

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	177
Land:	Burundi
Kilde:	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Titel:	Burundi: Government Should Ease Pressure On Human Rights Defenders
Udgivet:	25. november 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	10. december 2014

[EN](#) | [DE](#)

- **Source:**
OHCHR - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Title:**
Burundi: Government Should Ease Pressure On Human Rights Defenders
- **Publication date:**
25 November 2014
- **ecoi.net summary:** UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, concerned about treatment of human rights defenders, who are considered political opponents by the government [ID 291308]
- **Countries:**
Burundi
- **Original link** http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/%28httpNewsByYear_en%29/E9DE34EDCFE2E537C1257D9B003FA3B6?OpenDocument

Recommended citation:

OHCHR - UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: Burundi: Government Should Ease Pressure On Human Rights Defenders, 25 November 2014 (available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net))
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/291308/411808_en.html (accessed 09 December 2014)



Burundi: Government Should Ease Pressure On Human Rights Defenders

25 November 2014

Bujumbura (25 November 2014) – The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, expressed regret today that defenders in Burundi are deemed to be political opponents, when in reality they are activists working to promote and protect human rights and civil liberties.

"I was very struck by the incredible vitality and professionalism of civil society in Burundi despite the difficult environment in which they work. They face serious obstacles that can amount to violations of their rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as their legitimate right to promote and protect human rights," said Mr. Forst.

General situation

Threats and defamation campaigns by certain media outlets weigh on human rights defenders, who also report a high number of cases of physical threats, anonymous phone calls, assaults, arbitrary arrests, and judicial harassment.

"The arrest and detention of Pierre Claver Mbonimpa and unfair disbarment of Isidore Rufyikiri, the president of the Bar, constitute, in my view, an unacceptable escalation of the harassment of defenders by the State's authorities," Mr. Forst said.

Freedom of expression

Burundi is fortunate to have a dynamic civil society and a bold and free press, and yet the public authorities' attempt to restrict their freedom of expression by accusing them of being opposition actors when they report on events or testimonies questioning State institutions.

The Special Rapporteur shared his concerns with the Government regarding provisions of the law on the press that are contrary to international obligations. In particular, he noted the requirement that journalists reveal their sources, which would limit effective enjoyment of freedom of expression.

He highlighted the cases of the arrests and repeated threats made against certain journalists and radio stations dealing with politically sensitive topics, such as the allegations of arms distribution or the controversial methods of issuing identity cards.

"A free, independent, and occasionally impertinent press, able to expose abuses of power and corruption, is

essential to preserve civil liberties and to promote transparency and foster broad participation in public life," Mr Forst said.

Freedom of assembly and demonstration

Freedom of assembly and demonstration is guaranteed by the Constitution of Burundi, but in practice only protests in favour of the Government were reportedly authorised, while all others were systematically prohibited.

"By adopting an abusive interpretation of the concept of public order, in effect, the authorities muzzle freedom of assembly and demonstration in public spaces," the Special Rapporteur said.

Liberty of association

The Special Rapporteur also pointed out that the draft law on associations being considered by Parliament includes provisions which hamper the creation and development of associations and which would imperil the very principle of free association.

Approval or annual renewal of such approval poses a threat to the sustainability of certain associations. The appointment of the heads of associations by the Minister of the Interior and his power to suspend the activities of an association are contrary to international norms.

The Special Rapporteur will present his conclusions in a report to the United Nations Human Rights Council.

(*) See the full End of Mission statement (in French):

<http://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15338&LangID=F>

Mr. Michel Forst (France) was appointed by the President of the Human Rights Council as the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in June 2014. M. Michel Forst has extensive experience on human rights issues and particularly on the situation of human rights defenders. In particular, he was the Director General of Amnesty International (France) and Secretary General of the first World Summit on Human Rights Defenders in 1998.

The United Nations human rights experts are part of what it is known as 'Special Procedures', the largest body of independent experts in the United Nations Human Rights system. 'Special Procedures' is the general name of the independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms of the Human Rights Council 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 United Nations staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity. Learn more, log on to: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx>

For use of the information media; not an official record

HR14/357E