

**Question for written answer E-007454/2017  
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**  
Rule 130  
**Maria Arena (S&D)**

Subject: VP/HR - The situation of human rights defenders Nestor Nibitanga and Germain Rukuki in Burundi

On 21 November 2017, Burundian police arrested human rights defender (HRD) Nestor Nibitanga and detained him at an undisclosed location. His whereabouts are still unknown.

Nestor is a former regional representative for the *Association Burundaise pour la Protection des Droits Humains et des Personnes Détenues* in Gitega. Nestor served as the principal human rights observer for the organisation until it was deregistered, along with other NGOs in 2016.

The HRD Germain Rukuki was arrested in July 2017, and charged with 'breaching the internal security of the State' and 'rebellion' for his work with *Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture* (ACAT–Burundi). These arrests are part of a systemic crackdown on human rights defenders and civil society in Burundi.

1. Will the VP/HR take steps, including a formal démarche, to bring about the immediate release of Nestor and Germain, and to ensure that in the meantime their treatment meets international norms and that they receive due process under the law?
2. Will the VP/HR take action against Burundian authorities to ensure that human rights defenders in the country can carry out their work in safety and free from all restrictions?