

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER'S TRIAL STARTS

Burundian human rights defender, Germain Rukuki, is being prosecuted for 'threatening state security' and 'rebellion' on account of his human rights work. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Germain Rukuki is the president of a community organization called Njabutsa Tujane, an employee of the Burundian Catholic Lawyers Association and a former member of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi). ACAT-Burundi was closed down and deregistered by the Minister of Interior in October 2016, along with several other independent human rights groups, accused of working to 'tarnish the image of the country' and 'sow hatred and division among the Burundian population'.

He was arrested on 13 July 2017 in Bujumbura and has been held in pre-trial detention since. He was initially held and interrogated by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) without a lawyer present. On 26 July 2017, he was transferred to a prison in Ngozi. On 1 August 2017, Germain Rukuki was formally charged with 'threatening state security' and 'rebellion' for collaborating with ACAT-Burundi. An email exchange dating back to a period when ACAT-Burundi was legally registered in Burundi has been presented as evidence against him.

Germain Rukuki was denied bail on 17 August 2017, a decision that was upheld on 31 October 2017. His trial started on 13 February 2018.

Amnesty International considers Germain Rukuki 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 Germain Rukuki 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 105 Bujumbura, 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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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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.

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