

URGENT ACTION

JOURNALISTS DETAINED FOR DOING THEIR JOB

Four Iwacu journalists and their driver were arbitrarily arrested on 22 October in north-western Burundi, as they arrived to investigate reports of clashes between the security forces and an armed group in Bubanza province. Charged with undermining state security, the five remain in prison after the Council Chamber of the Bubanza Tribunal decided to keep them in detention on 31 October. They have appealed this decision.

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

*Prosecutor General of the Republic Sylvestre Nyandwi
Parquet général
B. P. 105
Bujumbura, Burundi*

Dear Mr Prosecutor General,

*I am appalled by the continued detention of Iwacu journalists **Agnès Ndirubusa, Christine Kamikazi, Egide Harerimana, Térence Mpozenzi** and their driver **Adolphe Masabarakiza** since they were arbitrarily arrested in Bubanza Province on 22 October 2019.*

According to Iwacu, a Burundian independent news outlet, its employees were in Bubanza to investigate reports of clashes between the security forces and an armed group in the province. As is their usual practice, they had informed the provincial authorities of their plan to travel to the area, only to be arrested upon arrival.

On 31 October the Council Chamber of the Bubanza Tribunal decided to keep the five in detention at Bubanza Central Prison where they had been transferred from police cells by the provincial prosecutor's office five days earlier. They were charged with undermining state security the same day.

I note your press statement of 31 October in which you stated that they were not arrested for being journalists, but rather for the facts for which they are accused. However, the activity for which they are accused – travelling to an area to investigate recent events – is precisely the kind journalists are expected to undertake.

*I believe **Agnès Ndirubusa, Christine Kamikazi, Egide Harerimana, Térence Mpozenzi and Adolphe Masabarakiza** were arrested and are being targeted simply for doing their work. Therefore, I call on you to ensure that all accusations against them are dropped and that they are released immediately and unconditionally.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Iwacu is one of the few independent news outlets still operating in Burundi. Since the crisis began in April 2015, over President Pierre Nkurunziza's bid for a third term in office, journalists, human rights activists and defenders and opposition members have been targeted and many have been forced into exile.

The move by President Nkurunziza sparked mass demonstrations as many believed it violated the [Arusha Accords](#) that ended a decade long civil war. The Accord prohibited anyone to preside over the country for more than 10 years. This ban was also reaffirmed in the 2005 Constitution. Demonstrations against President Nkurunziza's third term in 2015 were [violently dispersed](#) by security forces, resulting to scores of people arrested, injured, [tortured](#) and [killed](#). Many also went [missing](#). On 13 and 14 May 2015, a group of senior military officers tried to overthrow President Nkurunziza's government. Four independent media outlets, Radio Publique Africaine, Radio Tele Renaissance and Radio Isanganiro were destroyed by security forces in the aftermath of the failed coup. They were accused of sympathising with the coup plotters and to have broadcasted their messages.

Antoine Kaburahe, Iwacu Founder and Director was also forced to leave the country after he was questioned by the Prosecutor's office in December 2015 over his alleged contacts with soldiers reportedly responsible for the failed coup d'état of 13-14 May 2015.

[Jean Bigirimana](#), another Iwacu journalist, went missing on 22 July 2016 and his whereabouts remain unknown. According to his colleagues, Jean was lured to Bugarama for information on a case he was working on. He is believed to have been arrested by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Bugarama town, outside Bujumbura. His family have been forced into exile because of threats his wife received following her public statements on the enforced disappearance of her husband.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French.

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 23 December 2019

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Agnès Ndirubusa (She/Her/Hers), Christine Kamikazi (She/Her/Hers), Egide Harerimana (He/Him/His), Térance Mpozenzi (He/Him/His) and their driver Adolphe Masabarakiza (He/Him/His)