

URGENT ACTION

WHEREABOUTS OF BURUNDIAN JOURNALIST UNKNOWN

Jean Bigirimana, a journalist for the Burundian newspaper *Iwacu*, was last seen in Bugarama, Muramvya province, on 22 July. According to *Iwacu*, there are indications that Jean Bigirimana, who joined the newspaper less than a month ago, was arrested by security forces. The police spokesperson has however denied these allegations.

Jean Bigirimana was last seen on 22 July. He was taken by people believed to be members of Burundi's National Intelligence Services (SNR), according to a colleague who works with him in Bujumbura. *Iwacu*'s editor-in-chief received an anonymous call soon after alerting him that Jean Bigirimana had been taken by security forces in Bugarama (about 46 kilometres from Bujumbura).

The police spokesperson posted a message on his official Twitter account on 25 July denying allegations that security forces had arrested Jean Bigirimana and called on his family to cooperate with the police investigation.

The circumstances and motive behind why Jean Bigirimana was taken by people believed to be members of the SNR are still not clear. However, *Iwacu* believes that Jean Bigirimana might have been taken because of his work as a journalist and his recent visits to Kigali. He attended a seminar organized by a Dutch media NGO, RNW Media in Kigali in June 2016. Since the crisis started in April 2015, dozens of journalists have fled the country fearing for their security. Some journalists have decided to stop their work while many are currently working from Rwanda. (For additional information see: <http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/englishnews/confusion-around-an-arrest/>)

Amnesty International is concerned that Jean Bigirimana may have been subjected to enforced disappearance.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Jean Bigirimana may have been subjected to enforced disappearance and urging the authorities to disclose the findings and progress of the ongoing investigation;
- Calling on them to ensure that, if he is under custody, he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and given prompt access to his family, a lawyer of his choosing and any medical attention he may require;
- If he is in custody, urging them to ensure he is immediately and unconditionally released unless he is promptly charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence;
- Urging the authorities to effectively protect journalists against any threat, attack, intimidation or harassment related to their journalistic work.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 SEPTEMBER 2016 TO:

President

H.E. Pierre Nkurunziza
Présidence de la République du Burundi
Boulevard de l'Indépendance
Bujumbura
Burundi
Email: pierre.nkurunziza@burundi.gov.bi
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Security

Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni
Ministère de la Sécurité Publique
Avenue Nyabisindu
Ngagara, Quartier Industriel
Bujumbura
Burundi
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Prosecutor General
Valentin Bagorikunda
Parquet General
BP 105
Bujumbura
Burundi

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Before joining *Iwacu*, Jean Bigirimana was a journalist at Rema FM, a radio station close to the ruling party in Burundi. He joined *Iwacu* less than a month before he was last seen. *Iwacu* newspaper is one of the last independent media outlets still operating from inside Burundi.

Journalists have been targeted by security forces since the beginning of the crisis in April 2015 in Burundi. As protests erupted on 26 April 2015 after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he would seek a third term, Radio Publique Africaine (RPA), Radio Bonesha FM and Radio Isanganiro were prevented from broadcasting outside the capital Bujumbura.

The authorities, on 27 April 2015, shut down the Maison de la Presse (Media House) in Bujumbura, a place where media houses occasionally record joint broadcasts. The General Prosecutor ordered the re-opening of Maison de la Presse on 5 May 2015, but kept its studio closed.

Following the attempted coup d'état of 13 and 14 May 2015, government forces destroyed four independent media houses: RPA, Radio Bonesha FM, Radio Isanganiro and Radio-Tele Renaissance. Rema FM, a radio station close to the ruling party, was also destroyed by unidentified men.

Before, during and after the protests, Amnesty International documented several cases of intimidation and harassment of local and international journalists by Burundian officials and security forces.

Name: Jean Bigirimana

Gender m/f: m

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