

URGENT ACTION

BURUNDIAN JOURNALIST IS STILL MISSING

Burundian journalist, Jean Bigirimana, is still missing, two months after he was reported to have been arrested by security forces outside the capital, Bujumbura. Attempts by his family and employer *Iwacu* newspaper to find him have been unsuccessful.

Jean Bigirimana was last seen on 22 July in Bugarama, Muramvya province, after he was taken by people believed to be members of Burundi's National Intelligence Service (SNR). Efforts by his family and his employer, *Iwacu* newspaper, to locate him have been unsuccessful.

Iwacu conducted their own investigation into Jean Bigirimana's disappearance around the area where he was reported to have been seen last. They were joined by the Burundian police and investigators from the National Independent Human Rights Commission. This investigation led to the discovery of two decaying bodies in Mubarazi River. The National Independent Human Rights Commission invited Jean Bigirimana's wife to help identify if her husband was among the two, but he was not.

Iwacu on 22 August introduced an official complaint against X (a type of complaint when one cannot determine who is responsible for a crime committed) at the Prosecutor's office in Burundi. *Iwacu* has also introduced an urgent complaint to the United Nations' Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances. The newspaper believes that Jean Bigirimana was disappeared because of his work and activities as a journalist. The Burundian police spokesperson has denied these allegations.

Amnesty International is concerned that Jean Birigimana might have been subjected to enforced disappearance and by the lack of effective investigation into cases of enforced disappearances by the Burundian authorities.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Expressing concern that Jean Bigirimana may have been subjected to enforced disappearance;
- Calling on the authorities to thoroughly, independently and impartially investigate the disappearance of Jean Bigirimana;
- Urging them to effectively protect journalists against any threat, attack, intimidation or harassment;
- Calling on the Burundian authorities to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 OCTOBER 2016 TO:

Président

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

Prosecutor General

Sylvestre Nyandwi
Parquet General
BP 105
Bujumbura
Burundi
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General

And copies to:

Minister of Public Security
Alain Guillaume Bunyoni
Ministere de la Security Publique
Avenue Nyabisindu
Ngagara, Quartier Industriel
Bujumbura

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 183/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr16/4596/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Jean Bigirimana joined *Iwacu* newspaper less than a month before he went missing. Before joining *Iwacu*, Jean Bigirimana was a journalist at Rema FM, a radio station close to the ruling party in Burundi. *Iwacu* is currently one of the last independent media outlets still able to operate in Burundi.

Dozens of journalists fled Burundi after security forces destroyed four major independent media houses in Bujumbura in the aftermath of the failed coup d'état on 13 and 14 May 2015. The destruction came after several attempts by the Burundian authorities to silence the media before and during mass protests against President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to seek for a third term in the office in April 2015.

The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights has documented several cases of enforced disappearances in Burundi.

Name: Jean Bigirimana
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 183/16 Index: AFR 16/4832/2016 Issue Date: 19 September 2016