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<http://www.rsf.org/burundi-the-hassan-ruvakuki-case-burundian-21-02-2013,44103.html>

Africa - Burundi

Hopes dashed

The Hassan Ruvakuki case: Burundian authorities entrenched in injustice

21 February 2013

Reporters Without Borders firmly denounces the relentlessness that the Burundian Authorities have shown against **Hassan Ruvakuki**. The correspondent for the Swahili service of *Radio France Internationale (RFI)*, who is also a journalist for *Bonesha* radio, has been imprisoned since the 28th November 2011 and had applied for parole. On 19 February 2013, an announcement from the Ministry of Justice, as well as the repression of a demonstration, put an end to any such hope.

"The judicial persecution of Hassan Ruvakuki puts the Burundian authorities in an untenable position," says Reporters Without Borders. "The violent repression of a peaceful demonstration demanding his release proves that they'll do anything to justify their actions. Despite legal arguments, the mobilisation of journalists and the criticism of diplomats in the country, they're using all means at their disposal to avoid admitting their own error. It's time that the Burundian authorities put an end to this injustice and order the immediate release of Hassan Ruvakuki".

The Burundian authorities accuse Hassan Ruvakuki of complicity with a rebel group, whose emergence he had gone to cover in Tanzania in November 2011. He was originally sentenced to life in prison for terrorism but on appeal, the charge was changed to "participating in an association formed for the purpose of attacking people and property". After several delays to the hearings, the Court of Appeal commuted the sentence to three years in prison. Ignoring international appeals, the prosecutor used the pretext of a further appeal to deny the journalist parole. Hassan Ruvakuki's lawyer was not notified that this procedure was taking place.

A few hours before this statement from the Ministry of Justice, [the Bujumbura police used tear gas to violently disperse journalists](#) who had been demonstrating peacefully, for the fourth time, demanding the release of their colleague. Several sources reported that journalists wearing t-shirts bearing pictures of Hassan Ruvakuki were beaten, and **Innocent Muhozi**, President of the Burundi Press Observatory, [was temporarily arrested](#).

Hassan Ruvakuki has benefitted from strong international support from diplomats, journalists and individuals, all ready to show their support for a journalist who was just doing his job when he went to get information direct from the source. A petition demanding Hassan Ruvakuki's release has already garnered over 2,500 signatures, and [the support of a number of international media organisations](#).

[Sign the petition.](#)

[For more information on Hassan Ruvakuki's case since his November 2011 arrest, please see here.](#)

[To learn more about the state of press freedom in Burundi, see here.](#)

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