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Burundi: Thirty-two-year sentence handed down to human rights defender, Germain Rukuki

On 26 April, 2018, the Ntahangwa High Court in Burundi sentenced **Germain Rukuki** to 32 years in prison on charges of “rebellion”, “breach of State security”, “participation in an insurrectional movement” and “attack on the head of state”.

[Germain Rukuki](#) is a human rights defender, who works for Association des juristes catholiques du Burundi – AJCB (Association of Catholic Jurists of Burundi). He previously worked for *Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture* – ACAT-Burundi (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture), which advocates for the respect of human dignity in Burundi, and particularly for the abolition of torture and the death penalty. ACAT-Burundi was suspended by the government in November 2015 as part of its clampdown on civil society organisations.

The human rights defender was arrested without a warrant on 13 July 2017 and held by the *Service National de Renseignement - SNR* (National Intelligence Service) before being transferred to Ngozi Prison on 26 July 2017, where he has been held since.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the charges against Germain Rukuki, as well as the lengthy sentence he has received, which it believes is due to his work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Burundi to:

1. Drop all charges against Germain Rukuki as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being detained and charged solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately and unconditionally release Germain Rukuki and ensure his liberty and security;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in all circumstances so that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.