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15 February 2012

H.E Pierre Nkurunziza
President of the Republic of Burundi
Office of the President
Boulevard de L'Uprona
Rohero I BP 1870
Bujumbura, Burundi
Fax: 257 22 22 74 90

Subject: Concern about the arbitrary detention of Mr Faustin Ndikumana

Dear Mr President,

I write as the Secretary General of CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an international movement of civil society dedicated to strengthening civil society and citizens' freedom of association.

CIVICUS is deeply concerned about the persecution of civil society activists and persistent violations of the freedom to express and associate in Burundi. We write to you because we are shocked at the arrest and detention of anti-corruption activist Faustin Ndikumana on 7 February 2012. Mr. Ndikumana heads Words and Action for the Awakening of Conscience and the Evolution of Mindsets (PARCEM), a civil society organisation that advocates transparency and accountability in public life. He is also a leading voice against corruption in Burundi.

Mr. Ndikumana was arrested on the basis of a judicial complaint filed by the Minister of Justice after he gave a press conference and took part in radio interviews denouncing corrupt practices in the Ministry of Justice. He has been accused of making "false declarations" to the Minister of Justice by writing to him that some judges had confessed to his organisation that they had been requested to pay between USD 1000 and USD 1500 to be recruited. .

We believe that it is well within Mr. Ndikumana's rights to freely express his views on corruption and point out malpractices in government functioning. As such he should not be persecuted for merely discharging his duty as a member of civil society and as a public spirited citizen. As a party to the international Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the state of Burundi has a responsibility to promote, protect and uphold the right of free speech.

We believe that that Mr. Ndikumana - currently in detention in Mpimba Prison in Bujumbura under over-crowded and unsanitary conditions – is a prisoner of conscience. His case is certainly not isolated. We have observed a worrying trend of civil society activists being regularly arrested, charged with “defamation” for expressing their views and being illegally detained for extended periods in Burundi.

We urge the immediate and unconditional release of Mr. Ndikumana as well as the creation of an enabling environment for civil society in line with constitutional and international legal standards.

Sincerely

Ingrid Srinath

Secretary General
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

cc:

First Vice-President

His Excellency Thérence Sinunguruza
Fax: 257 22 22 74 90

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Laurent Kavakure
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