



Fédération internationale des ACAT – Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture
International Federation of ACATs – Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture

FIACAT's Oral Statement

Item 3 : Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders

49th session of the Human Rights Council

Thank you Mr. President,

Madam Rapporteur,

FIACAT would like to share with you its concerns about the situation of human rights defenders in Burundi.

The release in 2021 of Germain Rukuki and Nestor Nibitanga, who had long been arbitrarily detained for their human rights work, demonstrates a certain willingness on the part of the Burundian authorities to restore an international image tarnished by the serious deterioration of human rights in the country since 2015. These efforts have resulted in the recent lifting of US and EU sanctions on the country. However, the serious judicial failures highlighted by Mr. Rukuki's case - a justice system subservient to the regime, an unfair trial, arbitrary detention, and deprivation of health care - have not stopped.

In a joint statement in February 2022, ACAT Burundi and 16 other Burundian civil society organizations expressed their incomprehension at this return to the grace of the State. FIACAT is also concerned about the situation of human rights defenders in Burundi. In particular, FIACAT wishes to denounce the fact that Burundian defenders in exile continue to be deterred from returning to Burundi, as evidenced by the sentencing in absentia of 12 of them to life imprisonment by the Supreme Court on 2 February 2021. These concerns are reinforced by the government's recent refusal to allow the future UN Special Rapporteur on Burundi access to the country.

Thus, FIACAT encourages you to plan a visit to Burundi during the year and calls on the Burundian state to cooperate with you. FIACAT also calls for the release of all prisoners of conscience, an end to their persecution, and an investigation into the continuing human rights violations against them.

Thank you.