



Press release on repetitive attacks on media professionals in Burundi

The Burundian Union of Journalists (UBJ), is concerned with the repetitive attacks on media professionals in the run-up to the 2020 elections.

This Thursday, April 9, a journalist of the Independent radio station Isanganiro and his driver were abused by the young Imbonerakure of the ruling party before deflating the tires of their vehicle. He was investigating an attack on an official of an opposition party, the National Council for Liberty (CNL) on Rukuba village, in Kanyosha commune south of the capital, Bujumbura.

The Burundian Union of Journalists takes this opportunity to strongly condemn these practices of another age.

"It is unacceptable for a journalist to be prevented from doing his job when the law guarantees him the free exercise of his profession. We once again condemn this umpteenth attack on media professionals," said UBJ President Alexander Niyungeko.

The UBJ once again calls on the authorities empowered to do their work so that those responsible, who are otherwise known, are punished according to law.

It is not the first time young Imbonerakure have been cited in such acts, but the administration and the authorities of the ruling party at different levels have turned a blind eye to such cases.

The Burundian Union of Journalists would like to reiterate that the cup is likely to be full because no day goes by without journalists being victims of physical or verbal attacks.

A few weeks ago, a journalist from the IWACU press group received death threats from a member of parliament elected in the Cankuzo district in the east of the country.

The Burundian Union of Journalists is more concerned because the National Council of Communication, guarantor of press freedom, keeps a deafening silence while it continues to organize workshops calling media professionals to work in a professional manner when covering the upcoming elections.

We would then be entitled to question this professionalism advocated by the CNC while media professionals no longer have free access to sources of information and, moreover, threatened.

The same free access to information that was denied to independent media journalists, banned from attending the Minister of Health's press conference on the Coronavirus this Saturday, April 11, 2020. Only journalists from government media and / or close to the ruling party were invited to this press conference.

"It is regrettable and to be condemned that at a time when everyone is mobilized to fight against this pandemic, a minister of health has been striving to select the journalists who must inform the public. And moreover in a press conference which elsewhere, is a public event reserved for the media ", deplored the President of the UBJ.

The Burundian Union of Journalists finds this unworthy of a minister of health, normally responsible for preserving the health of the public, in particular by communicating as much as possible.

The Iwacu press group is already paying a heavy price for the journalists' denial of access to sources. Four journalists from the Iwacu press group are languishing in jail for a sentence of 2 years and 6 months in prison for "an impossible attempt to aid in the accomplishment of the internal security of the state".

Let us recall that our comrades Christine Kamikazi, Agnès Ndirubusa, Térance Mpozenzi and Egide Harerimana were arrested in Bubanza, in October 2019 while they were covering clashes between the police and a rebel group in the province of Bubanza , in the northwest of the country.