

4 January 2017

Burundi: The Ligue Iteka disbanded by the government

On 3 January 2017, the oldest human rights organisation in Burundi, the **Burundi League for Human Rights – Ligue Burundaise des Droits de l’Homme (la Ligue Iteka)** was disbanded by a ministerial decree.

[The Ligue Iteka](#) is a Burundian human rights organisation founded in February 1991 whose primary mission is “the promotion and the defence of human rights as well as preventing the violation of human rights”. Throughout recent periods of political crisis in Burundi, the Ligue Iteka has set itself apart through its consistent commitment to thoroughly monitoring and denouncing human rights violations. The Ligue Iteka has done this through the publication of periodic reports concerning the situation of human rights in Burundi for both national and international audiences.

According to a ministerial decree that was signed on 21 December 2016 by the Minister of the Interior and of Patriotic Development, the Ligue Iteka is “permanently barred from the list of non-governmental associations in Burundi”. The minister accused the organisation of being “a repeat offender in tarnishing the brand image of the country and of sowing hate and division amongst the Burundi population”.

In October 2016, the Ligue Iteka and four other human rights organisations were subject to a “provisional suspension” from the same minister. According to the decree, the activities of the organisations (including the Ligue Iteka) did not “adhere to the objectives set down in their constitutions but are rather of a nature to disturb state security and order”. This same provisional suspension called for the permanent termination of five other human rights organisations whose leaders were suspected of leading a civil society campaign in April 2015 against President Nkurunziza’s third term. In the most recent decree, the minister put forward that the organisation had “not stopped the activities for which it had been previously suspended”.

Beyond these administrative measures that have targeted human rights organisations, there is reason to fear a surge of threats against leaders and members of these organisations. Many of them have been forced to leave Burundi after having received death threats. The former treasurer of the Ligue Iteka, Mme Marie Claudette Kwizera, who disappeared in December 2015, is still missing.

Front Line Defenders condemns the disbanding of the Ligue Iteka as well as other similar measures targeting civil society organisations in Burundi since the beginning of the political crisis. Front Line Defenders believes these measures aim to intimidate and stifle civil society actors, and particularly to block any efforts to monitor human rights violations in Burundi.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Burundi to:

1. Annul the recent decrees establishing the termination and suspension of human rights organisations and other civil society organisations;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of the members of the Ligue Iteka;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of Marie Claudette Kwizera, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Burundi are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.