

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL STATEMENT

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Burundi: Two Years After Activist Slain, Justice Stalled *Resume Investigations, Prosecutions in Ernest Manirumva's Killing, Rights Groups Say*

(Bujumbura, April 8, 2011) – The government of Burundi should complete its investigations and deliver justice for the killing two years ago of Ernest Manirumva, a Burundian anti-corruption activist, seventeen Burundian and international nongovernmental organizations said today in a [joint statement](#). The organizations also called on the government to allow civil society activists to demonstrate peacefully in support of justice for the killing of Manirumva.

Manirumva, who was vice president of the civil society organization Anti-corruption and Economic Malpractice Observatory (OLUCOME) and vice president of an official body that regulates public procurement, was found stabbed to death outside his home in the capital, Bujumbura, on April 9, 2009. His colleagues and friends say that at the time of his killing, Manirumva was investigating several sensitive cases, including allegations of large-scale police corruption and illegal weapons purchases.

“The government made a show of justice, but the process has been blocked for months,” said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “The government should uncover the truth, no matter where it leads.”

The Burundian government established several successive commissions to investigate the killing, and accepted an offer from the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to assist in investigations. However, judicial authorities disregarded recommendations by the FBI, including the recommendation to require a number of high-ranking police officials implicated by witnesses in the course of the investigation to submit to questioning and DNA testing.

The government also did not respond to an invitation from the Canadian government in February 2010 to send a Burundian team to Canada to interview a suspect who fled there after the killing. Several people cited by witnesses as having been implicated in or having known in advance about the plans to kill Manirumva were later killed or have disappeared. To date, no thorough investigations have been conducted into these crimes.

Efforts to seek justice have further stalled since the first public hearing into Manirumva's killing in July 2010. Questions over which court had jurisdiction led to delays, as did the court's failure to notify suspects who had not yet been arrested of the charges against them. No new court date has been set. Eleven suspects have been held in pretrial detention since 2009, raising concerns about their right to a speedy trial.

The government refused to issue a permit to a group of Burundian organizations that requested authorization to hold a silent protest march on the anniversary of Manirumva's killing. When the organizations attempted to march without authorization on the morning of April 8, 2011, two demonstrators, Gabriel Rufyiri and Claver Irambona of OLUCOME, were arrested by the police commissioner of the western region, David Nikiza, who is among the suspects cited in the FBI report. They were released a few hours later.

“The refusal to allow us to hold a peaceful march and the arrests of our activists raise questions about the government's commitment to justice and freedom of expression,” said

Pacifique Nininahazwe, delegate general of the Forum for the Strengthening of Civil Society (FORSC), a Burundian organization that has led the “Justice for Ernest Manirumva” campaign.

The organizations called on the government of Burundi to carry out additional investigations, including questioning and taking DNA samples from the people cited in the FBI report and in a subsequent motion filed by the civil party. The government should also investigate other crimes that appear to be linked to the killing of Manirumva, the groups said, provide protection for witnesses and others material to the investigation, and ensure that the judicial system acts expeditiously and independently to deliver justice.

The organizations that issued the joint statement are:

Burundian organizations:

Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT Burundi)
Association pour la Défense des Droits de la Femme (ADDF)
Association pour la Protection des droits humains et des personnes détenues (APRODH)
Coalition de la Société Civile pour le Monitoring Electoral (COSOME)
Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)
Collectif pour la Promotion des Associations des Jeunes (CPAJ)
Confédération des Syndicats du Burundi (COSYBU)
Forum pour le renforcement de la société civile (FORSC)
Ligue Burundaise des Droits de l'Homme ITEKA
Observatoire de l'Action Gouvernementale (OAG)
Observatoire de Lutte contre la Corruption et les Malversations Économiques (OLUCOME)
Union Burundaise des Journalistes (UBJ)

International organizations:

Amnesty International (AI)
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
Front Line
Human Rights Watch (HRW)
Observatoire pour la protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme (joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organisation Against Torture)

To read the April 2010 Human Rights Watch news release, “[Burundi: Ensure Justice Over Activist's Killing](#),” please visit:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/04/08/burundi-ensure-justice-over-activist-s-killing>

For further details on the Manirumva case, please see a report by the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH):

<http://www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/burundi/2011/04/d21198/>

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