

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALIST'S CONVICTION MUST BE OVERTURNED

On 2 January, the High Court of Mukaza in Bujumbura, Burundi, sentenced journalist Floriane Irangabiye to 10 years in prison and a fine of one million Burundian francs (USD 482). She was convicted on trumped-up charges of “undermining the integrity of the national territory”. Her lawyers have appealed this decision. Floriane Irangabiye was arrested on 30 August 2022 while on a family visit in Bujumbura. She is currently being held at the Musinga Prison. Amnesty International believes that Floriane Irangabiye is being prosecuted solely for peacefully exercising her human rights and for her work as a journalist and calls for her immediate and unconditional release.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mme Domine Banyankimbona

Minister of Justice

PO Box: 1880

Bujumbura, Burundi

Email: minjustice@gmail.com /

infos@burundi.justice.gov.bi

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Dear Minister

I am appalled by the conviction and arbitrary detention of journalist, **Floriane Irangabiye** who on 2 January 2023 was sentenced to 10 years in prison and a one million Burundian francs fine by the High Court of Mukaza in Bujumbura for “undermining the integrity of the national territory.”. Her lawyers appealed this decision on 23 January.

Floriane Irangabiye was arrested on 30 August 2022 while visiting family in Bujumbura, the former capital of Burundi. She was held without being formally charged until October 2022. During the trial, the prosecution presented comments made during the broadcasting of a show, in August 2022, on Radio Igicaniro, a Burundian online media outlet where she and her guests criticized the government of Burundi. In an audio record of the show retrieved by the prosecutor, she purportedly said: “the population is resigned to the evils of the leaders of Burundi, citizens do not express themselves for fear of being killed, we call on Burundians to brave the fear.” The prosecution also presented as evidence photos of her posing with President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and former President Pierre Buyoya at public events. She was also accused of participating in meetings held by Burundian youths in exile in Rwanda.

In September 2022, she was transferred to the Musinga Prison, in the northern province of Musinga, where she remains held.

Floriane Irangabiye's unfair prosecution is motivated by continuous efforts by Burundian authorities to clamp down on peaceful dissent, despite multiple promises by President Evariste Ndayishimiye to improve the country's human rights situation. Her conviction and ongoing arbitrary detention are in violation of her rights to freedom of expression and fair trial.

I urge you to instruct the Prosecutor General of the Republic to ensure that Floriane Irangabiye is immediately and unconditionally released. Authorities must quash the conviction and drop all charges against her.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Floriane Irangabiye has been living in Rwanda for more than a decade. Before the 2015 crisis, she used to make regular trips between the capital, Kigali, where she resides, and Bujumbura, Burundi, where her family lives.

When former President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to run for a third term in office in April 2015, many Burundians took to the streets to express their frustration against the decision that they believed violated the 2005 Burundian Constitution which limited presidential terms to two terms of 5 years. Her trip in August 2022 was the first time she visited her family in Bujumbura since 2015.

Burundi's civil society and media organizations were among the first targets of the government repression in 2015. The government suspended or closed most independent human rights organizations and media outlets and drove them into exile. Despite promises by President Ndayishimiye to normalize relations with the media in 2021, the Burundian government continues to view the press and human rights work with suspicion, [and severe restrictions on human rights](#), including the right to freedom of expression, remain in place.

Most independent human rights organizations have been unable to resume their activities in Burundi, especially as the Burundian authorities have issued arrest warrants for many of their leading activists, who live in exile. 12 human rights defenders and journalists were among a group of 34 people [sentenced to life in prison in absentia in June 2020](#) on accusations of involvement in an attempted coup in May 2015; the Supreme Court judgment was not made public until February 2021.

Arrest or detention as punishment for the peaceful exercise of human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, is arbitrary and violates the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights both of which Burundi has ratified. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has determined that those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights must be immediately released.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 3 April 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Floriane Irangabiye (She/Her)