



## Burundi Watch Update

6 – 12 March 2018



### **Burundian refugees leave DRC for Rwanda**

About 2,500 refugees have fled their refugee settlement in the DRC and relocated to Rwanda for fear of being returned to Burundi. The refugees belong to a religious sect led by a female prophet named Zebiya. They left Burundi for fear of religious persecution. Several humanitarian agencies had stopped offering them aid since they refused to be registered using the biometric system claiming it was against their religion. Faced with the prospect of deportation to Burundi, the refugees asked the peacekeepers to escort them to Rwanda.<sup>1</sup> In Rwanda, the camp that received the refugees reported resource constraint since the transit camp of Nayarushishi has a capacity of 2,300 only.

### **Three activists sentenced to 10 years**

Three human rights activists in Burundi were sentenced to 10 years in prison by a court Friday 9 March. The three activists, Emmanuel Nshimirimana, Aime Constant Gatore and Marius Nizigiyimana, are members of a campaign group called Parcem. They were sentenced to 10 years in a proceeding in which neither they nor their lawyers were present for the crime of organizing a human rights workshop in June 2017. The prosecutor termed the action likely to disrupt security. The three have been in detention since the month of the workshop.<sup>2</sup>

### **Burundi's president named Eternal Guide**

Burundi President Pierre Nkurunziza has been named the “Eternal Supreme Guide” of Burundi by his ruling party CNDD-FDD. The party's secretary general Evariste Ndayishimiye justified the title saying that Nkurunziza is their elder,

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<sup>1</sup> AFP, “Fearing deportation, Burundi refugees quit DRC for Rwanda,” *News24*, 7 March 2018, available at <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/fearing-deportation-burundi-refugees-quit-drc-for-rwanda-20180307>

<sup>2</sup> AFP, “Three rights activists sentenced to 10 years in Burundi,” 9 March 2018, available at <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/three-rights-activists-sentenced-to-10-years-in-burundi-20180309>

father and adviser. Some critics called this a cult of personality around Nkurunziza.<sup>3</sup>

### **President Mkapa called to act**

The representatives of the opposition, civil society, media, groups of women and those in the diaspora held the Citizen Forum from 9 to 11 March 2018 in Leuven, Belgium. The forum drew up the vision that they presented as “Burundi we want”. The Forum was an opportunity of assessing the path made in the struggle for the respect of the Arusha peace agreement and the constitution. A Committee of coordination made of 5 people was created and assigned to coordinate efforts aimed at fostering the same positioning of all groups mobilized for the respect of the Arusha peace agreement and the constitution.

Regarding the forthcoming political meeting including the EAC mediated inter-Burundian dialogue round, the forum requested President Mkapa to engage the government of Burundi to suspend the constitutional referendum. Participants confirmed their commitment to combat the referendum because they strongly believe a constitutional change amid unsolved deadly conflict will put an end to efforts dedicated to the peaceful settlement of dispute and the civil war and widespread human rights violations.

### **Human rights violation at a glance**

Some of the cases of murders, assassinations, abduction and arbitrary arrests reported during the report period include:

- On 19 February 2018, the pro opposition Rwaso FNL militant, named Jean Bosco Nimpagaritse was arrested on Butare Hill in the District of Bukemba whereas Richard Ndayihimbaze and Eric Nduwayo were arrested on Kimanga hill in Bukemba district. All were arrested by Imbonerakure militiamen.
- On 24 February 2018, two dead bodies of a 22-year-old male, René Pacifique Ntwari and another who was not identified in as much as he was beheaded, were found at Gatete Hill in the District of Busoni. René Pacifique Ntwari was returning from Rwanda where he fled a while back. According to neighbors, he could have been killed by Imbonerakure militiamen on a patrol.

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<sup>3</sup> AFP, “Burundi leader dubbed 'eternal supreme guide' by party,” the *Daily Mail*, 11 March 2018, available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5487909/Burundi-leader-dubbed-eternal-supreme-guide-party.html>

- On 24 February 2018, Dieudonné Ngendakumana was killed at Buringa Hill in the District of Gihanga.
- On 24 February 2018, Salvator Ntahomvukiye and his wife were abducted from Rubimba hill in the District of Kibago by Imbonerakure militiamen who accused them of failure to register for the forthcoming elections
- On 24 February 2018, journalist Désiré Sindihebura working with IWACU Group Press was assaulted by Imbonerakure militiamen in the District of Giheta. Relatives report that the victim was accused of spreading fake news



*Journalist Désiré Sindihebura after the aggression by Imbonerakure in Giheta. Credit: Iwacu on twitter*

- On 25 February 2018, Clement Ruhaza was arrested at Muriza hill in the District of Butaganzwa. Witnesses report that Clement was accused by Imbonerakure of disobeying and insulting institutions. The victim was released the next day after being forced to pay 50,000 BIF to Butaganzwa District agents
- On 26 February 2018, Evariste Ngenzi was shot dead at Mutoyi hill in the District of Bugendana. Witnesses report that the victim is the representative of the ruling CNDD FDD party on Mutoyi Hill. Sergeant Ndabahagamyé and Caporal Chief Jonas Uwimbabazi were arrested in relation with the murder. The two were prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.
- On 27 February 2018, Clovis Icishatse, Leon Nincuti and Ndikumana were arrested by police agents on Kagwema Hill in the District of Gihanga. Witnesses report that the three (3) young men were reportedly taken to Buganda police station. They are accused of collaborating with a group of rebels based in the DRC.
- On 1 March 2018 two officials in the District of Kiremba, Cyriaque nkezabahizi and his deputy in charge of sports, Michel Mutama were arrested and detained in Ngozi following the accusation of conspiracy against Pierre Nkurunziza as their town's football team allegedly roughed up President Nkurunziza who was playing during a match with his personal team Allélua FC

- On 2 March 2018, thirteen (13) teachers were arrested at Murambi hill in the District of Gataru. All the teachers were arrested by Imbonerakure militiamen as they accused them of assaulting the headmaster.
- On 3 March 2018, FNL member, Jean Népo Bimenyimana was arrested on Mukerwa hill in the District of Busoni by the Imbonerakure militiamen as he refused to pay a contribution for the construction of a local headquarters of the ruling CNDD- FDD party which he is not affiliated with.
- On 5 March 2018, Willy Mucondo was arrested by Police agents on Murinda hill in the District of Vugizo
- On 8 March 2018, FNL member Eric Ndikumasabo was arrested in Bibara in the District of Mwakiro by Imbonerakure who accused him of teaching to vote against the change of the constitution
- On 10 March 2018, five MSD members namely Benius Sinzobatungana, Bonaventure Havyarimana, Egide Habonimana, Lionel Hafashimana; and Emmanuel were arrested in Bujumbura by the NIS agent Mathias Joseph Niyonzima known as Kazungu and taken to unknown destination.

### **Atrocities Watch Africa**

Atrocities Watch Africa (AWA) is a non-partisan, civil society organization and institution that intends to provide continental leadership in matters pertaining to the prevention of mass atrocities within Africa and beyond, through multi-pronged approaches that infuse ownership, legitimacy, and sustainable interface. AWA's strategic and approaches are grounded in the realization that atrocities can be prevented through various interventions, including, but not limited to, early warning mechanisms, diplomatic efforts, use of social media and new technologies, litigation, and advocacy campaigns.

info@atrocitieswatch.org

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