

Brussels, 03 August 2017

## Statement

### Protection International insists on the immediate release of Germain Rukuki

Germain Rukuki, a human rights defender in Burundi, was arrested by the *Service National du Renseignement* (SNR, the National Intelligence Service) in Burundi on 13 July 2017. After 14 days of imprisonment in an SNR facility, he was transferred to the prison in Ngozi on 26 July. The first hearing took place on 1 August in Ngozi before the public prosecutor of the Republic. Protection International regrets that one of his lawyers was expelled from the hearing.

Protection International is deeply concerned about the unfounded accusations of “breach of security of the State” and about the fact that he risks a sentence of life imprisonment. We insist on the immediate release of Germain Rukuki. We also demand sustained attention to guarantee his physical and psychological integrity.

We thank our partners and human rights organisations for joining us in this demand and we reiterate the need to continue striving for his release. This detainment is part of a general context of intense harassment of human rights defenders in Burundi. Protection International is afraid that Germain Rukuki is symbolically held in detention in order to totally silence human rights defenders in the country.

We are also very concerned about the security of the members of our partner organisation, the *Association des Juristes Catholiques du Burundi* (ACJB), and we urge the international community to provide extreme vigilance in their protection.

*Since last February, Germain Rukuki has been an employee at AJCB as part of a joint project between Protection International and AJCB. In 2015, Germain received training by Protection International on protection management for Human Rights Defenders as part of an old partnership with ACAT-Burundi, before the latest was closed down by the Burundian government.*

For more information please contact:

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