

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER MARKS ONE YEAR IN PRISON

Human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Germain Rukuki was arrested one year ago on 13 July 2017. He was sentenced to 32 years in prison on 26 April 2018. In June, he was hospitalised and underwent surgery for injuries sustained in prison. He has since been returned to prison although he requires continued treatment.

On 26 April 2018, **Germain Rukuki**, the president of a community-based organization called Njubutsa Tujane and an employee of the Burundian Catholic Lawyers Association, was sentenced to 32 years in prison by the Ntahangwa High Court. He had been arrested on 13 July 2017 in the capital Bujumbura. He was found guilty of “rebellion”, “threatening state security”, “attacking the authority of the state” and “participation in an insurrectionist movement”, and acquitted on charges of “assassination” and “destruction of public and private buildings”. Neither he nor his lawyers were present when the verdict was delivered. He appealed the decision on 29 May. His appeal remains pending.

On 8 June, Germain Rukuki fractured his ankle and later injured his right shoulder and right leg. He underwent surgical operation at Ngozi hospital, in northern Burundi, on 11 June. On 18 June, he was discharged from the hospital and returned to prison, although he could not walk unassisted and his foot was still bandaged. He applied for bail on 26 June in order to receive continued medical treatment and rehabilitation care in hospital.

Amnesty International believes that Germain Rukuki has been prosecuted solely because of his human rights work and considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Urging the Burundian authorities to overturn Germain Rukuki’s conviction and immediately and unconditionally release him from arbitrary detention;
- Urging them to ensure that Germain Rukuki receives adequate medical treatment as required by his state of health;
- Urging them to end intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 AUGUST 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice

Aimee Laurentine Kanyana
Ministry of Justice
BP 1305
Bujumbura, Burundi
Twitter: @AimeeLaurentine;
@MiniJustice
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General of the Republic

Sylvestre Nyandwi
Parquet General
BP 105
Bujumbura, Burundi
Email: slynandwi@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
Twitter: @mmnivyabandi
Email: solidaritegenre@yahoo.fr

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 second update of UA 32/18. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afri16/8286/2018/en/

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the start of the political crisis in April 2015, the Burundian authorities have engaged in a clampdown on opposition members, independent civil society and media. Many human rights defenders and activists fled the country for their safety while others are being persecuted solely because of their human rights work.

Germain Rukuki formerly worked for ACAT- Burundi before the organization was shut down by the authorities. ACAT-Burundi along with several other civil society organizations was shut down in October 2016 by the Minister of Interior. They were accused of “tarnishing the image of the country” and “sowing hatred and division among the Burundian population”. Part of the evidence the Public Prosecutor presented against Germain was an email exchange between him and ACAT staff from the time when ACAT-Burundi was legally registered in Burundi.

After his arrest on 13 July 2017 in Bujumbura, Germain Rukuki was initially detained and interrogated by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) without a lawyer present. He was transferred to the prison in Ngozi on 26 July 2017. On 1 August 2017, he was charged with “threatening state security and “rebellion” for working with the non-governmental organization Action by Christian for Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi). The charges of “assassination”, “destruction of public and private buildings” and “participation in an insurrectionist movement” were added when his trial began on 13 February 2018.

Name: Germain Rukuki
Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 32/18 Index: AFR 16/8636/2018 Issue Date: 13 July 2018