

Burundi rights groups protest jailing of radio chief

BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI: Some 150 journalists and civil rights activists in Burundi demonstrated Tuesday to demand the release of a radio station boss accused of complicity in the murder of three Italian nuns.



Protesters gathered in the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, to protest against the arrest of Bob Rugurika, director of the popular independent African Public Radio (RPA). (Image: Public Domain)

Bob Rugurika, director of the popular independent African Public Radio (RPA), was arrested in mid-January after broadcasting the purported confession of a man claiming he was one of the killers.

Protesters, who gathered outside the courthouse in the capital Bujumbura, defied an order from the mayor not to assemble, but police allowed their demonstration to go ahead.

"We are here to... seek justice and freedom for Bob Rugurika, who is unjustly imprisoned," said Patrick Nduwimana, from Burundi's radio journalists association.

Rugurika was doing "a good job in informing the public about the killing" and seeking the "truth about those responsible for these heinous crimes", he added.

Burundi, a small landlocked nation in central Africa's Great Lakes region, emerged in 2006 from a brutal 13-year civil war. The political climate remains fractious ahead of local, parliamentary and presidential polls in May and June.

For broadcasting the alleged confession and refusing to give up the self-proclaimed killer, Rugurika was charged with complicity in the murders, "breach of public solidarity" and disclosing confidential information regarding a case.

He faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted. Rugurika is next due in court today for a bail hearing.

The three Roman Catholic nuns, aged between 75 and 83, were murdered at a convent north of Bujumbura in September. The purported confession contradicted a police account of the crime and implicated a top official.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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