

URGENT ACTION

JAILED DOCTOR NEEDS URGENT MEDICAL CARE

Dr Christophe Sahabo, a Burundian doctor, was arrested on 1 April 2022 over a dispute regarding the management of Kira hospital and has remained in detention ever since. On 10 September, he vomited and collapsed during a trial hearing. He was admitted to hospital, but transferred back to Ruyigi Prison on 12 September, while still undergoing treatment. His medical condition is serious and potentially life-threatening if he does not receive urgent medical attention. Family members were refused access to visit him in prison on 14 September and were not allowed to bring him medicines. The authorities must immediately allow him unfettered access to all necessary medical care.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Mme Domine Banyankimbona

Ministre de la Justice

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Dear Minister,

I am alarmed by the poor state of health of **Dr Christophe Sahabo**, who has been detained since 1 April 2022. He needs urgent medical attention.

On 10 September, Dr Christophe Sahabo attended a trial hearing at Muha High Court in Bujumbura. The hearing was suspended after he vomited and collapsed in court. He was admitted to hospital where he underwent tests and began treatment. Despite a recommendation to maintain him under medical observation for several days, Dr Christophe Sahabo was transferred back to Ruyigi Prison on the evening of 12 September – a journey of approximately 160 km. His family members were refused access to visit him in prison on 14 September and were not allowed to hand over medication they had brought for him.

At Amnesty International's request, two independent doctors reviewed Dr Christophe Sahabo's medical notes and test results. They confirmed that his condition was potentially life-threatening and that he requires urgent medical attention.

The deliberate denial of medical care to prisoners has potentially fatal consequences and may constitute a violation to the right to life. The authorities' deliberate denial of health care, causing severe pain and suffering, amounts to torture and other ill-treatment under international law. Under Burundian law (Article 33 of the 2017 law on the penitentiary system), detainees who are unwell have the right to be transferred to a medical institution for specialized care that is not available at the prison on the recommendation of the prison doctor.

In light of the above, I urge you to ensure that Dr Christophe Sahabo immediately receives appropriate medical attention and has unfettered access to his family and lawyers.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr Christophe Sahabo, managing director of Kira Hospital in Bujumbura, was arrested in April 2022, alongside Jean-David Pillot, chair of the hospital's board of directors. The latter was released after one night in detention, but Christophe Sahabo remained in detention for several days without access to his family or lawyers of his choosing. He was detained in a National Intelligence Service (SNR) cell where he spent more than 30 days before being presented to a magistrate and transferred to Mpimba prison. On 29 September 2022, he was transferred to Ruyigi prison, approximately 160km from Bujumbura where his case is being heard. His family and lawyers alleged that he was put under pressure and forced to resign from his role at Kira Hospital over unsubstantiated claims of fraud, money laundering and forging documents. One of his lawyers said that a recent financial audit, commissioned by Kira Hospital interim officials, found no wrongdoing on Christophe Sahabo's account. On 27 September 2022, his brother and lawyer were arrested and accused by the prosecutor general of forging the minutes of the Kira Hospital's general assembly meeting that reinstated Christophe Sahabo as director. His lawyer was released on 7 October 2022 after recusing herself from the case. His brother was also released the same day.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 16 March 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Christophe Sahabo (he/him)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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