

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST RELEASED IN BURUNDI

Faustin Ndikumana, President of the Burundian organization Words and Action for the Awakening of Conscience and the Evolution of Mindsets (PARCEM), was released on 21 February, after two weeks in custody. He was also fined 1,000,000 Burundian francs (\$775 US). He had alleged that magistrates bribe officials in the Ministry of Justice to secure appointment.

Faustin Ndikumana wrote to the Minister of Justice in Burundi, asking him to investigate and halt corruption in the recruitment of judges. He held a press conference and gave radio interviews on 3 February denouncing allegations of corruption within the Ministry.

He was arrested on 7 February, questioned by a magistrate at the Anti-Corruption Court, charged with making false declarations, and transferred to Mpimba Central Prison in Bujumbura, Burundi's capital.

Faustin Ndikumana was required to pay the maximum fine under Article 14 of the Anti-Corruption Law which states that making "false declarations" is punishable by five to ten years in prison and a fine of 5,000 (\$4 US) to 1,000,000 (\$775 US) Burundian francs. He has been instructed to report to the Anti-Corruption Court in Bujumbura every week and is not permitted to leave the city.

The independence of the judiciary in Burundi is regularly compromised through political interference. The United Nations Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Burundi, Fatsah Ouguergouz, cited problems with judicial independence as a key weakness of Burundi's justice system in his May 2011 report.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 44/12. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR16/001/2012/en

Name: Faustin Ndikumana
Gender m/f: Male

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