



Burundi Watch Update, 28 March- 03 April 2016

Background

As the violence stemming from the disputed 29 June 2015¹, 21 July 2015² and 24 July 2015³ continues to be recorded including killing of high profile army officers, the tension remains high within the army. Abduction, torture and arbitrary arrest of individuals opposed to President Nkurunziza's third term bid are reported on a daily basis.

Former Rwanda Minister and Ambassador dies in Burundi Prison

Former Rwandan Minister and Ambassador **Jacques Bihozagara** died on 31 March 2016 in Mpimba Central Prison where he was detained since December 2015. The Diplomat turned businessman was arrested for allegedly "spying" for Kigali⁴. He had been living in Burundi for some years ever since he retired from politics.

In a statement released on the website of the Rwandan ministry of foreign affairs⁵, **Eugene Ngoga**, the Africa Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the deceased died in unclear circumstances and asked Burundi government to disclose **Bihozagara's** cause of death and repatriate his body to Rwanda.

"Jacques **Bihozagara** is one of many Rwandans in Burundi who have died under violent circumstances or suspiciously in the past several months. The Rwanda Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation wishes to obtain precise information from Burundian authorities on the circumstances of Mr **Bihozagara's** death and clarification on the reasons for his detention since last December," Mr Ngoga said.

The United States echoed Rwanda call as it expressed deep concern over the death of Jacques **Bihozagara**. In his statement dated 31 March 2016, Assistant Secretary and Spokesperson Department John Kirby stressed: " **Bihozagara's** death highlights abiding concerns about

¹ Communal and legislative elections

² Presidential election

³ Senatorial election

⁴ Rwanda shocked by death of former diplomat in Burundi <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/Rwanda-shocked-by-death-of-former-diplomat-in-Burundi/-/2558/3140814/-/14hoi47z/-/index.html>,

⁵ Rwanda seeks clarification from Burundi on suspicious death of Jacques Bihozagara, [http://www.minaffet.gov.rw/index.php?id=886&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=1772&cHash=178842ab61ed297fc1e01a7127c40f7d](http://www.minaffet.gov.rw/index.php?id=886&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1772&cHash=178842ab61ed297fc1e01a7127c40f7d)

inhumane prison conditions in Burundi, as well as persistent credible reports of arbitrary arrests, increased torture, the presence of underground detention facilities, and disappearances of individuals detained by security forces”⁶.

During his detention, **Bihozagara** was visited by several diplomats who were assured he was in safe custody⁷. On Saturday night, reports indicated that Burundi official demanded that the deceased’s family sign documents indicating that he died of natural causes or forget asking for the body.

The United Nations Security Council votes a resolution for the deployment of a United Nations police in Burundi

On 1st April 2016, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2279(2016)⁸ on Burundi and requesting for United Nations Police Deployment to Monitor Security Situation in Burundi.

The United Nations Secretary General was requested to present options for the deployment of a United Nations police to monitor the security situation, promote respect for human rights, and advance the rule of law in the country.

The government of Burundi and all other parties concerned were requested to reject any kind of violence and condemn any public statement inciting hatred, demanding that they refrain from actions that threatened the country’s peace and stability.

The Council further urged the Government to guarantee fundamental freedoms for all and adhere to the rule of law, strongly condemning all violations and abuses of human rights. It is worth recalling that on 17 December 2015, the African Union Peace and Security Council had decided to authorize the deployment of an African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (MAPROBU) of 5000 peacekeepers⁹. The Burundi government vehemently protested such deployment then.

The Prosecutor General invites victims’ families to submit their complaints to his Office

In a Press release dated 29 March 2016, the Burundi Prosecutor General Mr **Valentin Bagorikunda** invited victims’ families to submit complaints with his office instead of approaching the International Criminal Court. The Prosecutor General argued that his office often conduct investigation when it is informed of any crime but so far it was never approached

⁶ United States Concerned about Prison Conditions in Burundi
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/03/255385.htm>

⁷ Tension as Burundi Refuses to Hand Over Ex Rwandan Diplomat’s Body
<http://www.chimpreports.com/tension-as-burundi-refuses-to-hand-over-ex-rwandan-diplomats-body/>

⁸ <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12315.doc.htm>

⁹ Communiqué of the 565th meeting of the PSC on the situation in Burundi - See more at:
<http://www.peaceau.org/en/article/communique-of-the-565th-meeting-of-the-psc-on-the-situation-in-burundi#sthash.aEKexGvQ.dpuf>

by any victim family. He contended that there is a risk of manipulation since victims are “represented by lawyers with a hidden agenda”.

He stressed that lawyers for the victim families including Belgian **Bernard Maingain** and Burundian **Armel Niyongere** are under prosecution in relation to 13 May 2015 coup attempt and other crimes. However many of the victims family say that the Burundi justice system failed to put an end to impunity and continues to commit atrocities. It is on this basis that Burundi citizen are free to approach other international justice systems such as the ICC¹⁰

Continued killings and grenade attacks

During the reporting period, grenade attacks and gunshots continues in several locations of the country, with some reported casualties and damage. Some of the reported incidents include the following:

- On 28 March 2016, an attack by unidentified armed group in Bwoga in the District of Gitega(Centre of Burundi) resulted in 1 killed and 3 wounded;
- On 28 March 2016 **Jérôme Nduwimana** aka Vandam from Maramvya in the District of Burambi(South of Burundi) was killed in a gunshot;
- On 29 March 2016, a grenade attack on a Police van in Gasenyi, in the Zone of Gihosha resulted in 6 wounded;
- On 28 March 2016, one person was killed near Mpimba prison. Dead body was found the morning of 29 March 2016;
- On 30 March 2016 Caporal **Hicuburundi** was killed in Kirundo. He was one of the body guard of the Kirundo Camp Deputy Commander;
- On 2 April 2016, a grenade attack near the venue where the Musaga administrative authorities were meeting resulted in 1 killed and 5 wounded;
- On 2 April 2016 around 8pm, a grenade attack near Musaga zone was reported. No damage were caused;
- On 30 March 2016, **Ezéchiel Niyongabo** from Muramba in the District of Kirundo(North of Burundi) was targeted and wounded following a grenade attack. In an interview to Voice of America, **Ezéchiel Niyongabo** and neighbors argued that the attack was in retaliation of having decided to relocate the rest of the family

Arbitrary arrests, abduction and torture

During the update period, police continued their random searches and arrests in several neighborhoods of Bujumbura and upcountry. Dozens of youths were arrested and detained incommunicado. In some of the reported incidences, police and the Imbonerakure militia subjected victims to thorough beatings and ill-treatment. Some of the reported cases include the following:

- On 29 March 2016, **Thierry Nkeraguhiga** was abducted by police agents in Muyinga(East of Burundi);

¹⁰ Justice : Des citoyens burundais libres de saisir la Cour Pénale Internationale, <http://www.bonesha.bi/Justice-Des-citoyens-burundais.html>

- 29 March 2016, **Mpawenayo Prosper** was abducted in Gasenyi in the Zone of Gihosha;
- On 29 March **Jacques Sibomana** aka Rousseau was beaten by 30 Imbonerakure in Rugombo(West of Burundi);
- On 28 March 2016, **Eric Nintunze** was abducted in Musaga;
- 30 March 2016, following police search 40 persons were arrested in Mabanda(South of Burundi);
- On 31 March 2016, a 18- year- old girl was subjected to gang rape by 6 youths. The Prosecution office in Cibitoke announced that 3 suspects were arrested for investigation
- On 1 April 2016, **Justin Ahishakiye**, a taxi driver from Mukike was arrested by an intelligent agent in Jenda (Centre of Burundi) and taken to unknown destination;
- On 3 April 2016 a soldier only known as **Vianney** working with the Kamenge Military Hospital was abducted by national intelligence agents and conducted to unknown destination

Atrocities Watch Africa

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