

BURUNDIAN LIGUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS "ITEKA"

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Week from 21-27 october 2024



In memory of Madam Marie Claudette Kwizera, Treasurer of Iteka, reported missing since December 10 2015. From December 2015 to 27 October 2024, Iteka has documented at least 709 cases of enforced disappearances

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ACRONYMS

CDS	: <i>Health Center</i>
CECI	: <i>Independent Communal Electoral Commission</i>
CENI	: <i>Independent Provincial Electoral Commission</i>
CNDD-FDD	: <i>National Council for the Defense of Democracy</i>
CNL	: <i>National Congress for Liberty</i>
COTEBU	: <i>Bujumbura Textile Complex</i>
ECOFO	: <i>Fundamental School</i>
FRODEBU	: <i>Front for Democracy in Burundi</i>
GBV	: <i>Gender Based Violence</i>
OPJ	: <i>Judiciary Police Officer</i>
REGIDESO	: <i>Water Distribution Company</i>
SNR	: <i>Intelligence Service at the service</i>
TGI	: <i>High Court</i>
UPRONA	: <i>Union for National Progress</i>

0. INTRODUCTION

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

Thus, during this reporting period of this bulletin, the human rights and security situation was reported as follows: at least 5 persons killed including 3 killed by police officers, 1 killed by Imbonerakure and 1 found dead, 2 victims of GBV, 1 tortured, 1 abducted and 3 victims of arbitrary arrest. Among the victims are 2 women killed.

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

I. POLITICAL, JUDICIAL, GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY CONTEXT

I.1. POLITICAL CONTEXT

Forced registration for the 2025 elections in Burundi

In the electoral calendar presented by CENI on October 15, 2024, the voter registration period was set from October 22 to 31, 2024.

However, although the registration for the 2025 elections is voluntary, messages forcing the population to register have multiplied. Impulsive communiqués from the communal administrators of Kabezi in Bujumbura province and Buyengero in Rumonge province, issued on October 24 and 25, 2024, respectively, indicated that registration is an obligation rather than a right and that anyone who does not register will no longer have access to the services from the commune at all levels.

This compulsory nature of the voter registration has been observed in other provinces, namely in Kirundo, Karuzi, Mwaro and Kayanza. Young members of Imbonerakure militia have been active in different places in these provinces. These young Imbonerakure have been positioned at the entrances to markets and schools to check whether everyone has the registration receipt. In some communes, Imbonerakure have been deployed on all the hills to force those who were in the fields to go and register.

In the education sector, the Minister of National Education and Scientific Research has set the tone. In his letter of October 25, 2024, he instructed school officials to facilitate the enrollment of staff and students of voting age for the 2025 elections.

Clearly, some have noted a general lack of enthusiasm among the population for enrollment for the 2025 elections.

Indeed, over the years, the Burundian population has gradually experienced disillusionment with the elections since their vote did not have the expected impact on improving their socio-economic conditions.

Also, the restriction of civic and political space, including the repression of opponents, has had a major influence on the lack of interest in enrolling for the elections. The political climate in Burundi has been marked by violent repression against opposition parties, including the fragmentation of the main opposition party CNL in March 2024. This has created a sense of fear among citizens, dissuading them from engaging in the electoral process.

Furthermore, it is evident that the Burundian population has lost confidence in the integrity of the elections and has become discouraged from registering to vote.

The financial contributions imposed on citizens to finance the elections have created a sense of injustice and additional economic pressure, adding to the already very precarious economic conditions of the population. Many Burundians find themselves unable to bear these costs, pushing them away from the electoral process.

In conclusion, the disinterest in the 2025 elections in Burundi appears to be the result of a combination of political repression, lack of confidence in the electoral process, and economic pressures. To remedy this situation, Ligue Iteka recommends improving civic space, guaranteeing transparent elections and ensuring that citizen participation is encouraged without financial constraints or intimidation.

Commemoration of the 31st anniversary of the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye

This Monday, October 21, 2024, Burundi commemorated across the country the 31st anniversary of the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye, a hero of democracy. In the economic capital, the ceremonies which took place at “Palais des Martyrs de la Démocratie” called “Kwa Ndadaye” in Bujumbura Mairie, were enhanced by the presence of the presidential couple as well as several other personalities including the President of the Senate Emmanuel Sinzohagera, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Gélase Daniel Ndabirabe. The latter laid wreaths of flowers. Security forces arrived there very early in the morning cordoned off the area and prohibited the passage of vehicles.

Songs calling for peace, reconciliation, unity and democracy were played on a loop to give the ceremonies atmosphere¹. After the national anthem, the President of the Republic greeted the high-ranking personalities present at these ceremonies and laid two wreaths of flowers, one on the tomb of the late Melchior Ndadaye, the other on the tomb of the unknown martyr. The ceremonies ended with a requiem mass in memory of the Hero of Democracy, celebrated at Regina Mundi Cathedral².

A call to move away from all greed

During the mass celebrated at Regina Mundi Cathedral, the parish priest Father Félix Fupi called on Christians to avoid greed and to remember that life does not depend on material goods. He stressed that we are passing through this earth and that our life is short, adding that only God gives and takes life.

Father Fupi paid tribute to Melchior Ndadaye, who was assassinated several years ago, stressing that he left behind good memories and positive works. He said that Ndadaye sacrificed himself for the good of all Burundians and that his assassination was fatal.

Father Fupi also defined true wealth as that which benefits others, stressing that no one gets rich alone. He condemned the exploitation of man by man and called on Burundians to change their behavior. After the mass, the commemoration ceremonies of the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye were closed by the laying of wreaths. A book on this historic event has just been published, revealing the testimony of Brigadier General Joseph Rugigana, who was a lieutenant attached to the President's security at the time.

This testimony reveals the circumstances of the assassination of Ndadaye and the massacres that followed, leading the United Nations Security Council to establish an international commission of inquiry in accordance with its resolution 1012 (1995)³.

¹<https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/31e-commemoration-de-lassassinat-du-president-ndadaye-les-burundais-appelles-a-exorciser-la-cupidite/>

²<https://presidence.gov.bi/2024/10/21/les-burundais-commemorent-le-31eme-anniversaire-de-lassassinat-du-heros-de-la-democratie-s-e-president-melchior-ndadaye/>

³<https://www.burundi-information.net/rapport-de-la-commission-d-enquete-de-l-onu-sur-le-genocide-des-tutsi-du-burundi.html>

1.2. JUSTICE CONTEXT

Fragrance trial in Makamba commune and province

On October 25, 2024, Makamba TGI imposed a 5-year penal servitude sentence and a fine of 800,000 Burundian francs against a census agent Léonard Nsabimana. The latter was accused of distorting information on a public document according to article 359 of the penal code and article 223 paragraph 2 of the electoral code which accuses him of compromising the development of the electoral roll.

In this flagrante delicto trial, Leonard Nsabimana said that he did it by mistake because he had reported to the service not being at ease because he was too hungry, he reported to work on an empty stomach. According to witnesses, Leonard Nsabimana was arrested on the afternoon of October 24, 2024 at the registration center located at Gatabo communal high school on Gatwe hill, Kayogoro commune, Makamba province. According to the same sources, Leonard Nsabimana was arrested after the verification of the records by the president of the registration center. The latter reportedly noticed that on a page where 10 candidates were registered, 3 did not have the same names in the two registers in which census agents simultaneously register one candidate. According to sources close to CNL party, Léonard Nsabimana is an activist of the said party who would have escaped the vigilance of CNDD-FDD party officials in the locality because almost all of the opposition activists were replaced after the posting of the selected candidates. Léonard Nsabimana had been arrested during the 2020 elections on the orders of the then administrator Zachée Misago accused of holding illegal meetings of CNL party activists during the election period. Zachée Misago is currently a member of parliament for CNDD-FDD party elected in Makamba province. He has been the communal secretary of this party for almost 2 years.

It should be recalled that even the spokesperson for CENI said during a press conference that it is normal to make a mistake.

Release of the three judges of TGI Bururi

Three judges Léonard Nizigiyimana, Irène Mukeshimana and Antoine Ngendakumana were released, on October 22, 2024, in the evening by the Attorney General's Office. They had been acquitted by the Supreme Court on September 17, 2024 against the offense of complicity in undermining the internal security of State for which they were prosecuted by the public prosecutor. The three have always pleaded not guilty, they were arrested in September 2023 after releasing some alleged perpetrators of the machete attacks in Bururi. They had considered that there was insufficient evidence to justify their detention.

Legal proceedings against magistrates of Gitega

On October 23, 2023, four magistrates of the High Court of Gitega, namely MANIRAKIZA Damien, SINDAYIRWANYA Abel, NSHIMIRIMANA Jean Claude and NDIKUMASABO Tharcisse, were arrested. However, on March 4, 2024, the Anti-Corruption Court granted provisional release to NSHIMIRIMANA Jean Claude and NDIKUMASABO Tharcisse.

Subsequently, on April 23, 2024, the Anti-Corruption Court issued a judgment (RPAC 3085) acquitting MANIRAKIZA Damien, NSHIMIRIMANA Jean Claude and NDIKUMASABO Tharcisse. Despite this, SINDAYIRWANYA Abel appealed his conviction, while the Public Prosecutor appealed the acquittal of MANIRAKIZA Damien.

It is important to note that the magistrates NSHIMIRIMANA Jean Claude and NDIKUMASABO Tharcisse have not yet returned to their duties, despite the final acquittal. This is a violation of the law, because Article 27 of Decree No. 100/119 of 25 August 2000 on implementing measures for the status of magistrates in disciplinary matters stipulates that when suspension from duty is motivated by preventive detention, its effects are cancelled from the beginning and the unreceived salaries are paid to the

magistrate, provided that he has not been subject to any disciplinary or judicial penalty.

1.3. CONTEXT GOVERNANCE

Five days without a drop of water in the north of the economic capital in Bujumbura Mairie

The inhabitants of Ntakangwa commune, the north of the economic capital, Bujumbura mairie, have been deprived of REGIDESO water since October 18, 2024 when REGIDESO pipe that supplied this area was broken under Ntakangwa bridge near the market commonly called COTEBU in Ngagara zone, Bujumbura mairie.

According to an eyewitness, to have water, a 20-liter can costs between 3,000 and 4,000 BIF, which means that a family living in a house with a toilet uses around ten cans per day, or about 40,000 BIF without adding other daily needs.

This population is crying for help and fears contamination from dirty hands diseases, especially MPOX, which has even started in this health district in the north of Bujumbura mairie.

They fetch unclean water from Nyabagere River and are asking the government and REGIDESO to do everything to find a solution to this breakdown so that this population can regain the right to have water.

The Minister of Hydraulics, Energy and Mines, in a visit to the site of the breakdown, specified that the remaining work could take two days for the problem to be resolved and appealed to patience of the population without any other solution for this population to have water. Water returned on October 26, 2024 after eight days without water in this commune.

Restrictions to access public spaces following the 2025 elections

In Cibitoke province, since the morning of October 27, 2024, in the communes of Buganda and Rugombo, Cibitoke province, Imbonerakure have been prohibiting from entering the markets anyone who does not have a registration receipt for the 2025 elections. According to eyewitnesses, residents are confused and do not understand such restrictions while the authorities talk about freedom and democracy. According to a local source, even people who come from the mountains to the markets located in the plain region after traveling several kilometers are denied access.

In Mwaro province, on October 25, 2024, in the morning, in Ndava commune, young Imbonerakure from the ruling party were monitoring to verify that anyone going to Mwaro market has been registered as a voter. According to information from this commune, this message was given to Imbonerakure on all the hills to check on anyone who had not yet registered. In Rusaka commune, the date of October 25, 2024 was a day off linked to International Teachers' Day and the principals of different schools in this commune then ordered all their students to take advantage of it to register and to show the authorities when they returned to school that they had responded the call made to them. On October 26, 2024, a young member of the ruling party was circulating in different avenues of Kagoma quarter, calling on residents of the quarter who had not yet registered to go there without delay.

In this same Rusaka commune, on October 23, 2024, Nestor Niyongabo, Director of Mpumbu Fundamental School in this commune, ordered all the schoolchildren native from Mpumbu hill who had come to study in the afternoon to return home and tell their parents to come and register while it is time for classes. This was motivated by the fact that this Rusaka hill which will belong to Nyabihanga commune according to the administrative division of next year was the last in terms of numbers of people who were enrolled on the 1st day in the entire Nyabihanga commune.

In Kayanza province, on 26 and 27 October 2024 at all entrances to Kayanza market, no one was allowed to enter without showing the registration receipt for the next elections of 2025. At all entrances to the market there were Imbonerakure who were organized by Fabien Nijimbere, adviser to Kayanza communal direction and Timbiri Alexandre, teacher at Gatara communal high school, both Imbonerakure. The situation is thus while there is no written document or a press release authorizing this activity. A lot of grumbling among the population in Kayanza. Some say that their rights are being violated because they say there is no law that stipulates that the population should register by force. Others say that they have been enlisted but keep the receipt at home for fear of losing it. Sellers of different products at Kayanza market grumble that they are working at loss because of the lack of customers for their products. Total panic among the population in Kayanza who fear the worst in the days to come. An eyewitness approached these Imbonerakure who supervise this activity at Kayanza market to find out who gave them the order, they informed him that the activity is known among the leaders of the ruling party in Kayanza commune as well as the administrative authorities in this commune without however specifying where this order came from.

In Cankuzo province, on October 24, 2024, Chantal Irakoze, communal administrator of Cankuzo, took the measure of prohibiting the granting of any administrative document, chemical fertilizers, seeds, to anyone not having the registration receipt for the elections. Even at the hospital, before accessing medicines, one must present the registration receipt for the elections. Even in financial institutions such as COOPEC, post office, to collect receipts to access fertilizer, one must present the registration receipt for the elections.

On the morning of October 24, 2024, in the quarters of Cankuzo urban center, Cankuzo province, Shabani, Imbonerakure and others were going around to stop people and ask them to show them the registration receipt for the 2025 elections. According to sources on site, those who did not have one were beaten, as was the case for Pie Ntunguru, a woman nicknamed "Munyeshure", a bicycle taxi and a customer he was transporting on this bicycle. Others saw their kiosks closed by force. According to the same sources, Shabani, transported people on his motorcycle by force, to the registration place and then asked them for transport costs.

In Karuzi province, since October 26, 2024, in Buhiga commune, all roads leading to Saturday markets have been blocked by Imbonerakure's barriers under the order of the administrative authorities in collaboration with those of CNDD-FDD party. According to witnesses on site, no one was allowed to go to the market without a registration receipt for the 2025 elections. According to the same witnesses, those who do not have one should rush to register or look for another clandestine way to get to the market. An example is the so-called Kamahoro market which takes place on Saturdays and Tuesdays only.

Since October 25, 2024, SOSUMO sugar traders had received orders from Buhiga zone administration including Sindaruhuka Phocas and CNDD-FDD leader in this zone, Alexis Bandyatuyaga, that anyone who does not present the registration receipt does not have the right to buy a kilogram of sugar. Although it remains expensive, the population laments these unfounded decisions that deprive them of their freedom. Members of Imbonerakure circulate with microphones around Buhiga market and in the quarters, urging the population to go and register otherwise anyone who is not registered will have no service in the administration.

In Kirundo province, the population is forced to register for the upcoming elections. Imbonerakure with loudspeakers are circulating everywhere to sensitize the population while adding that anyone who does not have the receipt will not have right to State services.

In Kirundo commune, at BUTTOM gas station, no one can have access to fuel (petrol) without presenting the receipt to the head of SNR Kirundo and as of October 26, 2024, at the market, restaurants, shops or

food stores could not open without having presented it because the traders should first be verified before opening the shops. House workers from different quarters who were looking for water at the spring called 'Kumarimano' were banned by Imbonerakure Bisereka, Yusufu and Claver of this locality while there is no more water in the whole city. Dump trucks carrying sand were banned from Rushubije barrier, even though this is the site that supplies the people of Kirundo city. In Busoni, Bugabira and Bwambarangwe communes, Imbonerakure barriers were set up for verification. In Ntega, since October 25, 2024, rice farmers from the marshlands developed by the Chinese have been removed from the fields and forced to go to the registration offices.

2025 census and voter registration

From 1 to 4 October 2024, the CENI has publicly opened the submission of applications for the recruitment of voter enumerators for the 2025 edition in all the country's communes. In Nyanza-lac commune, 265 applications were submitted, but only 190 were selected based on the lists from the party offices and not on merit. There are 473 selected enumerators at the provincial level. The distribution was made on the basis of reference from political parties, for example, among the 190 agents, UPRONA party has only five, FRODEBU has three and 182 members for CNDD-FDD.

In Makamba province, there are 13 zones: Vugizo, Nyanza-lac, Mukubano, Mukungu, Muyange, Mpinga, Kazirabageni, Mabanda, Kayogoro, Gishiha, Kayove, Gitara and Kabonga. There are 131 enrollment centers, and the census hills also refer to the administrative subdivision: 79 hills. According to a witness in Makamba, the commune staff is mobilized to prepare fabricated national identity cards of voters brought by the leaders of the ruling party as well as the directors of schools.

Cases of fraud in voter registration in Karuzi province

In Karuzi province, during voter registration, there are cases of fraud organized by the ruling party CNDD-FDD and the administration where they are distributing identity cards to members of this party who do not have any. According to witnesses close to the communes, the cards are finished and the civil status offices give numbers to applicants for these identity cards to register. These cards are pieces of paper on which the elements of the Identity Card are written but without any signature or stamp showing that it is administrative. The census agents had been instructed to accept these drafts with photos.

Speech by the Minister of Interior on voter registration

On October 26, 2024, the Minister of Interior announced on Radio and Television Isanganiro that he had instructed administrators to adopt strategies that could lead the people to enroll en masse.

According to him, it is forbidden to mistreat or assault persons arguing that they have not been enrolled. Martin Niteretse indicates that what is important is to complete this activity on time.

The Minister of Interior announced that an evaluation meeting is scheduled for October 28 in Muramvya province, that it will also be the matter of evaluating the already adopted strategies by the administrators, and improving them if necessary. Voter registration is organized from October 22 to 31, 2024.

Distribution of national identity cards in Mutambu commune, Bujumbura-rural

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 26, 2024, at ECOFO Karinzi, Mutambu commune and province, Isidonie, director of ECOFO Karinzi in Bujumbura-rural province, distributes national identity cards to students of her school. She is assisted by Pasteur Bigirimana of Rubanda commune, director of ECOFO Buhama and the distribution is done in the director's office.

The heads of sectors gave notebooks to the supervisors and those who are registered are also registered in these notebooks. According to a witness, it was Liduine Habonimana, administrator of Mutambu commune who instructed this.

According to other eyewitnesses, in the civil registry of Mutambu commune, there are many national identity cards and residents think that these IDs will be distributed to the hill heads who will in turn distribute them to students and children under the voting age.

Environmental degradation attributable to the administration authorities of Murwi commune, Cibitoke province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 27, 2024 indicates that residents of the hills near the tree plantations belonging to the public domain are worried about the way these trees are being cut down, which is observed in Ngoma and Buzirasazi zones, Murwi commune, Cibitoke province.

According to eyewitnesses, the population is protesting against the excessive cutting of trees belonging to the public domain, particularly in Mahande, Nyarurinzi, Gasheke and Mpinga hills in Ngoma and Buzirasazi zones, Murwi commune, Cibitoke province.

These are vast plantations of eucalyptus and Pinus planted with the World Bank funding in the 1980s. The governor of Cibitoke Carême Bizoza and the administrator of this commune Melchiad Nzokizwano are denounced by the inhabitants of having installed carpentry units there to make timbers from the cut trees.

The same inhabitants speak of acts of robbery under the blessing of some high political authorities native from Cibitoke province.

According to an eyewitness, the timbers are transported day and night to Bujumbura where they are sold while the governor of the Cibitoke province speaks rather of an initiative aimed at addressing the lack of desks for children who study on the ground, hence the cutting of these trees which serve as timbers.

1.4. SECURITY CONTEXT

Abandonment of a child in Bugendana commune, Gitega province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 27, 2024 indicates that on October 20, 2024, in the bush located on Runyeri hill, 50 meters from the side of the road connecting Runyeri and Bitare hills in Bugendana commune, Gitega province, a living newborn was found. According to eyewitnesses, the crying newborn was seen by the children who were looking for firewood in this bush. They alerted those around them, Lazare Barumpozako, head of Runyeri hill, subsequently called the commune administrator and the communal commissioner. These two authorities and an OPJ Juliette went to the scene and recovered the newborn then transferred him to Bugendana CDS. According to the same sources, on the evening of October 20, 2024, Joselyne Nshimirimana, a single mother, aged 34, from Nyakeru hill was arrested at Bugendana center and then jailed in Bugendana communal police station cell. According to eyewitnesses, Joselyne Nshimirimana had given birth at Kibimba hospital in Giheta commune. During the interrogation which took place on October 21, 2024, she explained that she threw away this child because Lionel Bayubahe, from Rutana, the author of the pregnancy, disappointed her by refusing the child. The perpetrator was transferred to Gitega on October 22, 2024 for the continuation of this case. Until October 25, 2024, the newborn was at Bugendana CDS waiting to find an orphanage that could receive him.

Attempted assassination in Bugendana commune, Gitega province

On October 24, 2024, around 8 p.m., on Gitongo hill, Bugendana commune and Gitega province, Nibigira Générose, aged 34, was almost assassinated by her husband Ntamahungiro Jacques, aged 54, both farmers. According to sources on site, Jacques took an axe and followed his wife to the kitchen, then injured her in the head and ran away after the act, believing that she had killed her. The children cried for help.

According to Ndayisaba Manacé, the head of Gitongo hill, the victim was taken to Kibimba hospital in critical condition and the alleged perpetrator was arrested at Bugendana commune office when he came to the OPJ to tell what happened the day before. Before the OPJ, he explained by saying that he decided to commit this crime because, his wife was still cheating on him with Barengayabo Stany, and added that he could not resist this situation. He also added that his wife took all the family property to keep them at Stany's, her partner. Jacques was arrested and then jailed in Bugendana communal cell.

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 has taken 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 the regularly ratified international texts are an integral part of this constitution, implementing texts are put in place, in particular the penal code of December 29, 2017 and the code of criminal procedure of May 11, 2018 and other institutions for the protection of human rights in Burundi have been created.

II.1. RIGHT TO LIFE

II.1.1. PERSONS KILLED BY STATE AGENTS

II.1.1. 1. PERSONS KILLED BY POLICE OFFICERS

Three people killed in Ngozi commune and province

On October 26, 2024, around 3 a.m., at the bar called Umuco located in the center of Ngozi town center, Gabiro quarter, Ngozi zone, commune and province, three people Ménédoire Nduwayo, Chantal and Népomuscene Irankunda were killed and another injured, shot by a police officer using his Kalashnikov, Déo Ndayisenga, assigned to the police station located at the provincial office of agriculture, livestock and environment of Ngozi. According to witnesses on the spot, this member of the security force was drunk and wanted to drink the customers' drinks by force. When an attempt was made to prevent him, he shot on a cashier Ménédoire Nduwayo who was hit in the head and died on the spot. This police officer also shot Chantal, a waitress in the same bar, as well as a customer who was drinking in the bar. According to the same eyewitnesses, the three victims died on the spot. A fourth person was injured in the arm and was taken to Ngozi hospital. After committing this crime, the police officer in question took off.

II.1.1. 2. PERSONS KILLED BY IMBONERAKURE

A member of CNL party killed in Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province

On October 20, 2024, around 8 p.m., on Gahondo sub-hill, Caragata hill, Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province, Jonas Nzoyihaya, father of three children, trader of grilled meat in Gahondo residing on Gasasa hill, member of CNL party, was killed and others injured by Imbonerakure including Claver. According to eyewitnesses, Jonas Nzoyihaya, was killed at Kabengo's, a banana wine trader when he was about to start drinking after work. Jonas had demanded the money that Kabengo owes him as he had taken a

skewer from him but he refused to pay the debt even in exchange for two bottles of banana wine, saying that he did not have the money. Jonas took banana wine and paid the money before as Kabengo demanded. According to the same sources, when he started drinking, Muhimbiri, an Imbonerakure from the locality came and took Jonas' bottle by force and the fight started. Afterwards, other Imbonerakure came and started accusing Jonas of being an opponent and wanting to harm these young people. Jonas went to his home and he came back with a knife in his hand, he jumped on Muhimbiri and Kabengo, and injured them.

According to the same sources, Claver, the hill head of Imbonerakure, blew a whistle and many people came including the hill head and Melchisédech, the zonal head of Imbonetakure as well as others. Melchisédech told the four Imbonerakure including Claver, the hill head of Imbonerakure to guard and secure Jonas and the hill head looked for a way for the two injured to reach the CDS for treatment. The same sources add that some people asked Melchisédech to release Jonas to go to the hospital because he was bleeding a lot but he refused.

But after a few minutes, Claver came to say that Jonas had just been killed and died and that he did not know the alleged perpetrators. After Jonas' death, Rémy Ndarufatiye, the communal administrator of Buhanganzwa and the provincial head of SNR in Ruyigi went to the scene and took the hill head and brought him to the commune city center and he spent the night at the administrator's home. Melchisédech, the zonal head of Mugege of the Imbonerakure and the watchman of Gahondo market were arrested by the police and taken to the communal police station cell for investigation.

II.2. RIGHT TO PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

II.2.1. 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 girl raped in Bugendana commune, Gitega province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 26, 2024 indicates that on October 11, 2024, around 6 p.m., in the bush, on Gaterama hill, Bugendana commune and Gitega province, N. S, aged 14, a 6th grade student at ECOFO Gaterama, was raped by Désiré Sinzumunsi, aged 18, a farmer and member of Imbonerakure militia. According to the victim, the incident happened when Nadine went to the spring to fetch water. The victim was raped by Sinzumunsi Désiré and the latter ordered her not to say anything. After the act, the perpetrator ran away, and the victim ran after him screaming. According to Juliette, the OPJ of Bugendana, this perpetrator was arrested the same night by the population of the locality and then took him to the police cell in Bugendana and the victim was taken to Cunywe hospital where the doctor confirmed the rape. The girl received the medication and the perpetrator was transferred to Gitega central prison on October 15, 2024.

A girl raped in Cankuzo commune and province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on October 22, 2024 indicates that on October 13, 2024, C I, aged 14, was raped by Gilbert, a police officer working in Cankuzo. According to sources on site, the victim is an illegitimate child whose mother went to get married, leaving her with her neighbor as a guardian, but the latter was unable to bear the burden of this child and her family. A neighboring woman contacted the guardian to lend the victim to her so that she could employ her as a house worker. In the 2023 school year, the victim was in the 3rd grade and had obtained good marks allowing her to move up a grade, but she has not been able to return to school since September. The child's boss fell ill and was hospitalized in Cankuzo. Taking advantage of his wife's absence, Gilbert asked the victim to sleep with him but she

refused and then this policeman raped her. When the child reported him, the policeman was summoned but he was afraid of appearing before the prosecutor and fled. His superiors contacted him by phone and he said that he would prefer to desert work rather than serve time in prison given the seriousness of the offense committed. The child was treated at Cankuzo hospital.

II.2.2. PERSONS TORTURED

A person tortured in Vumbi commune, Kirundo province

On October 23, 2024, on Nyagatovu hill, Bukuba zone, Vumbi commune, Kirundo province, Léonard Habayimana, leader of the pro-Agathon Rwaswa CNL party, was beaten up by Imbonerakure including Bivunyungu, leader of Imbonerakure on the same hill, Emmanuel Birame and Nduwayo led by the leader of CNDD-FDD party on the said Nyagatovu hill, Eric Bigirimana. According to witnesses on site, this CNL activist was accused of preventing citizens from registering to participate in the upcoming 2025 elections, accusations deemed unfounded by local residents. According to the same witnesses, they met him on the road and started beating him up, accusing him of prohibiting the population from enrolling for the upcoming elections.

The same witnesses added that the victim was evacuated to Gasura health center for treatment and since he had been hit in the ribs and back, he was transferred to Kirundo hospital.

II. 3. RIGHT TO FREEDOM

II. 3.1. ABDUCTIONS AND FORCED DISAPPEARANCES

A CNL party activist abducted in Rumonge commune and province

On October 23, 2024, at the electoral registration office located at the vocational training center, in Birimba quarter, Rumonge commune and province, Fleury Niyonkomezi, evangelist of EUZEBU Church in Rumonge, member of CNL party loyal to Agathon Rwaswa, native of Muhuta commune in the same province, was abducted and taken to a secret location by unidentified people in police uniform. According to information from his political family, the victim was arrested by police officers who were in a double cabin vehicle whose registration number has not been identified. According to eyewitnesses, the victim was abducted while he was on the electoral registration line in order to participate in the 2025 elections. Some CNL party activists loyal to Agathon Rwaswa believe that the victim was arrested by agents of the national intelligence service of Rumonge. His family lives in Birimba quarter in Rumonge downtown and is outraged how theirs can be abducted from a place where the police are and taken to an unknown location until October 27, 2024.

II. 3.2. ARBITRARY ARRESTS

Three persons arrested in Kayanza commune and province.

On October 25, 2024, on Kavumu hill, Kayanza commune and province, three persons including Kiwara Nicodème, hill head, Nimbona Polycarpe, deputy hill head, and Minani Christine, head of Abakenyererugamba women's league at the hill level, were arrested by the communal administrator Niyonizigiye Godefroi. According to witnesses on site, they accused them of sensitizing the population to go to CNL meeting instead of registering for the elections. According to the same witnesses, the administrator came himself with his police guards and took the 3 people in his vehicle. Christine is in the commune's cell while the 2 men are at the police station.

III. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

III.1. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Politics at school in Buhiga Commune, Karuzi Province

On 22 October 2024, at the Technical School La Référence in Buhiga, Karuzi province, the director Rivizimana Eric, member of CNDD FDD political party, made a controversial decision. He sent all the students away asking them to collect the documents required to register for the 2025 elections.

According to witnesses, this decision resulted in the loss of classes for the students that day and was perceived as a form of political activism. The students were victims of this approach, which generated feelings of discomfort and injustice.

However, the next day, the students resumed their classes normally, without any preconditions. This decision by the director raised questions about the separation between politics and education, and the potential consequences of such actions on students.

IV. CATEGORICAL RIGHTS

IV.1. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

A body found in Bugendana commune, Gitega province

On October 25, 2024, on Mwurire hill, Bugendana commune and Gitega province, a body of a newborn was found in the toilet belonging to Cishahayo Vénerande. According to eyewitnesses, the perpetrator of this crime is Eliane Bavugubusa, aged 28, married but her husband has been in Tanzania for 3 years. According to the same eyewitnesses, everything was revealed by Eliane's neighbors because they knew that she was pregnant but that since October 23, 2024, Eliane was no longer pregnant, and those around her began to wonder where she had put her child. The alleged perpetrator had left her home to stay with her mother Vénerande. They decided to surround Vénerande's house to inquire about the situation. According to the same sources, Vénerande told them that her daughter left the house around 4am to go to Bujumbura. They insisted by asking her to say where they put the newborn. She ended up saying that her daughter gave birth to a stillborn baby and that she threw it in the toilet. Around 10am, Eliane was arrested in Kibimba in a probbox-type vehicle when she was heading to Bujumbura. Eliane and her mother later mentioned Ntakarutimana François, Bakurakubusa Michel, Nyandwi Désiré, Ntirampeba Audace, Muzanyingata Lucien and Ntirandekura Oscar. The latter helped Eliane and her mother throw this newborn in the toilet for a sum of 200,000 Bif to keep the secret. According to the same sources, all these accomplices were arrested in the afternoon of October 25, 2024 and are jailed in the communal cell with Eliane and her mother. Bukuru Béatrice and Bigirimana Eric, successively administrator and communal commissioner of Bugendana, instructed to bury the body with dignity and the burial took place in Mwurire cemetery.

V. CONCLUSION

Ligue Iteka notes and denounces a continued deterioration of human rights situation across the country. It condemns the impunity of the perpetrators of crimes and launches an urgent appeal to the Burundian authorities to :

- ⇒ Ensure compliance with the law and prosecute those responsible for crimes;
- ⇒ Guarantee public rights and freedoms for all burundian citizens;
- ⇒ Improve civic space;
- ⇒ Organize transparent elections and encourage citizen participation without financial constraints or intimidation.