

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER DETAINED

Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa, a Burundian human rights defender, was arrested during the night of 15 to 16 May and is detained on spurious charges relating to state security after making declarations on Burundian radio.

Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa is the President of a local human rights organization, the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons (Association pour la protection des droits humains et des personnes détenues, APRODH), and an internationally renowned champion of human rights. APRODH provides vital assistance to detainees and to victims of basic rights violations, including of torture and sexual abuse, and is a lifeline for Burundi's most vulnerable.

Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa was arrested during the night of 15 May to 16 May and initially held by judicial police. He was then questioned by the prosecutor's office in relation to comments he made on the radio on 6 May in which he reported that young men were receiving arms, uniforms and travelling to the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo for military training.

On 16 May, he was charged under Article 602 of the Penal code (spreading false rumors to incite the population to rise up against the authorities) and Article 579 (threatening external security) in relation to the comments he made on radio. He could face a maximum of 8 years in prison and a fine of 300,000 FBU (approximately US \$191) if found guilty. He is currently held in Mpimba Central Prison, in the country's capital, Bujumbura. Both charges in relation to threatening state security should be dropped and he should be immediately released.

Prior to his arrest, Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa had appeared for two judicial summons by the authorities. The third summons for 14 May was re-scheduled to 19 May.

Please write immediately in French, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to drop all the charges relating to state security against Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa and release him immediately;
- Calling on the authorities to provide guarantees that all human rights defenders are able to operate freely, independently and with the full protection of the state.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 JUNE 2014 TO:

President of Burundi

Pierre Nkurunziza
Office of the President
Boulevard de l'Uprona
BP 1870
Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: 001 257 22 24 89 08
Email: president@burundi.bi
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

Pascal Barandagiye
Ministry of Justice
BP 1305
Bujumbura
Burundi
Email: info@justice.gov.bi
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of the Interior

Edouard Nduwimana
Ministry of the Interior
BP 1910
Bujumbura
Burundi
Fax: 001 257 22 24 53 51

Also send copies to:

Ambassador H.E Ernest Ndashinze, Embassy of Burundi
2233 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Suite 408, Washington, DC 20007
Fax: 1 202 342 2574 | Telephone: 1 202 342 2575 | Email: burundiembassy@erols.com
Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A police officer before he was a human rights defender, Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa was wrongfully imprisoned from 1994 to 1996 for illegal possession of a firearm. His time in prison prompted him to establish APRODH upon his release. The organization was set up to defend the rights of prisoners, but has grown and works on a number of justice-related issues.

Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa has since received international recognition for his human rights work, including the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2007 and the Henry Dunant Prize in 2011.

Human rights defenders in Burundi are often harassed, intimidated and subject to judicial summons, especially those who choose to work on sensitive issues relating to corruption and or violations by state security services.

Name: Pierre-Claver Mbonimpa (M)

Issues: Freedom of expression, Human rights defender, Legal concern

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