

[Burundi | Release Germain Rukuki, quash his conviction and comply with international standards](#)

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During the Human Rights Council's 40th session, an interactive dialogue took place with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, in which [ISHR expressed serious concerns](#) over the breaches to due process observed in all of human rights defender Germain Rukuki's legal proceedings since his arrest without warrant on 13 July 2017. The infringements upon Germain Rukuki's rights since he was detained have been denounced relentlessly by the civil society and United Nations bodies, such as the [OHCHR](#) and the [Commission of Inquiry on Burundi](#).

Considering the failure of Burundi to change its ways, ISHR and twenty international and Burundian NGOs joined hands in a statement led by Protection International to "strongly condemn this blatant miscarriage of justice and insist that Germain's conviction is unlawful and part of a pattern of systematic attacks against human rights defenders and dissent voices since 2015".

On 26 April 2018, Germain Rukuki was sentenced to thirty-two years of imprisonment by the Ntahangwa High Court on charges of "breach of State security", "rebellion", "participation in an insurrectional movement" and "attack on the head of State", despite him carrying out peaceful and legitimate activities. On 26 November 2018, he appeared before the Court of Appeal of Bujumbura, which has still not handed down a decision four months after the hearing was held. This dispels any doubt over the government's crackdown on human rights defenders, for this case is no exception. This is yet another clear attempt to repress and criminalise freedom of expression and assembly.

Furthermore, the fact that his case file went missing a few days ago is proof of the Burundian State's contempt for the rule of law and of the lack of transparency, independence and credibility of the judiciary system. Thus, in light of the State's failure to ensure the respect of the defendant's procedural guarantees, the condemnations from civil society have amounted to reiterated calls for his release.

The statement lays out recommendations to Burundian authorities to put an end to gross human rights violation. They include the launch of an impartial, immediate and transparent investigation into the loss of Germain Rukuki's file; the full compliance with international and national obligations and standards, which implies the creation of a safe and enabling environment; the promotion and protection of human rights and the recognition of human rights defenders' work as legitimate, among others.

Germain Rukuki must be released, his conviction quashed and access to his file must be given to him and his

lawyer until so.

Read the full statement [here](#).

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