

Question for written answer E-000747/2019
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Francisco Assis (S&D)

Subject: VP/HR - Prisoners of conscience in Burundi

On 1 August 2017 Germain Rukuki, a human rights defender, was sentenced to 32 years' imprisonment in Burundi because of his links to ACAT-Burundi, an NGO which campaigns against torture and which had been banned by the Government in 2016. Germain Rukuki and his lawyers were not present in court when the verdict was read out; he was found guilty of 'rebellion' and 'undermining State security', arbitrary charges with no basis in fact. In addition to Rukuki, there are other prisoners of conscience serving long prison sentences on account of their human rights work: Nestor Nibitanga, Aimé Constant Gatore, Marius Nizigama, and Emmanuel Nshimirimana are among those in that situation. Civil society in Burundi has been under attack since the political crisis in 2015. Several NGOs have been banned, and many journalists and activists are leaving the country.

Is the EU keeping watch on the fate of Germain Rukuki and the other activists mentioned above?

If so, what forms of pressure is it bringing to bear to make the Burundian Government respect civil and political rights and freedoms?