

BURUNDIAN LIGUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS "ITEKA"

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Weekly bulletin « ITEKA N'IJAMBO » n°442 of the Burundian Ligue of Human Rights "ITEKA"

Week from 30 September au 6 octobre 2024



In memory of Madam Marie Claudette Kwizera, Treasurer of Iteka, reported missing since December 10 2015. From December 2015 to 6 October 2024, Iteka has documented at least 706 cases of enforced disappearances

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ACRONYMS

BRB	: <i>Bank of the Republic of Burundi</i>
BUCECO	: <i>Burundi Cement Company</i>
CDP	: <i>Council of Patriots</i>
CDS	: <i>Health Center</i>
CNDD-FDD	: <i>National Council for the Defense of Democracy</i>
CNL	: <i>National Congress for Liberty</i>
ECOFO	: <i>Fundamental School</i>
FDLR	: <i>Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda</i>
FNL	: <i>National Liberation Forces</i>
GBV	: <i>Gender Based Violence</i>
OPJ	: <i>Judiciary Police Officer</i>
UPRONA	: <i>Union for National Progress</i>

0. INTRODUCTION

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

Thus, during this reporting period, the human rights and security situation was reported as follows: at least 6 people killed, 3 of whom were found dead, and 6 victims of GBV.

Among the victims are a woman killed, two children who succumbed to their injuries, a police officer killed, a case of infanticide and 1 child victim of human trafficking.

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

1. POLITICAL, JUSTICE, GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY CONTEXT

1.1. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Call for voluntary contributions for the 2025 elections in Burundi

On October 4, 2024, the Ministry of Interior, Community Development and Public Security issued a press release calling on Burundians to voluntarily contribute for the 2025 elections.

In this communication, it was indicated that preparations for the 2025 elections are at an advanced stage. All electoral partners are working to ensure that this activity takes place without any hindrance.

He further added that following continuous requests from citizens to participate in the organization of these elections through voluntary contributions for this noble cause, the Government of Burundi has opened two accounts at the BRB whose numbers are 03104582377 in BIF and 02104583810 in foreign currencies respectively entitled "contribution to the 2025 elections".

The Ministry of Interior, Community Development and Public Security specified in its press release that this contribution to the elections is not mandatory.

In addition, in this press release, there was no clarification on an amount required to contribute as was the case for the 2020 elections where two Burundian ministers of Interior and Finance had presented a joint order that established this contribution. A farmer had to contribute 2,000 BIF per year and a student or a pupil (secondary school) of voting age (18 years old) 1,000 BIF per year. For civil servants, a variable amount according to their income was deducted at source each month for two years, from January 2018 to the end of December 2019.

However, it is an open secret that contributions for the 2025 elections are forced¹. Members of CNDD-FDD party collect funds from the population, often in a coercive manner. The amounts requested vary depending on the social category and economic status of the taxpayers.

1.2. JUSTICE CONTEXT

Recurrent violation of the right of access to health of detainees in Burundian prisons

The situation of detainees in Burundi, particularly with regard to their right to health, is critical and requires urgent attention. Systematic violations of these rights lead to tragic consequences for detainees, including deaths.

¹https://ligue-iteka.bi/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/CONTRIBUTIONS_FORCEES_ELECTIONS_2025.pdf

Prisons in Burundi are often overcrowded and under-resourced. Detainees live in unsanitary conditions, which contributes to the deterioration of their physical and mental health. Lack of access to adequate medical care is a recurring problem.

The death of Joseph Nzigamasabo in Bubanza prison on 2 October 2024 illustrates serious problems in Burundi regarding the violation of the rights of detainees in general and the right of access to health in particular. For months, Joseph Nzigamasabo had been seeking adequate medical care for a severe lung condition, but his requests were ignored by the prison administration.

Medical neglect is also a major concern. Inmates often suffer from untreated illnesses and conditions that could be treated in an appropriate setting. In Nzigamasabo's case, his death was due to prolonged medical neglect coupled with the willingness of Bubanza prison director Samuel Kayanda to keep the patient in prison despite his very serious health condition.

Joseph Nzigamasabo's death highlights serious problems within the Burundian prison system. Imperative and concrete measures are needed to prevent such tragedies from happening again and to ensure that all inmates have access to appropriate health care and humane treatment.

It should be noted that Ligue Iteka has reported two cases of inmates who died in prison. This is the case of Edith Nizigama² who died on January 1, 2024 in Mpimba prison following an asthma illness, due to lack of appropriate care and that of Antoine Nimpagaritse³ who died in Bururi prison on January 24, 2024, the CDS manager of this prison having refused to grant him a transfer for treatment at Bururi hospital.

1.3. GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

An administrative official imprisoned in Cibitoke provincial cell

On September 30, 2024, Patrick Icoyitungiye, technical advisor in charge of development of Rugombo commune, Cibitoke province, was arrested and imprisoned in the provincial police station cell. He was accused of having celebrated a marriage outside the civil registry offices, in a reception room and not in a civil registry office without having the necessary skills to preside over the ceremony, which are reserved for the advisor in charge of administrative and social affairs, which is contrary to the law. The inhabitants of the locality are irritated by this violation of the norms: the groom wore a karate kimono and made demonstrations of force, which was considered a serious breach. A professional of the Burundian civil code indicates that the marriage celebrated outside the civil registry offices has no legal force and must be cancelled.

Administrators advised Patrick Icoyitungiye not to celebrate the marriage, but in vain. The governor of Cibitoke, Carême Bizoza, let the judiciary take charge of the case. A magistrate considered the arrest abusive, because the civil code does not provide for this case, and requested the unconditional release of Patrick Icoyitungiye.

1.4. SECURITY CONTEXT

1.4.1. PERSONS KILLED BY UNIDENTIFIED PEOPLE

A woman killed in Buhiga commune, Karuzi province

On September 30, 2024, around 8 p.m., on Gasenyi hill, Rutonganikwa zone, Buhiga commune, Karuzi province, Spès Fureka, aged 69, a member of CNDD-FDD, was killed with machetes to the head and neck by unidentified people.

²<https://ligue-iteka.bi/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Bulletin-ITEKA-N-IJAMBO-403.pdf>

³<https://ligue-iteka.bi/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Bulletin-ITEKA-N-IJAMBO-406.pdf>

According to the neighbors, she had no disputes with anyone and had spent the day with her husband at Gasenyi trading center quenching thirst. The husband left shortly before but he waited for his wife but in vain. Her body was seen by the children who were going to school. But according to another close source, the deceased was accused of bewitchment in the neighborhood and they did not want to reveal the secret of the murder even though they knew it quite well. Investigations are ongoing according to the same sources but no one has been arrested. The victim was buried on October 1, 2024 in the cemetery of this hill.

A body found in Mukaza commune, Bujumbura Mairie

On October 3, 2024, at the 1st avenue of Buyenzi zone, Mukaza commune in Bujumbura Marie, around 8 am, a body of an unidentified man in his thirties was discovered under a plank bridge of the ARESHE church.

According to sources on site, the victim's body had no injuries, which suggests that he was strangled elsewhere before being taken to this locality and Sefu Niyonkuru, head of Buyenzi zone, ordered that this body be taken to the mortuary of Prince Régent Charles hospital.

Police Officer killed in Rutana commune and province

On October 4, 2024, at around 8 p.m., near Musanzaza River, in the locality commonly called Kigarama, on Rutana-Gitega road, in Rutana commune and province, Bukuru, aged 47, a police officer working at Rutana communal police station, was arrested and killed by unidentified people as he was returning home on a motorbike, on Ngoma hill and zone, Musongati commune, Rutana province. According to sources on site, the motorbike was found next to the body. The body was found at the roadside and taken to the mortuary of Rutana hospital.

1.4.2. OTHER SECURITY INCIDENTS

Two children dead and two others injured in Mutambu commune, Bujumbura province

On 3 October 2024, at around 9 a.m., on Gomvyi hill, in Mutambu commune, Bujumbura province, very close to the communal meeting room, Joab Amiel Igiraneza, aged 4; Shalom Nishimwe, aged 4; Ismaël Manirumva, aged 10 and a 4th grade student; Kenny Mervin Irumva, aged 9 and a 3rd grade student; all natives and residents of the said hill played with a Chinese brand offensive grenade in good condition given its remains, while trying to break it with a stone and exploded injuring all four. According to sources on site, the 4 victims were evacuated to the health center of Karinzi Catholic parish located in Mutambu commune where Joab Amiel Igiraneza and Shalom Nishimwe succumbed to their injuries.

This grenade would be brought by one of the children of Fabien Havyarimana, a former FNL fighter but who later joined CNDD-FDD.

This child who would have brought this grenade would have found it in their house and he narrowly escaped this incident. Administrative and security authorities do not want the origin of this grenade to be clarified.

Seventeen people injured by rain mixed with violent wind, in Giharo commune, Rutana province

A natural disaster in Kabingo, Rutana on October 2, 2024, between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m., a violent storm accompanied by rain hit Kabingo hill, Butezi zone, Giharo commune, Rutana province. The material and human damage recorded include:

⇒ More than 300 houses were demolished by the storm;

⇒ 17 people were injured, including 3 women and 14 children. The injuries were caused by the collapse of the walls of the damaged houses. Investigations have started by the authorities to assess the human and material damage. The communal hospital received the injured people for medical care. According to sources on site, the local authorities are mobilizing resources to help the victims. The inhabitants of the affected area are waiting for humanitarian aid to rebuild their homes and find a safe environment.

This natural disaster has caused significant damage and affected the lives of many residents of the region. The efforts of the authorities and humanitarian organizations are necessary to help the victims overcome this trouble.

Houses destroyed in Kayanza commune and province

As of October 1, 2024, around the afternoon, on Magamba hill, Kayanza commune and province, the inhabitants of thirteen households of Batwa community of Magamba site are homeless. According to sources on site, they are victims of heavy rains mixed with strong winds that hit the locality and destroyed their homes, where other houses had their roofs blown away by these strong winds. According to Godefroid Niyoyizigiye, communal administrator, the administration is currently inventorying the damage in order to aid the victims as soon as possible.

A house burned in Gisuru commune, Ruyigi province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 2, 2024 indicates that on September 10, 2024, on Nyabitaka hill, Nyabitare zone, Gisuru commune, the house of the family of Ernest Manirakiza and Ephémie Manirakiza, repatriated in 2020 from Tanzania, was burned by an unidentified person and all their property was ravaged by fire. According to sources on site, two people were arrested for investigation purposes.

Three houses burned in Cendajuru commune, Cankuzo province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 2, 2024 indicates that on September 22, 2024, on Ru-koyoyo hill, Cendajuru commune, Cankuzo province, three houses were burned by unidentified persons. According to police sources, investigations have started to identify and punish the perpetrators.

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. RIGHT TO PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

II.1.1. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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

A young girl raped in Muramvya commune and province

On October 6, 2024, Ligue Iteka received information about a rape that occurred on September 29, 2024, around 3 p.m., on Burambana hill. A 16-year-old girl, C. M., a domestic worker at Célestin Nindaba, was raped by Pierre Ndayisaba, 28, a neighboring domestic worker and member of Imbonerakure youth militia. According to eyewitnesses, the victim had returned from mass at Muramvya parish with Ndayisaba. Arriving at "Kukayaga" bar in Burambana, Ndayisaba offered the victim a drink, who accepted. They drank an alcoholic beer called "Savana". The victim lost consciousness from the alcohol, and Ndayisaba took her to a toilet where he raped her. Witnesses heard screams and intervened, but Ndayisaba fled, leaving his jacket at the bar. The victim's boss was alerted, arrived on the scene and took the victim to Muramvya hospital for medical examinations. Hospital sources indicate that medical tests confirmed the rape. Pierre Ndayisaba was arrested on October 4, 2024 at Bugarama trading center by OPJ Janvier Niyorugira and he was taken to the police station cell in Muramvya.

A girl raped in Rumonge commune and province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 2, 2024 indicates that on September 25, 2024, around 2 p.m., on Kanenge hill, Rumonge commune and province, R. B. A, aged 5, was raped by Dismas Mvuyekure, a goat herder who had taken her to his house and committed the crime. According to sources on site, the alleged perpetrator was arrested the same day and taken to Rumonge police station cell. The victim was taken to Humura center for care.

A girl raped in Isare commune, Bujumbura province

On September 20, 2024, on Caranka hill, Isare commune, Bujumbura province, K. N. aged 15, was raped by Déo Claude Ndayikeza. According to the victim, she was looking for cattle grass in the field near his house and the alleged perpetrator came and raped her. The child did not hide what happened to him, he told his parents everything. The alleged perpetrator was arrested by the police, he is currently imprisoned in Kabezi while waiting to be transferred to Mpimba prison and the victim was taken to Seruka center for medical care.

A woman with part of her genitals amputated in Ruyigi commune and province

On September 30, 2024, G. H., a resident of Gasanda quarter, in Ruyigi commune and province, aged 35, cohabited with Gérard Bukuru, from Cibitoke province, an ore miner at Kazimya site, in Ruyigi commune and province. After the act, Gérard Bukuru amputated part of G.H.'s genitals for obscure beliefs related to his mining job. According to sources on site, the victim was taken to Ruyigi Health District Hospital for medical care.

A woman beaten by her husband in Ruyigi commune and province

On September 3, 2024, C. N., aged 41, living in Sanzu quarter, in Ruyigi commune and province, a teacher at ECOFO Nyamutobo, was beaten by her husband. According to sources on site, was surprised by her husband, H.E., an agent of Interbank Bank, Ruyigi branch, in the room of the head of the Interbank Ruyigi branch named L.

After being caught red-handed by her husband, C. N. was beaten up by the latter and was taken to one of the hospitals in Bujumbura for medical treatment while the named L. took off.

A little girl raped in Bugendana commune, Gitega province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 2, 2024 indicates that on September 29, 2024, around 9 p.m., on Runyeri hill, Bugendana commune, Gitega province, N.U., a 3-year-old girl was raped by Fabien Ngendakuma, aged 36, married and a farmer, a neighbor of the victim's parents. According to

sources on site, the child came into the house around 9 p.m. crying, her mother asked her why she was crying and the child replied that Fabien had just done vile things to her in her private parts. The next morning, the parents transported the victim to Cunya hospital for first aid and then to OPJ Gilbert in Bugendana to file the complaints.

According to police sources, the alleged perpetrator was arrested in Bujumbura on October 3, 2024 and is being jailed at Ngagara police station and it is expected that this alleged perpetrator will be taken to Bugendana cell so that his case can be prepared against him and then transferred to Gitega.

II.2. RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

Ban on political party meetings in Vugizo commune, Makamba province

On October 2, 2024, Ligue Iteka received information that Diomède Dusengimana, administrator of Vugizo commune, banned a meeting of CDP political party that was scheduled for September 28, 2024. According to sources within this party, the administrator had initially requested the list of members of the hill committees to authorize the meeting. The CDP leader provided the lists, but Dusengimana demanded the contact details of all members, which was impossible because many do not have telephones. The meeting was banned at the last minute for political reasons.

CDP leaders consider this decision as an attempt to intimidate their party activists, which recently welcomed new members, including former CNDD-FDD members. Administrator Dusengimana demanded the replacement of CDP communal leader, Noël, to authorize future meetings. It should be noted that this is the second time that CDP party has been prevented from holding a meeting in Vugizo. UPRONA party was also prevented from holding a meeting in the same region a few months ago.

III. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Lack of corn seeds in the northern provinces of Burundi

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 3, 2024 indicates that in the provinces of the country, there was the sale of corn seeds for this cropping season but no one received more than two kilos while there are families who need more than 20kg.

For example:

In Karuzi province, the administration sold selected corn seeds called Pan 53 in all the hills where each hill received 300 kg, that is to say that each household should receive 2 kg, but this quantity is very insufficient so that there are households who have divided a sachet in two per household. To calm their minds, the administration promised them to bring another batch later. But incessant lamentations are still circulating.

In Muyinga province, farmers are lamenting the lack of Pan 53 maize seeds, which are very profitable although not renewable for the following season, while season A is halfway through. The State, which usually imported its Pan 53 seeds, only sells two kg per household without considering the cultivated area. Farmers say that there are some who have more than one hectare, therefore need more than 20 kg, but do not see where to find these seeds. The administration and the provincial director of agriculture say that we must return to traditional seeds.

Muyinga commune received only 8,000 kg while it has 50 hills. If we share fairly, each hill would receive 160 kg divided by 2 kg, only 80 households per hill will have 2 kg of maize seeds.

BUCECO Cement price rise

BUCECO cement price rise: consumers blame the public administration and the ruling party

On October 3, 2024, Ligue Iteka received alarming information about the spike in BUCECO cement prices, which has reached an unprecedented level. Residents speak of a critical situation where September 2024 was the record month for price spikes. Consumers accuse the public administration and CNDD-FDD party of being involved in the fraudulent trade of some products, including cement and fuel.

Illustrative case: Cement delivery to Mugina

On September 9, 2024, a batch of 735 bags of cement was delivered by BUCECO to Mugina, after two months of shortage. A second batch of 735 bags was expected on September 14, 2024, but it only benefited influential members of the ruling party. As for the exorbitant price: cement is officially sold at 45,000 BIF, but it is bought at 75,000 BIF or even 80,000 BIF. The population denounces this situation and accuses the authorities of complicity. Consumers are asking higher authorities, including the President of the Republic, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Commerce, to set up institutions that defend the well-being of the population and do not get involved in trade. This situation raises concerns about transparency and the management of public resources in Burundi.

IV. CATEGORICAL RIGHTS

IV.1. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

A newborn killed in Buyengero commune, Rumonge province

On October 4, 2024, Ligue Iteka received information about a case of infanticide that occurred on September 25, 2024, on Gasenyi hill, Buyengero commune, Rumonge province. Thierryve Nyandwi, 22, killed her newborn daughter. According to neighbors, she threw the body in the toilet, then removed it and buried it behind the house. The administration and the police ordered the exhumation of the body. The people who carried out the burial took Thierryve Nyandwi to Muyama hospital for emergency care, because the womb was still inside.

She is currently under police guard at the hospital, awaiting her recovery and the transfer of the case to Rumonge police station. The case is currently under investigation. The reasons for the murder and the exact circumstances of the event will be established by the competent authorities. This case raises concerns about the mental health and social conditions of young mothers in Burundi.

A child found in Mubimbi commune, Bujumbura province

On 17 September 2024, on Mageyo hill, Mubimbi commune, Bujumbura province, Jean Ndiwokubwayo, aged 13, was found on the said hill. According to an eyewitness, this child indicates that two weeks ago he was recruited by Sébastien Minani and brought him to Bujumbura. He comes from Hahiro hill, Muta-ho commune, Gitega province, the recruiter is a domestic worker in Kanyosha, Gisyo quarter, Muha commune, Bujumbura mairie. They took a bus, arrived in Kanyosha, he found that he is unable to do all the work he was assigned and decided to walk back home. At the moment, he is in Mageyo, Mubimbi commune, Bujumbura province.

V. CONCLUSION

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

It protests against the impunity of the crimes observed and demands:

- ⇒ The Minister of Justice to ensure compliance with the law against the perpetrators of crimes;
- ⇒ The Minister of the Interior, Community Development and Public Security to inclusively guarantee public rights and freedoms to all Burundian citizens.