

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

24 October 2019

Index number: AFR 16/1283/2019

# BURUNDI: IMMEDIATELY RELEASE DETAINED JOURNALISTS

Authorities in Burundi must immediately and unconditionally release four journalists and their driver arrested for simply doing their job.

Christine Kamikazi, Agnès Ndirubusa, Tércence Mpozenzi, and Egide Harerimana, journalists working for the Burundian private media house Iwacu, and their driver Adolphe Masabarakiza, were arrested on Tuesday 22 October in the northwestern district of Musigati, in Bubanza Province.

They had travelled to Bubanza following reports of clashes between an armed group and the security forces in the province. According to Iwacu, even though the four journalists and their driver had informed the provincial authorities of their intention to travel to the area, the head of operations in the region ordered their arrests.

As of 24 October, they had been held for two days and two nights at the Bubanza police station. On 23 October, they were interrogated but they have not been charged with any crime.

Arresting journalists for simply doing their job is an attempt to curb media freedom and the right to freedom of expression in Burundi.

Since the start of the political crisis in 2015, the activities of independent media have become more and more restricted. The BBC's operating licence was revoked earlier this year and VOA broadcasts have been suspended in Burundi since May 2018. Journalists are banned from sharing any information that could be broadcast by the two media houses.

Another Iwacu journalist Jean Bigirimana has been missing since 22 July 2016, when he was abducted by people believed to be members of the National Intelligence Service (SNR). His fate remains unknown.