



Statement

Civil society organisations call for Germain Rukuki's acquittal in Burundi

Today, the appeal hearing of human rights defender Germain Rukuki took place in Ngozi before the Bujumbura Court of Appeal, with no security incidents reported. The Court took the case under advisement and the decision is expected to be announced within the next 30 days.

Mr. Rukuki was arrested by the *Service National du Renseignement* (SNR, the National Intelligence Service) on 13 July 2017 and unjustly sentenced to 32 years in prison on 26 April 2018, after a process characterised by serious violations of the right to fair trial. Sentenced for "rebellion", "attacking the authority of the State", "participation in an insurrectionist movement" and "receiving contributions and funds from foreign organisations", he appealed the conviction on 29 May and subsequently applied for bail on 26 June, in order to receive adequate medical treatment and full rehabilitation in hospital after fracturing his ankle in jail.

We, the undersigned organisations, demand:

- That the Burundian authorities:
 - Release Germain Rukuki on humanitarian grounds; and
 - Acquit Germain Rukuki of all charges.

- That the international community:
 - Continues monitoring the proceedings in order to ensure fair trial guarantees, and;
 - Expresses support and solidarity with Mr Rukuki and his family.

Germain Rukuki's arrest and imprisonment is an unjust attack against his peaceful human rights work, as part of a deliberate and continuous attempt of Burundian authorities to silence and criminalise human rights defenders in the country.

The signatory organisations

Protection International

DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)

Fédération Internationale des ACAT (FIACAT)

Front Line Defenders

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

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