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First UA: 82/24 Index: AFR 16/8534/2024 Burundi of September 18, 2024

## **BURUNDI**

### **DOCTOR DENIED URGENT MEDICAL CARE AFTER COLLAPSING IN COURT**

Dr. Christophe Sahabo, a doctor from Burundi, was arrested on April 1, 2022, after a dispute over the management of Kira Hospital. Since then, he has been held in detention. During a trial hearing on September 10, he vomited and collapsed. Although he was briefly admitted to a hospital, authorities transferred him back to Ruyigi Prison on September 12, despite his need for ongoing treatment.

Dr. Sahabo's condition remains serious and could become life-threatening without immediate medical attention. On September 14, his family was denied visitation rights and prohibited from bringing him medication. Authorities must urgently provide him with full access to necessary medical care to prevent further harm.

#### **Write to the Burundian Minister for Justice urging her to:**

- Ensure that Dr Christophe Sahabo immediately receives appropriate medical attention and has unfettered access to his family and lawyers.

#### **Write to:**

Mme Domine Banyankimbona  
Ministre de la Justice  
BP 1880  
Bujumbura, Burundi  
Emails: [minjustice.burundi@gmail.com](mailto:minjustice.burundi@gmail.com)  
[infos@burundi.justice.gov.bi](mailto:infos@burundi.justice.gov.bi)  
Twitter/X: @MiniJustice\_BDI  
*Salutation: Dear Minister,*

#### **And copy:**

Embassy of the Republic of Burundi  
2233 Wisconsin Avenue North West, 408  
Washington, D.C., DC 20007  
United States of America  
Tel: (202) 342-2574  
Email: [burundiembusadc@gmail.com](mailto:burundiembusadc@gmail.com)

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Dr. Christophe Sahabo, the managing director of Kira Hospital in Bujumbura, was arrested in April 2022 along with Jean-David Pillot, the hospital's board chair. While Pillot was released after just one night, Dr. Sahabo was held for several days without access to his family or the legal representation of his choosing. He was detained by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in a cell for over 30 days before appearing before a magistrate and being transferred to Mpimba Prison.

On September 29, 2022, Dr. Sahabo was moved to Ruyigi Prison, 160 km from Bujumbura, where his case is ongoing. His family and legal team claim that he was pressured to resign from his role at Kira Hospital over unfounded allegations of fraud, money laundering, and document forgery. A recent financial audit, ordered by interim hospital officials, reportedly cleared him of any wrongdoing.

In a separate incident, Dr. Sahabo's brother and lawyer were arrested on September 27, 2022, accused of forging documents that reinstated him as hospital director. Both were released on October 7, 2022, after his lawyer withdrew from the case.

The denial of medical care to prisoners can have life-threatening consequences and may violate the right to life. Under international law, withholding healthcare that causes severe pain and suffering is considered torture or ill-treatment. Burundian law (Article 33 of the 2017 law on the penitentiary system) affirms that detainees who are unwell have the right to be transferred to a medical facility for specialized care if prison doctors recommend it.

In Dr. Sahabo's case, this legal and human right has not been upheld. Immediate medical attention is critical to prevent further harm.

***Please take action as soon as possible until March 16, 2025! The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.***