

# URGENT ACTION

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER MARKS ONE YEAR IN PRISON

**Human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Germain Rukuki was arrested one year ago on 13 July 2017. He was sentenced to 32 years in prison on 26 April 2018. In June, he was hospitalised and underwent surgery for injuries sustained in prison. He has since been returned to prison although he requires continued treatment.**

On 26 April 2018, **Germain Rukuki**, the president of a community based organization called Njubutsa Tujane and an employee of the Burundian Catholic Lawyers Association, was sentenced to 32 years in prison by the Ntahangwa High Court. He had been arrested on 13 July 2017 in the capital Bujumbura. He was found guilty of “rebellion”, “threatening state security”, “attacking the authority of the state” and “participation in an insurrectionist movement”, and acquitted on charges of “assassination” and “destruction of public and private buildings”. Neither he nor his lawyers were present when the verdict was delivered. He appealed the decision on 29 May. His appeal remains pending.

On 8 June, Germain Rukuki fractured his ankle and later injured his right shoulder and right leg. He underwent surgical operation at Ngozi hospital, in northern Burundi, on 11 June. On 18 June, he was discharged from the hospital and returned to prison, although he could not walk unassisted and his foot was still bandaged. He applied for bail on 26 June in order to receive continued medical treatment and rehabilitation care in hospital.

Amnesty International believes that Germain Rukuki has been prosecuted solely because of his human rights work and considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

### 1) TAKE ACTION

**Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:**

- Urging the Burundian authorities to overturn Germain Rukuki’s conviction and immediately and unconditionally release him from arbitrary detention;
- Urging them to ensure that Germain Rukuki receives adequate medical treatment as required by his state of health;
- Urging them to end intimidation and harassment of human rights defenders.

**Contact these two officials by 24 August, 2018:**

Minister of Justice

Aimee Laurentine Kanyana

Ministry of Justice

BP 1305

Bujumbura, Burundi

Twitter: [@AimeeLaurentine](#) or [@MiniJustice](#)

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Benjamin Manirakiza Chargé d’Affaires ai.

Embassy of the Republic of Burundi

2233 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Suite 408,

Washington DC 20007

Phone: 202 342 2574 | Fax: 202 342 2578

Email: [burundiembusadc@gmail.com](mailto:burundiembusadc@gmail.com)

**Salutation: Dear Ambassador**

### 2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 32.18*

Here’s why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the start of the political crisis in April 2015, the Burundian authorities have engaged in a clampdown on opposition members, independent civil society and media. Many human rights defenders and activists fled the country for their safety while others are being persecuted solely because of their human rights work.

Germain Rukuki formerly worked for ACAT- Burundi before the organization was shut down by the authorities. ACAT-Burundi along with several other civil society organizations was shut down in October 2016 by the Minister of Interior. They were accused of “tarnishing the image of the country” and “sowing hatred and division among the Burundian population”. Part of the evidence the Public Prosecutor presented against Germain was an email exchange between him and ACAT staff from the time when ACAT-Burundi was legally registered in Burundi.

After his arrest on 13 July 2017 in Bujumbura, Germain Rukuki was initially detained and interrogated by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) without a lawyer present. He was transferred to the prison in Ngozi on 26 July 2017. On 1 August 2017, he was charged with “threatening state security and “rebellion” for working with the non-governmental organization Action by Christian for Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi). The charges of “assassination”, “destruction of public and private buildings” and “participation in an insurrectionist movement” were added when his trial began on 13 February 2018.

Name: Germain Rukuki

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 32/18 Index: AFR 16/8636/2018 Issue Date: 13 July 2018