

# URGENT ACTION

## PROMINENT JOURNALIST MUST BE RELEASED

**Bob Rugurika, director of African Public Radio (Radio Publique Africaine, RPA), has been detained since 20 January after broadcasting investigative reports about the September 2014 murder of three elderly Italian nuns.**

**Bob Rugurika** was arrested on 20 January, after African Public Radio (Radio Publique Africaine, RPA) broadcast investigative reports into the murder of three elderly Italian nuns. One of the broadcasts included an individual who alleged that he participated in the murder and that senior intelligence officials were also involved.

On 20 January Bob Rugurika was questioned by the prosecutor's office in Bujumbura. After refusing the prosecutor's request to reveal the name of his source, he was arrested and taken to Mpimba Prison in Bujumbura. On 22 January Bob Rugurika was moved to Muramvya Prison, approximately 30 km from Bujumbura. He was placed in an isolation cell for the first day. He was visited by his family, lawyers and civil society colleagues on 23 January.

Bob Rugurika is likely to be charged with complicity in the murder, obstructing the course of justice through violating confidentiality of a criminal investigation, harbouring a criminal and lacking public solidarity. Under the Burundian justice system, the prosecution have 15 days to bring him before court and charge him. Bob Rugurika is a human rights defender because of his journalistic activities. Over recent years, he has been repeatedly threatened and harassed, and his detention on this occasion appears to be politically motivated. Two of the charges carry jail sentences of up to 20 years each.

Bob Rugurika should be immediately released while the prosecution complete their investigation into the murder of the nuns. His detention does not constitute a necessary or proportionate restriction on the right to freedom of expression. If Bob Rugurika is to be ordered to reveal his source, he should be able to challenge that order before a court which should take full consideration of the journalistic privilege of protection of sources.

### **Please write immediately in French, English, Kirundi or your own language:**

- Urging the authorities to release Bob Rugurika while they continue their investigations into the murder of the nuns;
- Calling on them to ensure that he continues to have access to a lawyer and family members pending his release;
- Reminding them of their obligation to uphold the right to freedom of expression as a state party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 MARCH 2015 TO:**

President of Burundi  
Pierre Nkurunziza  
Office of the President  
Boulevard de l'Uprona  
BP 1870  
Bujumbura, Burundi  
Fax: +257 22 24 89 08  
Email: [president@burundi.bi](mailto:president@burundi.bi)  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Minister of Justice  
Pascal Barandagiye  
Ministry of Justice  
BP 1305  
Bujumbura, Burundi  
Email: [info@justice.gov.bi](mailto:info@justice.gov.bi)  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Prosecutor General  
Valentin Bagorikunda  
Office of the General Prosecutor  
BP 105  
Bujumbura, Burundi  
Fax: +257 22 27 30 53  
**Salutation: Dear Prosecutor General**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Burundi has a vibrant media and journalists continue to criticize the government despite attempts to silence them. The Burundian government has used prolonged pre-trial detention and harassment by judicial authorities to unduly restrict freedom of expression.

A Press Law, promulgated in June 2013, provides scope for official restriction of press activities and freedom of expression. A challenge to the press law is currently being heard by the East African Court of Justice based on a complaint lodged by the Union of Burundian Journalists.

RPA is a popular radio station known for its investigative reports. Founded by Alexis Sinduhije, who later went on to create an opposition political party, the Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD), the Burundian government accuses RPA of being a tool of the opposition.

As the Burundian elections approach in May, the government has cracked down on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Political tensions in Burundi are high as President Nkurunziza looks to be pushing for a third presidential term, perceived by many as in violation of Burundi's Constitution.

Journalists should never be forced to reveal their sources unless in exceptional cases. Compelling public interests, such as investigating a serious crime, prevail over the public interest of ensuring that journalists can keep their sources confidential. Any such pressing need must be clearly demonstrated in each case and ordered by an independent court. Journalists have an individual right to freedom of expression, and the media generally play a key role in ensuring the right of everyone to freedom of expression, which includes the right to obtain and exchange information. If journalists are not able to maintain the confidentiality of their sources, it is likely to deter sources from providing them with information; this impedes their ability to obtain and disseminate information, with a negative impact on freedom of expression generally.

Name: Bob Rugurika  
Gender m/f: M

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