

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AWAITING TRIAL

Nestor Nibitanga, a former member of the deregistered Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons (APRODH), remains in detention awaiting trial for charges of ‘threatening state security’ and ‘rebellion’. He was arrested in Gitega, Burundi on 21 November 2017. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Nestor Nibitanga, APRODH’s former regional observer responsible for central and eastern Burundi, is currently in detention awaiting trial. Police arrested him on the morning of 21 November 2017 at his home in the Musinzira neighbourhood of Gitega. In a tweet on the day of his arrest, the police said several documents were seized as evidence.

He was held by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in the capital Bujumbura without access to his lawyer until 4 December 2017, before being transferred to Murembwa central prison in Rumonge. He has been charged with ‘threatening state security’ and ‘rebellion’. Amnesty International believes the charges are in retaliation for his peaceful human rights activities. Nestor Nibitanga was denied bail on 3 January 2018.

APRODH was closed down by the Minister of Interior in October 2016 alongside several other human rights organizations.

Amnesty International considers Nestor Nibitanga to be a prisoner of conscience who has been imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.

Please write immediately in French, English or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to drop all charges and release Nestor Nibitanga immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on them to ensure that he has access to his family and the lawyer of his choice, pending his release;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment while detained;
- Urging them to stop harassing human rights defenders and to publicly recognize the legitimacy of their activities.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 MARCH 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice

Aimée Laurentine Kanyana

Ministry of Justice

BP 1305

Bujumbura, Burundi

Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General of the Republic

Sylvestre Nyandwi

Parquet General

BP 105Bujumbura, Burundi

Email: sylnyandwi@yahoo.fr

Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Minister of Human Rights, Social Affairs

and Gender

Martin Nivyabandi

Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs

and Gender,

Ex-Building of Finances

Bujumbura, Burundi

Email: mnivyabandi@yahoo.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ERNEST NDABASHINZE, Embassy of the Republic of Burundi, Uganda House Second Floor 58-59 Trafalgar Square WC2N 5DX, 020 7930 4958, Fax 020 7930 4957, www.burundiembassy.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 257/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr16/7493/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the start of the political crisis in April 2015 when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his decision to stand for a third term in office that sparked widespread demonstrations, the Burundian authorities have engaged in an extensive clampdown on independent civil society and media. Many human rights defenders have fled the country for their safety and many others are being unjustly prosecuted simply for their human rights work.

Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa, APRODH's founder and one of Burundi's most respected human rights defenders, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt in August 2015, sustaining life threatening injuries. His son-in-law was killed by unknown assailants in Bujumbura in October 2015, and his son was killed in November 2015 after being arrested by the police.

Further information on UA: 257/17 Index: AFR 16/7870/2018 Issue Date: 13 February 2018