

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	329
Land:	Burundi
Kilde:	UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Titel:	Burundi: UN experts denounce jail terms given to journalists before elections
Udgivet:	20. februar 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. maj 2020

Document #2025245

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Burundi: UN experts denounce jail terms given to journalists before elections

French (/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25586&LangID=F)

GENEVA (20 February 2020) - UN experts* have strongly criticised the two and a half year jail sentences handed down against four Burundian journalists who sought to cover violent clashes between the Burundi Defence Forces and members of the rebel group Red-Tabara in the north of the country.

“After a trial marred by irregularities, the sentencing of four journalists to jail for simply carrying out their jobs is not acceptable. Journalists must be able to conduct their work independently and must have unhindered access to sources of information,” the experts said.

Christine Kamikazi, Agnès Ndirubusa, Tércence Mpozenzi and Egide Harerimana, human rights defenders and journalists for the independent media outlet *Iwacu*, were arrested on 22 October 2019 on their way to Bubanza province to cover clashes in the region. On 30 January 2020, the Bubanza High Court sentenced them each to two and a half years in prison and fined them one million Burundian francs (about US\$ 530) for “an ‘impossible attempt’ to undermine the internal security of the state” - an offence under article 16 of the Burundian criminal code.

The four journalists were arrested before they could begin their reporting and were held without charge for several days. They were then charged with “complicity in undermining the internal security of the state,” mainly on the basis of a private message sent by one of them to a colleague. Their trial lasted only two hours. According to the information received, the offence was reclassified as an “impossible attempt to undermine State security” without the accused being informed. They were reportedly not given the opportunity to defend themselves against this new charge.

“We are deeply concerned that the prison sentences of Ms. Kamikazi, Ms. Ndirubusa, Mr. Mpozenzi and Mr. Harerimana were handed down following proceedings that do not appear to have respected the right to a fair trial. The convictions appear to be directly related to their activities as journalists. If the right to a fair trial has not been respected, the journalists should be released,” the experts said.

Noting that this case takes place in a context where freedom of information is increasingly under threat, especially in the run-up to the presidential, parliamentary, municipal and colline (hill) elections scheduled between May and August 2020, the Special Rapporteurs called for the rights of journalists and the media to be respected.

“We are deeply concerned by the information we have received that this case is taking place against a backdrop of a shrinking democratic space, particularly with regards to freedom of information, in the run-up to the elections,” they added.

A new press law, enacted on 14 September 2018, requires journalists to present only information that is deemed “balanced,” or face sanctions. The National Communication Council has also imposed a “Code of Good Conduct for Media and Journalists in the Election Period for 2020,” which prohibits journalists from publishing certain information of public interest, such as polls or information about possible challenges to election results. In 2019, the Burundian authorities withdrew the licence of one international radio station and suspended the licence of another for an indefinite period.

“The fact that the journalists were convicted in the run-up to the elections and while working for *Iwacu*, one of the country's last independent media outlets, raises questions about the motives of the verdict,” concluded the UN experts, who are in contact with the Burundian authorities on this case.

ENDS

* *The UN experts: **Mr. David Kaye**, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx), **Mr. Michel Forst**, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/SRHRDefendersIndex.aspx), and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (/en/issues/detention/pages/wgadindex.aspx).*

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures (/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

ecoi.net summary:

UN experts criticise 2.5-year prison term against 4 journalists



Country:

Burundi

Source:

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
(/en/source/11534.html)

Original link:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25586&LangID=E>
(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25586&LangID=E>)

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Published:

20 February 2020

Document ID:

2025245

Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research
 and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

