

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER HELD IN PRE-TRIAL DETENTION

Burundian human rights defender Nestor Nibitanga has spent more than five months in pre-trial detention. He was arrested on 21 November 2017. Amnesty International believes the charges against him of “threatening state security” and “rebellion” are in relation to his human rights work.

Nestor Nibitanga, a former regional observer with the Association the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons (APRODH) responsible for central and eastern Burundi, has been held in pre-trial detention for more than five months. He has been charged with ‘threatening state security’ and ‘rebellion’. Amnesty International believes he is being punished for his peaceful human rights activities and his past affiliation with APRODH.

He was arrested at his home in Gitega on 21 November 2017. During the arrest, the police took two flash disks from his house, one of which contained a draft activities report for a local network of human rights observers. Nestor was not employed by APRODH at the time, as it was one of at least 10 human rights organizations shut down by the Minister of Interior in October 2016 over accusations of “tarnishing the country’s image” and “sowing hatred and division in the Burundian population”.

Immediately after his arrest, he was held by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Bujumbura without access to his lawyer until 4 December 2017, when he was transferred to Murembwa central prison in Rumonge, in southwestern Burundi, where he remains detained.

He was denied bail on 3 January 2018, a decision he has since appealed against.

Amnesty International considers Nestor Nibitanga to be a prisoner of conscience who is being targeted because of his peaceful human rights activities.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to drop all charges and immediately and unconditionally release Nestor Nibitanga;
- Calling on them to ensure that he has access to his family and a lawyer of his choice, pending his release;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture or other ill-treatment while in detention;
- Urging them to stop the intimidation and harrassment of human rights defenders.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 JUNE 2018 TO:

Minister of Justice
Aimée 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. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ERNEST NDABASHINZE, Embassy of the Republic of Burundi, Uganda House Second Floor 58-59 Trafalgar Square WC2N 5DX, 020 7930 4958, Fax 020 7930 4957, www.burundiembassy.org.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 257/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afri16/7870/2018/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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

Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa, APRODH's founder and a prominent human rights defender, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt on 3 August 2015. His son was killed on 6 November 2015 after being arrested by the police.

Further information on UA: 257/17 Index: AFR 16/8292/2018 Issue Date: 30 April 2018