

URGENT ACTION

BURUNDIAN PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE ON TRIAL

Germain Rukuki remains in prison after appearing before court for the second time on 3 April 2018 for several charges relating to his human rights work. Germain was arrested in July 2017 in the capital Bujumbura. He is the president of a community organization called Njabutsa Tujane and an employee of the Burundian Catholic Lawyers Association.

Germain Rukuki, who is also a former employee of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT) – Burundi, appeared in court for the second time on 3 April 2018. During the hearing, the Prosecutor argued that Germain was part of the “insurrection movement of 2015” where widespread protests were organized against President Pierre Nkurunziza’s decision to seek a third term in office. At the same hearing, Germain’s lawyers asked the court to disregard the statements he made when he was interrogated by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) without a lawyer present. The court promised to review the lawyer’s request when it sits to hear the merits of the case. The date for the next hearing is yet to be set.

Germain was arrested on 13 July 2017 in Bujumbura where he was initially detained and interrogated by the SNR without a lawyer present. He was later transferred to prison in Ngozi, northern Burundi, on 26 July 2017. On 1 August 2017, he was charged with “threatening state security” and “rebellion” for working with ACAT-Burundi. ACAT-Burundi along with several other independent human rights organizations were shut down by the Minister of Interior in October 2016, who accused them of “tarnishing the image of the country” and “sowing hatred and division among the Burundian population.” Its closure came after it published a report on the anti-third term protests. The Public Prosecutor presented as evidence an email exchange between Germain and ACAT staff from a time when ACAT-Burundi was still legally registered in Burundi. When his trial began on 13 February 2018, Germain was additionally charged with “assassination”, “destruction of public and private buildings” and “participation in an insurrectionist movement”.

Amnesty International considers Germain Rukuki to be a prisoner of conscience. He is being prosecuted solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights work.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Urging the Burundian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Germain Rukuki;
- Calling on them to ensure that he has regular access to his family and his lawyer pending his release;
- Calling on them to ensure his is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;
- Urging them to end intimidation and harrassment against human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 JUNE 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice
Aimee Laurentine Kanyana
Ministry of Justice
BP 1305
Bujumbura, Burundi
Twitter: @AimeeLaurentine
Salutation: Dear Minister

Prosecutor General of the Republic
Sylvestre Nyandwi
Parquet General
BP 105
Bujumbura, Burundi
Email: sylnyandwi@yahoo.fr
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:
Minister of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender
Martin Nivyabandi
Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender
Ex-Building of Finances
Bujumbura, Burundi
Twitter: @mmnivyabandi
Email: solidaritegenre@yahoo.fr

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. This is the first update of UA 32/18. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr16/7869/2018/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the start of the political crisis in April 2015, the Burundian authorities have engaged in an extensive clampdown on opposition, independent civil society and media. Many human rights activists fled the country for their safety and many others are being unjustly prosecuted for their human rights work.

Germain was first denied bail on 17 August 2017 and then again on 31 October 2017.

Name: Germain Rukuki

Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 32/18 Index: AFR 16/8286/2018 Issue Date: 26 April 2018