

BURUNDIAN LIGUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS "ITEKA"

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Weekly bulletin « ITEKA N'IJAMBO » n°472 of the Burundian Ligue of Human Rights "ITEKA"

Week from 27 April – 4 May 2025



In memory of Madam Marie Claudette Kwizera, Treasurer of Iteka, reported missing since December 10 2015. From December 2015 to 4 May 2025, Iteka has documented at least 726 cases of enforced disappearances

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ACRONYMS

BAC II	: <i>Second-year Baccalaureate</i>
BRARUDI	: <i>Brewery and Lemonade of Burundi</i>
CECI	: <i>Independent Communal Electoral Commission</i>
CENI	: <i>Independent National Electoral Commission</i>
CEPI	: <i>Independent Provincial Electoral Commission</i>
CNC	: <i>National Communication Council</i>
CNDD-FDD	: <i>National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy</i>
CNL	: <i>National Congress for Liberty</i>
DCE	: <i>Communal Education Direction</i>
DPEAE	: <i>Provincial Directorate of the Environment, Agriculture and Livestock</i>
ECOFO	: <i>Fundamental School</i>
FDLR	: <i>Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda</i>
FLN	: <i>National Liberation Forces</i>
FM	: <i>Frequency Modulation</i>
FRODEBU	: <i>Front for Democracy in Burundi</i>
M23	: <i>March 23 Movement</i>
OPJ	: <i>Judicial Police Officer</i>
PV	: <i>Minutes</i>
RN7	: <i>National Road No. 7</i>
SOSUMO	: <i>Moso Sugar Plant</i>
UPRONA	: <i>Union for National Progress</i>

0. INTRODUCTION

This bulletin develops a worrying human rights and security situation in Burundi in a worrying time of preparation for legislative and local elections. This bulletin reviews a political context marred by human rights shortcomings.

We report 5 persons died, including 3 women. Also, 2 persons were tortured, including a mentally disabled person, two girls, respectively 5 and 7 years old, victims of rape and 3 persons arbitrarily

arrested, including a woman with her 3-month-old baby.

Civil and political rights, socio-economic and cultural rights are also taken into account in this bulletin. The political and security context is also reported.

Imbonerakure, police and administrative officials are accused of being the main perpetrators of these human rights violations.

1. CONTEXT

1.1. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The political context that prevailed during the week of May 28 to 4, 2025 depicts a situation of preparation for the elections scheduled for next June, but which is characterized by intimidation, exclusion and political intolerance from the ruling CNDD-FDD party.

Signs of intimidation in Mutaho commune in Gitega province.

Signs of intimidation in Burundi's ongoing electoral process are manifesting themselves in Mutaho commune in Gitega province. According to Jean de Dieu, a CNDD-FDD member residing in Mutaho IDP site, he was tasked to collect voters receipts suspected of wanting to boycott the vote. This collection also targets some members of CNDD-FDD themselves, suspected of wanting to vote for the opposition.

According to the same source, all the people registered on the lists of members of the polling stations are only CNDD-FDD members. According to Ndereyimana André, the communal representative of Burundi Bwa Bose Coalition, this behavior suggests a wish to control and intimidate voters, thus compromising the transparency and secrecy of the vote.

Shortcomings in training sessions for polling station members in Gitega province.

During this pre-election period, a climate of discord is growing in different communes across Gitega

province. Several shortcomings have been observed, raising questions about the credibility of those responsible for organizing the elections.

As previously reported, the lists of polling station members are composed exclusively of members of the ruling CNDD-FDD party, without even conducting an objective selection of the submitted applications. According to representatives of other political parties, this biased selection excludes their political parties, fueling mistrust and weakening the electoral climate. As evidence, the first training session for polling station members was held exclusively for CNDD-FDD members. This exclusion provoked a reaction from UPRONA party, which filed demands that its members also be trained. In response, a new training session was organized on Saturday, May 3, 2025, in Bugendana commune for members proposed by UPRONA.

However, this measure raised new concerns. While a similar training session was scheduled for the same Saturday in the new commune of Gitega (a merger of the communes of Gitega, Giheta, Makebuko, and Itaba), it was abruptly postponed to Monday, without a clear explanation. This postponement fuels suspicions of possible manipulation of the training schedule and content. According to Nsabimana Emmanuel, UPRONA representative in Bugendana commune (newly formed from the former communes of Bugendana and Mutaho), questions are being raised about the motivations for these separate training sessions. He noted, in

particular, a obvious inequality in treatment, as, he said, the training for CNDD-FDD members lasted six hours, while that for UPRONA members will only last two hours. This difference in duration may affect the quality of preparation and reflects an implicit wish to maintain an imbalance between the parties.

At the CECI office in the extended commune of Mwaro [*which encompasses the former communes of Bisoro, Gisozi, and Kayokwe*], lists of polling station agents and polling center presidents were posted on April 23, 2025. Only members of CNDD-FDD party appeared on these lists. In Rusaka commune, at some polling stations, polling station members from the ruling party were not selected. Thus, some people residing in Mwaro province town were invited to appear on these lists because they are party members. Since Thursday, April 24, 2025, all these polling agents were trained. Those attending the training in Rusaka but residing in Mwaro province town were transported by Carine Kaneza, the communal administrator, in the commune van.

Exclusion of opposition members from voting operations in Nyanza commune, Burunga province

On the eve of the legislative elections, the CENI (National Electoral Commission) expressed distrust of political parties that did not follow the CNDD-FDD party's lead. The targeted parties were UPRONA, FRODEBU, KAZE-FDD, and CNL, which regretted the refusal of the CECI presidents to receive anyone who appeared on the list of polling agents.

Thus, in Nyanza commune, in the new Burunga province, all 760 polling stations will be monitored by school principals designated as polling station presidents, supported by Imbonerakure youth.

The files received after the announcement of the recruitment of electoral agents were not taken into consideration even though the lists had been prepared at CND-DFDD communal offices. It should be recalled that usually, during the vote counting, political and civil society representatives are not allowed to enter the room where the activity was taking place; only polling station members have ac-

cess.

Offenses during the training of electoral officials in Gitega and Kirundo provinces

Since the CENI's announcement to the population to submit their applications to become voter registration agents and polling station members, the selection of files took place between April 21 and 28, 2025.

The members of Karusi CECI received a well-prepared list of all polling station members and voter registration agents from the entire extended commune of Karusi, including the four former communes of Bugenyuzi, Buhiga, Gitaramuka, and Mutumba.

According to witnesses on site in Karusi, the president of CECI, Sakubu J. Pierre, accompanied by the CEPI supervisor Ninziza Gérard, stated that this list came from above and forced the CECI members to sign the minutes prepared for this purpose, stating that the said list had been prepared by the CEPI members.

The only UPRONA member tried to refuse the maneuvers, but the CECI president and the supervising CEPI terrorized him, telling him that his opposition would achieve nothing since he was alone. They even informed CNDD-FDD officials and the intelligence, who called him, telling him that he had nothing to say and that he was endangering his safety, the reason why he signed on the pre-prepared minutes. As a reminder, in CECI Karusi, there are seven members of this bureau, six of whom are from CNDD-FDD and only one from UPRONA.

According to this Uprona member, his party's national officials were informed of the case and in turn informed the CENI, but nothing was done.

In Kirundo province, training was organized for members and presidents of voting centers by members of CECI Kirundo, including its president, Macumi Onésime.

On April 24, 2025, the training was organized for members of Bugabira commune polling station and took place in Ruhehe parish hall. On April 25, 2025, it was the turn of members and president of Ntega commune polling centers, on April 26, 2025,

that of members of Vumbi commune polling stations in Gasura parish hall, and finally on April 27, 2025, that of members of Kirundo commune polling centers in DPEAE Kirundo hall.

In all these localities, after the training, CECI president Macumi Onésime spent time with the polling station presidents, where he instructed them in Kirundi: "*Nshaka ijana kw'ijana, ntawuzobakorako mukingiwe hose*" (*I want 100%, don't be afraid, you are protected*).

Preparing for CNDD-FDD elections in Ruyigi, Rutana, and Makamba provinces

In Ruyigi province, on April 29, 2025, in the meeting room of Rugongo zone, Butaganzwa commune, CNDD-FDD party organized a meeting of young people affiliated with the party from across the zone. According to local sources, the meeting was chaired by Onésime Ngendandumwe, the party's communal representative in Butaganzwa commune and also the Communal Director of Education in the same commune.

In his speech, he called on the young Imbonerakure of this zone to prepare well for the elections and to mobilize all members of this party to collect their voter cards, an activity scheduled for the week of May 12, 2025 according to CENI calendar. It will be necessary to ensure that all members of the party collect their cards by going household by household and those who refuse will be punished, as was the case during the voter registration period, he added. He continued by saying that on election day, it will be necessary to wake up very early in the morning and head to the polling centers to secure this operation.

He reminded the role of different leaders within Rugongo youth league in organizing to ensure that each polling center has at least two or three Imbonerakure to ensure security. According to Onésime Ngendandumwe, each Imbonerakure will be assigned to the polling center on their nearest hill for two reasons:

1. To ensure the security of their hill and monitor the movement of opposition party members;
2. To ensure that everyone be present at the polling station, as they are expected to know all the residents of their hill.

It should be noted that this zone greatly frightens the ruling party because it is considered a stronghold of CNL party, Agathon RWASA's wing.

In the same Ruyigi province, a meeting of CNDD-FDD party members was held on May 3, 2025, on Itaba hill, Rugongo zone, Butaganzwa commune.

According to local sources, this meeting was chaired by Onésime Ngendandumwe, the party's communal representative. The objective of this meeting was to properly prepare for the upcoming elections. He called on the population in general and the Bagumyabanga in particular, to properly prepare for the elections scheduled for next month, and ordered everyone to mobilize their neighborhood for this activity.

As for Rutana province, in Bukemba commune, CNDD-FDD party held a meeting on April 29, 2025, in Kabanga, Murama-Rugwe, and Muyombwe; on April 30, 2025, in Ruranga; on May 2, 2025, in Rubanga; and on May 3, 2025, in Butare. The agenda for all these meetings was election preparation.

In Giharo commune, Rutana province, the ruling party held different meetings, each with the same objective: participation in the elections. On May 2, 2025, the ruling party held a meeting in Butezi zone, Kibimba, Butezi, and Mutwana hills; in Giharo zone, Giharo hill; and in Gakungu zone, Ngomante hill. On May 3, 2025, the meeting took place in the following zones: (1) Giharo, Kanyererwe hills, Giharo, and Nkudye; (2) Gakungu zone, Gakungu hills, and Nyamateke; (3) Muzye zone, Shembe hills, and Muzye; and (4) Butezi zone, Butezi hills, Mutwana, and Mwebeya.

On May 3, 2025, in Musongati hill, zone, and commune, CNDD-FDD party held a meeting whose agenda items were: (1) Peace and security, (2) collection of voter cards.

On May 1, 2025, in Rutana commune and province, a meeting of hill officials of CNDD-FDD party from Kivoga zone was held to prepare for the upcoming elections. On May 3, 2025, it was the turn of Ka-rinzi hill with the same objective.

On May 3, 2025, in Mpinga-Kayove commune, CNDD-FDD party organized a meeting of the Bagumyabanga of Kayero zone to prepare for the

upcoming elections. In the said commune, the week of April 28 to May 5, 2025, was characterized by a peaceful atmosphere between members of different political parties. Also, on May 3, 2025, in Gitanga commune, Rutana province, the head of Imbonerakure youth league in Nyakuguma zone met with the Imbonerakure of the said zone. The agenda included: (1) Peace and security and (2) Election preparation.

Regarding Makamba province, on April 28, 2025, in Kayogoro commune, CNDD-FDD party, through political mobilizers of Kayogoro zone, organized a visit to the local cells of Murangara sub-hill and those of Swahili quarter to raise awareness among the population about the need to participate in the elections and collect their voter registration cards on time. According to local sources, in Bigina zone, CNDD-FDD party officials from Mayange hill and political mobilizers held a meeting on Kibirizi sub-hill with the agenda regarding participation in the 2025 elections.

On April 29, 2025, in Kayogoro zone, the ruling party's hill official from Kabizi hill visited Buyenga local cells to prepare for the elections and welcome the Secretary General of CNDD-FDD party, who was due to visit Kayogoro zone on May 4, 2025. On the same date, political mobilizers from Kibimba hill met with the Bagumyabanga of this hill to urge them to be the first to collect their voter cards. Also on the same date, the Secretary General of CNDD-FDD party visited the Bagumyabanga of Kayogoro and Dunga zones. In his speech, apart from the preparation for the elections, he talked

1.2. SECURITY CONTEXT

The security situation during the reporting period was characterized by paramilitary training in Cibitoke and instances of insecurity in the south of the country.

1. Imbonerakure paramilitary training sows concern as elections approach

Information received by Ligue Iteka on May 4, 2025, indicates that for more than two months, there is a climate of tangible tension in Cibitoke province, where intense paramilitary exercises involving Imbonerakure are taking place amidst deafening silence from the authorities. These training sessions, reportedly supervised by members of FLN

about the opening of the electoral campaign in Burunga province scheduled for May 16, 2025.

Disruption of UPRONA party activities by Imbonerakure in Gisagara commune, Cankuzo province

On April 27, 2025, on Kigati hill, Gisagara commune, Cankuzo province, young Imbonerakure from this hill disrupted UPRONA party activities, led by the hill representative of the youth league, Jean Claude, nicknamed Fundi, accompanied by Eric, Firmin, and T rence. This UPRONA party meeting was chaired by L opold Hakizimana, UPRONA Party representative in Gisagara commune.

According to our sources in Gisagara, these young people accused UPRONA party officials of holding an unauthorized meeting from the administration. UPRONA Party members were shocked by the behavior of these young people from the ruling party who want to replace the administration, which they describe as political intolerance. "*According to the law on political parties, to hold a meeting or any party activity, one does not request authorization; rather, one informs the administration,*" the UPRONA party leader explained to these young Imbonerakure.

According to the same sources, the meeting started two hours late after Gratien Nitunga, Administrator of Gisagara commune, had to call the youth league leader on this hill in Kigati to allow UPRONA party to continue with the planned activities for that day.

and FDLR armed groups, rebels operating against Kigali, are causing serious apprehension among the population, particularly as the general elections approach. Voices are being raised to denounce the exploitation of these young people for purposes that transcend national borders and aim to intimidate the political opposition.

In Mabayi and Bukinanyana communes, epicenters of this paramilitary activity, Imbonerakure have been diligently undergoing intensive military training for over sixty days. These exercises are reportedly concentrated around the party office, located less than three kilometers from the provincial office.

A military source, speaking on condition of anonymity, claims that these training sessions are being supervised by active members of FLN and FDLR armed groups, responsible for their destabilizing actions against Kigali regime. These instructors reportedly bring their expertise in military tactics and theory, exercising tight control over the indoctrination and training of these young recruits. According to several concordant sources, these young people thus trained would then be deployed to the DRC, where they would join front lines alongside the Congolese army, the so-called Wazalendo militias, as well as elements of the FLN and FDLR; their mission being to join the fight against the M23 rebels operating in the provinces of North and South Kivu.

"Several of our friends have already died at the front. We are being sent to fight in a war that is not ours," confided a young man who participated in these training sessions. Grieving families, bearing the burden of the loss of their loved ones, like this father who lost his two sons during violent clashes in Kaziba and Nyangezi, strongly denounce this forced engagement in a foreign conflict that should not cost the lives of young Burundians.

In the country, these paramilitary activities are raising serious political concerns. With the general elections just months away, a growing number of voices are denouncing the potential use of these young people for electoral intimidation, aimed at distorting the democratic process. An octogenarian interviewed on site expressed his deep concern, accusing the regime of preparing an electoral campaign based on violence and fear, thus causing the lack of a truly convincing political program capable of mobilizing the electorate with solid arguments.

Contacted for comment, the governor of Cibitoke categorically rejected all these allegations, calling them unfounded rumors and attempts at destabilization. A similar denial came from the head of the leagues affiliated with the presidential party, who maintained that the youth mobilization aimed only to *"strengthen peace and security in local communities."*

However, in Kibira region, the persistent echoes of military chants and rumors of armed movements and deployments continue to disturb peace of residents, fueling a climate of fear and uncertainty about the future and the serenity of the ongoing

electoral process.

2. A police officer injured in Rumonge commune and province

On May 1, 2025, a police officer from Rumonge communal police station was injured in the left forearm during the arrest of Prosper Baricako of Mugara hill, Rumonge commune and province.

According to witnesses, Prosper Baricako had opposed the decision of the Residential Court regarding a land dispute and injured the police officer with a machete. The police officer had also minor injuries to his neck and head as the arrested person fought him before being handcuffed. He is currently being jailed in Rumonge police station cell. The police officer was taken to Rumonge hospital for medical treatment.

According to witnesses, the hill head had a warrant from Rumonge prosecutor's office for several days, but the man said no one could mobilize him. This is how the police intervened to arrest him.

3. A person arrested for human trafficking in Rumonge commune and province

Information received on May 4, 2025, indicates that on April 21, 2025, Ficela Bikorimana of Cabara hill, Rumonge commune and province, aged 25, was arrested for human trafficking. Among the victims he sent to Tanzania were Estella Nishimwe, aged 16, and Josepha Irakoze, aged 17, both from Cabara hill.

As soon as the parents learned of their children's departure, they filed a complaint with the police demanding their children's return.

4. Machete attack in Nyanza Lac commune, Makamba province

On May 1, 2025, on Bukeye hill in Nyanza Lac zone and commune, Makamba province, the family of Dieudonné Nininahazwe and Evangeline Niyonganji and their five children were attacked at home by their neighbor Emmanuel Sindayigaya, a court janitor and a member of CNDD-FDD party. He was armed with a machete and, upon seeing him, fled to another house. The perpetrator destroyed the palm tree planted in front of their house to quench his anger.

The next day around 6 p.m., they filed a complaint, first with the quarter head, who turned a deaf ear, and then with the judicial police, who also sulked. When asked for a second summons, the judicial police officer, Célestin, replied that summonses are paid for before being delivered. The perpetrator has never appeared until now except for an envelope that he gave to the OPJ in the eyes of the victims.

II. CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

II.1. RIGHT TO LIFE

II.1.1. A person killed by State agents or Imbonerakure militia

One person killed in Gitega commune and province

On May 29, 2025, at around 8:30 p.m., in Nyamugari quarter of Gitega commune and province, Butoyi Damas, a 38-year-old street shoe trader from Kayanza province, was killed by a group of Imbonerakure claiming to be security agents.

II.1.2. One person killed on suspicion of sorcery

A woman killed in Muyinga commune and province

On April 21, 2025, on Rukanya sub-hill, Gahororo hill, Munagano zone, Muyinga commune and province, 65-year-old Bizimana Léoncie was hacked to death by João Radjabu, a watchman at a local stable.

According to local witnesses, the alleged perpetrator said he thought a thief was attacking him as the victim passed by the stable. Bizimana Léoncie was suspected of sorcery because she is Radjabu's neighbor. The perpetrator was arrested and taken to Muyinga PJ where he is jailed.

II.1.3. People killed in settling scores

A body found in Muha commune, Bujumbura - mairie

On April 28, 2025, in Kajiji quarter, Kanyosha zone, Muha commune, Bujumbura mairie, the body of Athanase Ngirakimazi, 50 years old, from Vugizo commune, Makamba province, was found at his home. This man, described by his neighbors as an occasional trader, tragically lost his life in questionable circumstances.

According to testimonies from the neighborhood, the advanced state of decomposition of Athanase's body suggested he had died before April 25, 2025. He was buried on the same day at Kanyosha ce-

metery, located in Gisyo quarter, a procedure facilitated by the intervention of the Red Cross. This quick burial, probably due to the condition of the body and the absence of immediate family, adds a pathetic dimension to this tragedy.

A woman killed in Nyabitsinda commune, Ruyigi province

On April 23, 2025, at around 10:00 p.m., at her home on Murehe hill, Nyabitsinda commune, Ruyigi province, a woman named Amélie Barigenza, aged 50, a member of CNDD-FDD party, was beheaded by as yet unidentified individuals.

According to local sources, this crime occurred while her husband was out buying a battery for his torch, and upon his return, he found his wife's body strewn in front of the entrance to the house. The deceased was buried the next day by the communal administration. This woman is reportedly accused of sorcery. Investigations are ongoing to determine the reasons and perpetrators of this crime.

The initial investigation appears to point to a motive potentially linked to land disputes. A plot of land belonging to the victim was apparently a source of tension. In this context, suspicions are firmly focused on his own brother, Emmanuel Ndayiziga. Persistent disputes over this plot of land are said to have pitted them against each other, making him the prime suspect in the eyes of the community.

II.1.4. A person killed by unidentified people

A body of a woman found in Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province

On May 3, 2025, on Batye hill, Butaganzwa commune, Ruyigi province, the body of an unidentified woman was found. According to local sources, this body was discovered by a woman who was looking for fodder for her cattle. She smelled a bad odor and looked around; she noticed a place where something had been buried. She tried to remove the earth to see what was inside and discovered that a person had been buried there. She immediately alerted the people who were farming for Sangwe

cooperative. They alerted the local administration, which in turn informed the communal administration.

According to the same sources, Rémy Ndarufatiye, the communal administrator, accompanied by the communal judicial police officer, arrived at the scene and ordered the body to be exhumed and transported to the mortuary of Butaganzwa communal Hospital to start investigations into the identity of the deceased, the reasons for her murder, and the perpetrators of the crime. It should be noted that the deceased was not identified by local residents.

II.2. PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL INTEGRITY

II.2.1. Torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment

A person tortured in Buhiga commune, Karuzi province

On April 29, 2025, at around 4:00 p.m., on Buhiga hill, zone, and commune in Karuzi province, a mentally disabled man named Sebushahu, from Gashanga hill, Bugenyuzi zone and commune, was beaten by Imbonerakure, including Issa Nizigiyimana, accompanied by the leader of Imbonerakure of Buhiga zone, Jérôme.

According to eyewitnesses, they searched him and found a knife in his pockets, which he uses to destroy graves in Buhiga cemetery. They wounded his arms and right leg with the same knife and beat him with an electric wire that this zonal Imbonerakure leader always carries on his motorcycle.

A person tortured in Nyanza-Lac commune, Makamba province

On the night of May 2, 2025, around 9:00 p.m., on Kabo hill, Muyange zone, Nyanza-Lac commune in Makamba province, Jonas Niyomwungere, a member of Sahwanya-FRODEBU party of the Burundi bwa Bose coalition, was attacked with a machete by a group of Imbonerakure affiliated with CNDD-FDD, led by Benjamin Niyoyankunze.

According to local witnesses, they arrested him as he was returning home and started interrogating him, asking where he was from, then beating him. According to the same witnesses, he was injured in the left arm with a machete. He was taken to a local health facility for treatment. Residents of Nyanza-Lac commune, especially members of opposition parties, strongly condemn this unworthy behavior of the Imbonerakure, which they describe as intimi-

II.2.2. Rape and gender based violence

A girl raped in Muramvya commune and province

On April 30, 2025, on Biganda hill, Kabonobono sub hill, in Muramvya commune and province, Haringanji Galena Jesca, aged 5, was raped by Eloge Itangivyiza, aged 26, a neighbor, farmer, and member of Imbonerakure.

According to the victim, she was home alone when her mother, Iradukunda Espérance, went to draw water from a water pipe about a 20-minute walk away. The alleged perpetrator had watched for the

child's mother to leave and entered the compound. He offered the child a doughnut and a piece of sugarcane before committing the crime. According to Esperance, when she returned, the child was crying, naked. There were obvious signs of rape, and the perpetrator had left his machete at the scene of the crime, which the mother recognized.

The victim was taken to Muramvya Hospital, and medical tests confirmed the rape. The perpetrator was arrested by other Imbonerakure and taken to Muramvya police station, where he is jailed.

A little girl raped in Rumonge commune and province

On April 29, 2025, at around 6 p.m., on Mutambara hill, Rumonge commune and province, Marie Ange Irangabiye, aged 7, was the victim of rape by Nsen-giyumva Audace, a neighbor. He had promised sugarcane to the child's mother, and the latter sent her to take it.

When the child arrived at the house, the criminal closed the front doors and committed the crime after covering the child's mouth with a worn garment. After waiting for a long time, the mother went looking for her and found the doors of the house closed and other children standing there listening to the noise they could hear from afar. At that time, she cried for help to alert the neighbors. The child was taken to Humura Center for holistic care. As for the alleged perpetrator, he was arrested and taken to Rumonge police station cell.

II.3. RIGHT TO LIBERTY

II.3.1. Arbitrary arrests and detention

A member of CNL, Agathon Rwasas wing arrested in Ngozi commune and province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on April 28, 2025, indicates that on April 19, 2025, on Nyabihanga hill, Mugomera zone, Ngozi commune and province, Elias Niyonkuru, a loyal member of Agathon Rwasas, was arrested by the head of this hill, Bizabishaka Damascène, accusing him of sorcery. According to local witnesses, Elias Niyonkuru is in Mubuga zone cell, Ngozi commune, after spending nine days in the cell of his Mugomera zone. He has never been questioned by a judicial police officer. According to his family, Elias Niyonkuru is jailed in poor conditions because he rarely goes outside. His family is requesting his release so that he can regain his freedom.

his nose bled. The reason for this arrest was that the repairer owed 800,000 Bif to Mugishawimana Aline, a student at the University of Burundi who was a Lumicash agent before going to Bujumbura. The victim had used this money in Xbet games but never won. He had agreed to gradually repay the money, but these Imbonerakure took him to the police cell in Buhiga, saying he would be released after paying everything.

One person arrested in Buhiga commune, Karuzi province

On April 28, 2025, at around 3:00 p.m., on Buhiga hill, Buhiga zone and commune, Karuzi province, Niyonkuru, a bicycle repairer from Mwoya hill, Buhiga zone and commune, was arrested by Nizigiyimana Issa, under the command of the communal leader of Imbonerakure named Elysée.

Arbitrary detention of a woman and her infant in Bugendana commune, Gitega province

Information received by Ligue Iteka on May 2, 2025, indicates that on April 24, 2025, at Mutoyi center, Bugendana commune, Gitega province, Nibizi Goreth was arrested and detained with her 3-month-old infant in a container at Bugendana police station.

According to eyewitnesses, he first beat fist until

According to an eyewitness, her arrest followed the escape of her husband, who had not paid the admission fees for a child he had knocked with a motorcycle. Police officer Kagoma Salvator, working in Mutoyi zone, who had arrested her, finally released her that afternoon following the intervention of journalists who contacted the communal commissioner about this case. The latter subsequently ordered the police officer to release the woman.

II.3.2. Right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press

Journalists denounce an escalation of violence and demand protection

Faced with an alarming upsurge in violence targeting media professionals, particularly upcountry, Burundian journalists are sounding the alarm. They

are urgently appealing to the authorities to guarantee press freedom and bring the perpetrators of these unacceptable attacks to justice.

The situation in Burundi has become critical for journalists. Recent weeks have been marked by a worrying increase in cases of physical violence and

arbitrary arrests. The kidnapping of Willy Kwizera, a journalist with Radio Bonesha FM, on April 28, 2025, from Mutanga University campus in Bujumbura, is a striking illustration of this. This event caused a stir within the profession, raising serious fears of a significant drop in press freedom in the country.

Journalists interviewed reported a "serious deterioration in their working conditions," recounting acts of intimidation, beatings, and unjustified arrests. "Practicing our profession is becoming a constant risk," confided one of them, preferring anonymity for fear of reprisals.

These professionals are directly appealing to CNC, Burundi's media regulatory board. They urge it to break its silence and fully assume its role as guarantor of freedom of expression. "The CNC must protect us, not just observe," insisted another journalist.

The judiciary is also questioned. Journalists are calling for rigorous investigations to identify and punish those responsible for these heinous acts, in accordance with the law. "It's no longer enough to issue verbal condemnations; concrete action is imperative," insists a reporter working in the regions.

Bonesha FM journalist victim of brutal assault and death threats at a University campus

On April 28, 2025, Willy Kwizera, a journalist with the independent radio station Bonesha FM, was assaulted and threatened to death on Mutanga campus in Bujumbura, while investigating the difficult living conditions of students. His harrowing testimony reveals shocking brutality and a blatant attempt to silence the truth.

According to his own statements, Willy Kwizera, whose health is now worrying, was forcibly taken to an office presented as that of the student representation. There, six individuals, acting under the orders of the BAC II economics student representative, held him captive, threatened to kill him, and severely beat him. The attackers used rebar and batons commonly known as "inembo," injuring Willy Kwizera while he was held face down.

The accusation against him is as absurd as it is disturbing: working for Pacifique Nininahazwe, a Burundian opposition figure residing abroad. The jour-

nalists' attempts to prove his affiliation with Radio Bonesha FM were ignored by his tormentors. After being beaten and locked in an office in Pavilion 9, he was only released after being forced to sign a document forbidding him from revealing his ordeal, under penalty of death.

Far from being safe after his release, Willy Kwizera was escorted to Nyakabiga and prevented from accessing the university entrance in order to hide from academic authorities the consequences of the attack. His critical testimony also reveals that one of his attackers clearly claimed not to be a student, but to be on campus for an unknown mission.

Corroborating sources on the ground describe the office in Pavilion 9 as a true "office hell" for students, a place of torture and abuse where impunity reigns. These allegations, if confirmed, highlight a serious deviation within the university environment.

This abject act of violence against Willy Kwizera is unfortunately not an isolated case. It is part of an alarming context of attacks on press freedom in Burundi. The previous week, on April 21, two other journalists, one from Nderagakura radio and another from Bonesha FM, were arrested by the police while legitimately carrying out their duties in Kinama zone, Bujumbura mairie.

Faced with this escalation of violence, Radio Bonesha FM management reacted firmly, demanding the opening of impartial investigations and the bringing to justice of the individuals responsible for the attack and death threats against Willy Kwizera. It also calls on the authorities to guarantee the safety of all journalists in the exercise of their duties.

It is crucial to recall the case of Sandra Muhoza, a journalist with La Nova newspaper, jailed since April 2024. Accused of disrupting national security, inciting racial hatred, and disseminating divisive messages, she was sentenced to 12 years in prison simply for participating in a discussion in a WhatsApp group of journalists regarding the alleged distribution of machetes in some provinces of the country. Her imprisonment highlights a worrying criminalization of journalistic work and the exchange of information.

The brutal attack on Willy Kwizera, combined with other attacks on press freedom, demonstrates a worrying deterioration in the climate for the media in Burundi. The national and international community must mobilize to demand justice for the victims and ensure a safe and respectful environment for the practice of journalism, an essential pillar of any democratic society.

III. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

III.1. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Politicization of education in Bugenyuzi commune, Karuzi province

On April 30, 2025, at around 9:00 a.m., in the commune meeting room of Bugenyuzi commune, Karuzi Province, a meeting was held to analyze the results of the second-term joint examination.

According to witnesses on site, after the first meeting on the ranking of schools and classes and some recommendations, they discussed preparations for May Day celebration. The DCE, Serges Gahungu, asked teachers to massively participate in this celebration wearing loincloths they had purchased and reminded them that the purchase of these loincloths is mandatory for all civil servants and administrators, and the fees are collected by the communal officials of each department, and orders are made per province. According to this DCE and his advisors, teachers who do not buy these loincloths are rebels of the country (*abarimu banka kugura ivyo bitenge*

n'ibipinga, n'abagararariji b'igihugu, kuko nta buryo babuze). He added that among the latter, even those who will attend the festival in suit will not be received and will not enter the parade.

Then, he talked about the political point and asked the teachers who are not members of CNDD-FDD to leave because the topic does not concern them. He asked a director of ECOFO Cuba 2 to go outside to identify those who were leaving, but all those who are not CNDD-FDD members left without any difficulty.

According to witnesses on the scene, he informed these CNDD-FDD members that the distribution of voter's cards will take place on May 5, 2025, and everyone is required to attend very early in the morning. He added that absence from duty for Bagumyabanga is not a fault and during the awareness meetings, they will have to report to duty but for meetings time they will leave, leaving homework for the students (strictly for CNDD-FDD members).

III.2. RIGHT TO HEALTH

Lack of ambulances at Matana Hospital in Bururi province

Matana Hospital in Bururi province is facing a lack of ambulance. This vehicle has been out of service since March 30, 2025, following a traffic accident on RN7, more precisely in Migerere locality, not far from the hospital. This lack of ambulance is hindering

the referral and counter-referral system for patients throughout Matana health district. Inpatients in all the health facilities in this health district complain that they rent private vehicles themselves when they are transferred to other hospitals. Dr. Ange Larissa Nsabiyumva, the head doctor at Matana Hospital, says that this ambulance, whose engine

IV. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

An unidentified baby found in Bukemba commune, Rutana province

On April 30, 2025, in SOSUMO sugarcane plantation, near Maragarazi River, in a place commonly known as "KWI DIGI KWA NYAWENDA," in Bukemba commune, Rutana province, an unknown baby, around 3 months old, was found. According to sources on the scene, passersby heard a baby's cries about 5 meters from the road. They found the

baby alone, lying on a loincloth, cold because it had just rained. Next to him was a handbag containing two baby clothes. They searched all around the plantation but found no one suspected of having committed this act. They then looked for milk for the baby, and he regained his strength. The baby was assisted by Philippe Murumba, who took him at home. This benefactor operates a bicycle taxi and lives in Gasekebuye quarter in Gihofi.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Ligue Iteka strongly denounces the persistent deterioration of human rights in Burundi and condemns the impunity of the perpetrators of crimes. In the face of this alarming situation, Ligue Iteka is urgently calling on the Burundian authorities to take immediate action to stop these violations and ensure justice and equality for all citizens.

It recommends:

1. The Government of Burundi to :

- ⇒ Ban intimidating activities by Imbonerakure, especially during elections;
- ⇒ Conduct immediate, impartial and thorough investigations into all allegations of violence, intimidation and arbitrary arrests against journalists, including the brutal assault on Willy Kwizera;
- ⇒ Ensure respect for press freedom, in accordance with national laws and international conventions ratified by Burundi;
- ⇒ Conduct an immediate, impartial, and transparent investigation into allegations of military training by Imbonerakure, including the alleged involvement of members of foreign armed groups (FLN and FDLR).

2. To the National Communication Council (CNC) :

- ⇒ Fully play its role as a protector of press freedom by actively intervening with the authorities to guarantee the safety of journalists and respect for their rights;
- ⇒ Ensuring the protection of human rights and ending violence by Imbonerakure.