



Paris, 22 September 2015

To the President of the Republic of Burundi

Dear Mr President,

On August 13, you issued a statement condemning “the violent and unacceptable behaviour in a country with the rule of law” by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) towards our correspondent Esdras Ndikumana. You also announced that you had asked the “SNR Administrator General to urgently establish the circumstances of these acts, which belong to another era, so that those responsible are prosecuted and punished according to the law”.

More than one month later we are still without news. The State Prosecutor Mr Bagorikunda has just told the press that the investigation was made “difficult” by the impossibility of directly questioning Esdras Ndikumana, adding: “he can enlighten us or send someone to enlighten us (...)”.

It is therefore very willingly that we are communicating to you the facts that we have regarding this affair.

The man who arrested Esdras answers to the surname “Lumpu.” He was present during most of the beating of our correspondent although he did not participate directly. He therefore knows the names of the guilty parties.

“Lumpu” is himself well known to the head of the SNR, Colonel Bertin Gahungu, as he sent “Lumpu” to buy a bottle of water for Esdras just before releasing him.

Moreover, an officer of the SNR, Désiré Uwamahoro, also knows those responsible: he spoke to the commander of the Judicial Search and Intervention Brigade (BRIDJ), Pierre-Claver Barajengetera, about taking Esdras in his van to the SNR headquarters. The beating of our correspondent began the moment he was hustled into the vehicle.

Désiré Uwamahoro then went to the SNR offices in the company of an MP from the CNDD-FDD while Esdras Ndikumana was being beaten up.

Finally, the arrest and the beginning of the violence happened just a few metres from a group of personalities (MPS, government officials, advisors) to whom Esdras called unsuccessfully for help.

All of these initial elements should allow the investigation to be brought to a swift conclusion. We too indeed believe that those responsible should be “prosecuted and punished according to the law”.

This is an absolute condition for the re-establishment of confidence in the rule of law and freedom of expression in Burundi.

We propose in this regard to send in the coming weeks a joint mission from our two media organisations to Bujumbura to take note of the security guarantees that we are awaiting from you and your staff so that Esdras Ndikumana can return to work once he has fully recovered.

With our best regards,

Boris Bachorz

Director of the AFP Africa Project

Yves Rocle

Deputy to the RFI Director
in charge of African news