed area and sent his advisor Ferdinand Birahanyi in charge of development to make the report on July 31, 2024. He returned on August 1, 2024 to visit these places in the presence of the owners of the land concerned and the hill head of this area. These sites remained closed while waiting for the OBM delegation to enlighten the administration in resolving the disputes.

1.4. SECURITY CONTEXT

1.4.1. PERSONS KILLED BY UNIDENTIFIED PEOPLE

A body in Kayanza commune and province

On August 1, 2024, around 8 a.m., on Kirema hill, Kayanza commune and province, Paul Kandusha, aged 38, was found dead in his house where he lived alone. According to sources on site, the night before, he was with his friends drinking the very alcoholic drink called "Dodo Liqueur" and came home drunk. According to the same sources, his friend nicknamed Cigumije came to pick him up the next day and found the door of his house locked from inside. He then called the Busimbo hill head, Diomède who upon his arrival ordered the door to be broken down and they found Paul's body lying on his bed. The burial took place the same day on the orders of the communal administrator, Godefroid.

One person killed in Murwi commune, Cibitoke province

On July 31, 2024, on Rwiri sub-hill of Remera hill, Buhayira zone, Murwi commune, Cibitoke province, Samuel Kabuye, aged 71, farmer and breeder, was beheaded with a machete by unidentified criminals. Six alleged perpetrators including Juvénal Sinamuziga, cow seller; Charles Ikundabayo, cow seller; Aloys Bucumi, cow seller; Gérard Buhungu, cow seller; Jean Claude Nduwayezu, Imbonerakure and Paul Ngendahabonimana, Imbonerakure were arrested by the police for investigation purposes. According to Samuel Ndarushimana, Remera hill head of Buhayira zone, Murwi commune, Cibitoke province, the deceased who was in possession of a sum of 4 million BIF was going to Ndora market, Buhinyanya commune to buy a cow when he was intercepted en route by bandits who decapitated him before stealing his money which was in his bag. This local administrative authority reassured the angry inhabitants of this hill while awaiting the outcome of the investigations already initiated by the judicial police while the victim's family and neighbors requested a very thorough investigation to clarify the reasons and the perpetrators of this murder.

A body found in Mutimbuzi commune, Bujumbura province

On July 29, 2024, in Muzazi River, on Maramvya hill, Mutimbuzi commune, Bujumbura province, a body of an unidentified person was found by people passing by this river. According to witnesses, they fished him out of the water and put him next to it. The victim's body had wounds and traces of a rope at the throat, which led people to think that he had been strangled. Albert Hakizimana, Maramvya zone head, in collaboration with the local administration, took this body to the mortuary of Maramvya hospital in the communal vehicle before burying it the next day in the cemetery.

1.4.2. PERSONS KILLED FOLLOWING SETTLING OF SCORE

A person killed in Gashikanwa commune, Ngozi province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on July 29, 2024 indicates that on July 28, 2024, around 8 p.m., on Gatare hill, Gashikanwa zone and commune, Ngozi province, Dominique Habimfura, aged 40, was killed by his son, Maurice Niyorugira, aged 20, using a club. According to witnesses, the perpetrator of the crime fought with his father after refusing to take a girl to a family home. The same witnesses added that Maurice Niyorugira took a club and hit his father on the head and he lost consciousness. The victim was

evacuated to Nyakabanda health center located in Tangara commune where he died. Local sources indicated that the alleged perpetrator was in the habit of consuming prohibited drinks. The alleged perpetrator of the murder escaped but was arrested by the police in a family where he was hiding in Gashikanwa commune, on the evening of July 29, 2024 and he was transferred to Ngozi. The case is at the Prosecutor's Office.

A member of CNL party succumbed to his injuries in Cankuzo commune and province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on July 29, 2024 indicates that on July 27, 2024, around 8 a.m., in the emergency department at Cankuzo hospital, in Cankuzo province, Dieudonné Kazobagenda, a member of CNL party, married and father of 4 children, aged about 33, residing in Nyaruramba quarter, Cankuzo hill and commune, succumbed to his injuries. According to eyewitnesses, the cause of his death was that he was hit by his neighbor, Patrice Barankanuriye, a retired soldier, after Dieudonné slapped Patrice. They had fought the day before near a public tap near the cabarets. According to neighbors, Patrice had fought back using a stick that the victim had on him and each went home after the fight. The victim was evacuated to hospital at night in critical condition. The alleged perpetrator was arrested and taken to the provincial police station cell. According to police sources, Dieudonné had injuries to his forehead and neck but he had also fought in another bar in Cogo trading center where he had drunk drinks called Kick and Hana.

A minor killed in Mwumba commune, Ngozi province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on July 29, 2024 indicates that on July 25, 2024, on Gatsinda hill and zone, Mwumba commune, Ngozi province, Janvier Hakizimana, aged 15, was killed by Vyansekeje, aged 70, member of CNDD-FDD party, farmer. According to sources on site, the child was looking for grass for a cattle on the property of the alleged perpetrator and was beaten with a stick by the plot owner. The victim died immediately. The alleged perpetrator was arrested and taken to the police cell in Mwumba.

1.4.3. OTHER SECURITY INCIDENTS

Grumblings among trainers and candidate census agents in Burunga province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on July 29, 2024 indicates that since July 25, 2024, in Makamba commune, grouping 3 communes, namely Makamba, Kayogoro and Kibago, a training course for trainers and candidate census agents for the 2024 general census scheduled from August 16, 2024 to September 9, 2024 has been held.

According to sources on site, candidates and census agents contacted indicated that during this training they faced difficulties with catering and accommodation because many of them come from the former communes of Makamba province, dozens of kilometers from home, while all are unemployed. In addition, since the beginning of the training, they have not benefited from travel expenses while it was planned to distribute 10 thousand francs for this purpose. However, the latter are entitled to a lunch break and a bottle of water per person and per day, which means that most of them work hungry and had requested that they be accommodated at Makamba excellence school but their request did not receive a satisfactory response. At the Central Census Office, they say that there is no amount provided for the training and that travel expenses will be refunded after the training and that any payment will be made via an account opened at COOPEC or the National Post Office.

II. CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Burundi is one of the countries adhering to the international covenant on civil and political rights (1965) and its optional protocol (1976) without any reservation on May 9, 1990, which as part of its implementation, Burundi took measures in domestic legislation in particular in its constitution of June 7, 2018 (Main Law) in its article 19 which guarantees that all the rights proclaimed and guaranteed by regularly ratified international texts are an integral part of this constitution, implementing texts are put in place, namely the penal code of December 29, 2017 and the criminal procedure code of May 11, 2018 and other institutions for the protection of human rights in Burundi have been created.

II.1. THE RIGHT TO PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

II.1.1. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Law on Gender-Based Violence adopted in Burundi in 2016 constituted a major step forward. It guaranteed better protection, notably by providing a definition of rape that took into account the question of consent and by prohibiting harmful traditional practices.

A child raped in Kayanza commune and province.

Information received by Ligue Iteka on August 1, 2024 indicates that on July 16, 2024, at night, on Musave hill, Kayanza commune and province, H. N, aged 7, was raped by an unidentified man. According to the victim, he was sleeping with Donat Kubwayo, his mother-in-law, and a man came into the room wearing a long jacket and raped the child. The child cried for help but her mother-in-law did not move an inch to save the child. According to the same victim, the man went out after the crime. The next day, the mother-in-law intimidated the child to keep quiet but as the victim was in a lot of pain, she called her mother who took her to Kayanza hospital for medical care. The medicines were delivered for the protection of the child but the mother was short of 30,000 Bif to pay the medical bill. Having had no testimony from the mother-in-law, and other evidence on this rape, the child's mother remains confused to go and file a complaint because she suspects the mother-in-law of complicity and knows the alleged perpetrator.

A child raped in Kayanza commune and province

On July 31, 2024, on Gati sub-hill, Musave hill, Kayanza commune and province, D. A, aged 4, a school-girl in 2nd kindergarten at ECOFO Rwesero, was raped by Mbonimpa, married, a coal trader in Kayanza town near the UPRONA monument. According to the victim's parents, the perpetrator of the rape deceived the victim into accompanying him home to give her something to eat and he brought her into his room and raped her. The victim revealed it to her parents who took the child to a health facility and medical examinations confirmed this rape. The next day, the parents filed a complaint with Isaac Ningabira, Public Prosecutor of Kayanza and Mbonimpa was arrested by police officers. On August 2, 2024, the victim's parents were surprised to see Mbonimpa, his wife and their friends celebrating that he was released. The victim's parents add that they were summoned by the public prosecutor in Kayanza who told them that the victim's perpetrator is not male. Mbonimpa's neighbors say that he keeps being caught with other people's wives and that he is released after giving a sum of money no less than 500,000 BIF.

III. CATEGORICAL RIGHTS

III.1. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

A newborn baby killed in Rutegama commune, Muramvya province

On August 1, 2024, on Bupfunda hill, Rutegama commune, Muramvya province, a newborn was killed by her mother, Audrey Akimana, aged 24, a farmer, member of the CNDD-FDD party Women's League on her Mushikamo native hill, when she had just given birth. According to sources on site, she had left home on July 30, 2024 to go to her paternal aunt, Mathilde Gahwekazi, where she had spent two days. When she tried to return to her parents on August 1, 2024, her aunt saw that the dress she was wearing was wet. She asked her what it was and the girl confessed the facts and showed her where she had left the dead baby in a banana plantation. According to the same sources, the newborn's body was wrapped in a piece of loincloth and had wounds on the throat. The hill head, Juvent Barikore, took this girl to the police station cell in Rutegama. The newborn's body was buried the same day at Bupfunda cemetery with the permission of the girl's parents who were themselves present.

A child injured in Bukemba commune, Rutana province

On July 29, 2024, on Gihofi hill, Bukemba commune, Rutana province, Onille Irishura, aged 6, was beaten until his arm was broken by his mother, Espérance Bigirimana, a divorced farmer. According to eyewitnesses, the cause of this incident was not known and the child received first aid while waiting for the arm to deflate in order to give him medical care for this fracture.

IV. CONCLUSION

Ligue Iteka notes a continued deterioration of human rights situation across the country.

It protests against the impunity of the crimes observed and asks the Minister of Justice to ensure the strict application of the law against the perpetrators of the crimes.