

BURUNDI



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A group of Burundian women rearing goats / Marché aux chèvres (naines) au Burundi

Credit: CC, J. Bariyanga/USAID

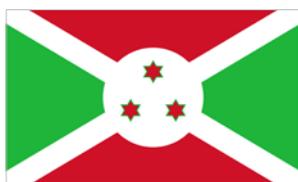
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THE COUNTRY AT A GLANCE

The Republic of Burundi is a landlocked country in the African Great Lakes region between East and Central Africa. The ancient Kingdom of Burundi had a troubled history, becoming first part of German East Africa, and finally United Nations Trust Territory under Belgian authority after World War II. Since gaining its independence in 1962, the country plunged into decades of political instability, coups d'état and ethnic clashes between Hutu and Tutsi, which resulted in two genocides (1972 and 1993) that claimed over 300.000 victims, mostly civilians. As a result of political and ethnic violence, several hundred thousand civilians sought refuge in the neighboring countries of Rwanda, Tanzania, and Democratic Republic of Congo. The violence of the past left the country underdeveloped and its population as one of the world's poorest. Even today, despite having regained some stability, Burundi still has to deal with hunger, poverty, corruption, weak infrastructure and poor access to health and education services. In 2015, Burundi witnessed large-scale political strife triggered by President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term against the provision of art. 96 of the Constitution which limits re-election to only one time, which resulted in a failed coup attempt. The elections that followed and that resulted in a sweeping victory by Nkurunziza were boycotted by the opposition, ensued by widespread criticism by the international community, and followed by gun battles, mass arrests and disappearances. As declared by UNHCR spokesperson, as result of the violence and repression, one year after the Burundi crisis began, almost 260,000 people have fled to nearby countries and thousands more could join them over the rest of the year unless a political solution is found and a descent into civil war averted.¹ In April 2016 the International Criminal Court has opened a preliminary examination into human rights abuses in Burundi.²

¹ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundians-continuing-flee-country-one-year-after-crisis-began>

² <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54261#.V4f6ivl96M8>

FLAG

NAME	Republic of Burundi Republika y'Uburundi (Kirundi) République du Burundi (French)
CAPITAL	Bujumbura
OFFICIAL AND VERNACULAR LANGUAGE	Kirundi French
POPULATION	10.3 million
ETHNIC GROUPS	85% Hutu 14% Tutsi 1% Twa
NEIGHBOURS	Rwanda Tanzania Democratic Republic of the Congo
TOTAL OF CIVILIANS AFFECTED (2016)	10 million
GDP (2016)	USD 8.3 billion
PEOPLE IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE (2016)	3.6 million
LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH	50 years
BURUNDESE REFUGEES	259,132
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX	0.4
IDPS	85,301
GLOBAL PEACE INDEX²	2.5 (ranking 138/163)
CORRUPTION PERCEPTION RANKING	150/175

³ The world's leading measure of national peacefulness, the GPI measures peace according to 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Geopolitical context

Some of Burundi's natural resources include uranium, nickel, cobalt, copper, and platinum. Despite this, the country's largest industry is agriculture, which accounts for over 30% of the GDP, out of which 90% is represented by subsistence agriculture. The lack of developed financial services, industry or manufacture sectors substantially slowed down the economic growth in Burundi, which is relatively steady but still trailing behind its neighbours. In fact, the first signs of economic recovery in Burundi started to appear only after 2006. In a regional effort toward achieving economic reconstruction, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi re-launched the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries. Burundi, along with Rwanda, also joined the East African Community in 2007 and is a potential member of the planned East African Federation. Burundi's international relations are marked by the proximity to Rwanda, as well as the influence of Tanzania, South Africa, and Uganda, who oversaw many rounds of peace talks in the country between 1993 and 2003. Burundi is an active contributor to African Union's peacekeeping missions, including the mission to Somalia. Following the contested third term reelection of the President, many of Burundi's development partners, such as Belgium, the Netherlands and the USA, partially or completely stopped their projects. The EU initiated a dialogue with the Burundian authorities under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreements to re-evaluate its future co-operation with the government.⁴

Peacekeeping missions: South African Protection Support Detachment (2001 – 2003); African Union Mission to Burundi (AMIB, 2003 – 2004); United Nations' United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB, 2005 – 2007); U N Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB, 2007 – 2011); UN Office in Burundi (BNUB, 2011 – 2014).

Main UN documents on Burundi

- **Report of the Mission to Burundi of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence Pablo de Greiff [A/HRC/20/42/Add.1]**, 10 August 2015
- **Briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Al Hussein on the situation in Burundi [S/PV.7482]**, 9 July 2015
- **Secretary-General's report on Burundi [S/2015/510]**, 7 July 2015
- **Human Rights Committee Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Burundi [CCPR/C/BDI/CO/2/Corr.1]**, 27 April 2015
- **UN Security Council presidential statement marking the termination of the mandate of BNUB on 31 December 2014 [S/PRST/2015/6]**, 18 February 2015
- **This was the report of the Security Council's fact-finding mission to Burundi, on 13 and 14 August 1994 [S/1994/1039]**, 7 September 1994

⁴<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/burundi/report-burundi/>

The genesis of the conflict

The electoral violence and political tensions currently affecting Burundi have a recent origin, but ancient roots. It follows a historical trend of political instability and ethnic tension, which already generated two genocides and innumerable episodes of violence against civilians. Protests first broke out after the announcement that President Nkurunziza would seek a third term in office against the provision of art. 96 of the Constitution limiting reelection to only one time. The situation aggravated on 13 May 2015, when an attempted coup d'état failed to depose Nkurunziza, who was attending an East African Community summit in neighbouring Tanzania. The president returned to Burundi, purged the government and launched a broad arrest campaign targeting alleged coup leaders and organizers. Despite the strong repression, protests continued resulting in armed clashes and widespread displacement. The situation further went from bad to worse during and after the contested parliamentary and presidential elections, resulting in almost daily clashes between the police and alleged armed civilians in Bujumbura as well as in the regions of Kirundo and Nyanza-lac. In addition to the regular fighting, a series of high-profile killings targeting both pro-government and opposition leaders pushed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to affirm that the incidents were “part of a growing pattern of politically-motivated violence in Burundi that must be broken before it escalates beyond control.”⁵ The latest episode, on April 20, was the killing by unknown attackers of Colonel Emmanuel Buzubona and his driver in Kinama.⁶ Buzubona had previously been arrested for suspected support of rebels in attacks on military bases in Bujumbura.⁷ It is widely recognized, that the political crisis in Burundi does not pit one ethnic group against another, but is more accurately described as pitting regime supporters against regime critics.⁸

Peace talks and agreements

In the decade 1993-2003, the Burundian situation was the subject of many rounds of peace talks in Tanzania, South Africa, and Uganda, with the engagement of several regional leaders. These talks mainly focused on gradually establishing power-sharing agreements, and trying to overcome mutual mistrust and ethnic gaps. The first official talks were initiated in 1995, upon request by the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, under the aegis of former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. Different obstacles linked to the ambitious objective of the peace talks, disagreement over the text of the treaty, and the lack of concurrent ceasefire and thus of direct negotiation with the other rebel groups, protracted the talks and undermined its possibility for success. In 2000, the Burundian President, together with 13 of the 19 warring Hutu and Tutsi factions, signed the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, and a Power-sharing Agreement proposing a formula of proportional representation. However, disagreements over the future government, together with ethnic tensions, reignited the violence. In 2003 at a summit of African leaders an accord was reached to end the conflict, in the form of the Pretoria Protocol on Political, Defence and Security Power Sharing in Burundi. The lessons learned from previous failures led to the deployment of the South African Protection Support Detachment, later absorbed in the African Union Mission to Burundi, to oversee the installation of a transitional government. In June 2004, the UN stepped in and took over peacekeeping responsibilities. Following the electoral violence in 2015, the United Nations promoted and assisted an East African Community-led dialogue process and its Facilitator, former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa,⁹ through the Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General, Jamal Benomar.¹⁰

⁵ <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=8881>

⁶ <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/update-burundi-local-data-on-recent-unrest-26-apr-2015-24-april-2016/>

⁷ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54453#.V4f50PI96M8>

⁸ <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/update-burundi-local-data-on-recent-unrest-26-apr-2015-24-april-2016/>

⁹ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=54453#.V4f50PI96M8>

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/apps/newsFr/storyF.asp?NewsID=37478#.V4f5mvl96M8>

HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

Since August 2015, members of the UN Security Council repeatedly expressed concern that the security situation in Burundi was deteriorating rapidly, as a result of the violence and abuses that marked the electoral period. In the second and third trimester of 2015, at least 96 people have been killed, including eight children, and over 500 have been injured, while more than 600 have been arrested and detained, including minors. As of April 2016, the UN Refugee Agency's (UNHCR) reports that 259,132 people have fled the country, and the Agency is planning an humanitarian response based on a figure of some 330,000 refugees by year's end. According to UNHCR, for Burundese refugees in Tanzania (135,941 refugees), Rwanda (76,404), Democratic Republic of the Congo (22,204) and Uganda (24,583), conditions in exile are already tough and a large influx would make their lives even more challenging.¹¹



Typical house in an urban area of a small town in Burundi

Credit: CC 2.0 BY, SuSanA Secretariat
Source: Flickr.com

Shelter

Despite the known important dimension of internal displacement in the country, no exact official figures for the total number of IDPs are currently available. Estimates for 2016 set the number at about 85,301, in a sharp increase from the 78,948 recorded in 2015.¹² Furthermore, IDP sites do not always emerge, as people are very often being hosted by families and friends and are reluctant to identify themselves as IDPs for fear of being linked to a political agenda. This has complicated ongoing efforts by partners to assess humanitarian needs in terms of shelter and Non Food Items.



Hospital in Burundi

Credit: CC, Elise Mertens
Source: Capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu / Pixabay

Health

The already precarious Burundian health system, and in particular hospitalization services, have been under stress during the crisis. Burundi is rated as one of the 10 countries with the lowest human development index worldwide and it has a high mortality rate amongst under-fives of 142 per 1000 births.¹³ Some hospitals in Bujumbura experienced serious shortage of hospital beds during periods of mass casualties. Emergency services are also hindered by the reduced capacity, and by the degrading security condition that limit the number of ambulances venturing out at night. Cholera, acute diarrhoea and malaria are on the rise, with over 5 million malaria cases detected in 2015. From January to mid-March 2016, there were 1,615,855 malaria cases recorded with 759 deaths, a number that remains high compared to previous years, but is currently decreasing.¹⁴

¹¹ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundians-continuing-flee-country-one-year-after-crisis-began>

¹² <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundi-humanitarian-snapshot-24-march-2016>

¹³ <http://www.eawag.ch/en/department/ess/projekte/study-on-the-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-situation-for-rural-families-in-burundi/>

¹⁴ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Burundi%20Humanitarian%20SitRep%20-%2031%20March%202016%20.pdf>



In parts of Burundi, commercial water remains the main source of clean water

Credit: CC, Quent Courtois
Source: Pixabay

Water and sanitation¹⁵

Unlike other countries, Burundi is rich in water resources. Unfortunately, most of the water management system dates from the time of the Belgian administration, and it has not been properly maintained nor updated since then. In addition, most of the existing infrastructure has been affected by decades of violence, reducing their capacity further. Political violence that hit the country since 2015 is putting the existing resources under further strain. As the already limited infrastructure cannot cope with the ever-increasing demand, people draw water directly from other available sources which are often contaminated, increasing the frequency of cholera epidemics and cases of diarrhoea. This is further exacerbated by the high price of soap.



Traditional Market in Burundi

Credit: CC 2.0 BY-SA, EC-ECHO/Martin Karimi
Source: Pixabay

Food security

According to latest OCHA reports, 645,000 people are food insecure in Burundi.¹⁶ In March 2016, the United Nations reported 150,000 children under 5 with acute malnutrition, of which 50,000 considered severe, and 100,000 moderate.¹⁷



The school Carolus-Magnus-Schule in Burundi

Credit: CC 3.0 BY, Bernd Weisbrod
Source: Wikiwand.com

Education

Access to education was severely hampered as a consequence of the political and electoral violence in 2015 and 2016, resulting in many schools being regularly forced to close. Even where schools were open, attendance was low due to fear of insecurity. Cases of exclusion from secondary school on the grounds of students' political affiliation have been reported from Muyinga province in 2015.

¹⁵ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundi-humanitarian-snapshot-24-march-2016>

¹⁶ <http://www.unocha.org/eastern-africa/about-us/about-ocha-eastern-africa/burundi>

¹⁷ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/burundi-humanitarian-snapshot-24-march-2016>



Burundi National Defense soldiers training

Credit: CC, Task Force Raptor (3-124 CAV)

PAO/U.S. Army

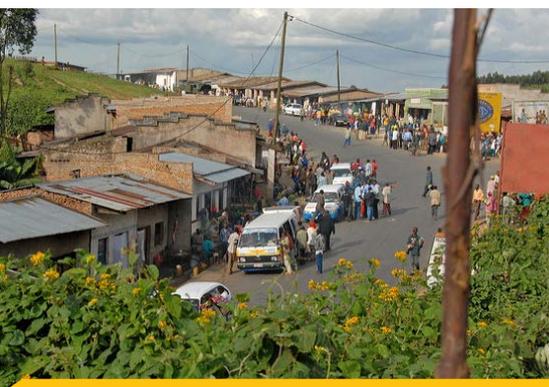
Source: commons.wikimedia.org

Protection

Police and intelligence services have repeatedly been accused by a variety of sources, including official UN reports, of responding to demonstrations with a pattern of excessive and disproportionate force. Arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment by intelligence officials, police and members of the Imbonerakure (the youth wing of the Burundi ruling party, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for Defence and Democracy CNDD-FDD) were reported by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in relation to at least 3,496 people during the current political crisis. Many were detained following their participation in peaceful protests against President Nkurunziza's third term. Many detainees were denied visits from their families or lawyers. Among those detained, UNICEF identified 66 children charged with "involvement in armed groups".¹⁸ Since April 2015, some 700 people have been killed, approximately 4,300 have been arbitrarily detained and at least 800 people have been forcibly disappeared, while more than 250,000 Burundians have fled the country.¹⁹ In early 2016, mass graves have been unearthed; secret detention facilities have been discovered; and there is credible evidence of torture inside detention facilities.²⁰ Imbonerakure is also accused of severe abuses including torture, threats, and intimidation, including toward refugees. The humanitarian situation is especially affecting children, as many of them have been arrested and detained after being caught up in fighting or protests, and some have been charged with involvement in armed groups. Furthermore, as recalled by UNICEF, 70% of the refugees fleeing from Burundi in 2015 are under 18 and a significant number have been separated from their families or are unaccompanied.

Access

Humanitarian access has been heavily hampered by the increasing violence that affected the country during and after the 2015 political crisis. Humanitarian agencies have met restrictions on the delivery of food supplies from warehouses to distribution sites, as well as serious limitations in accessing isolated communities for performing protection activities. Considering the degrading security context, and the escalation of both insecurity and needs, in April 2016 the UN Secretary General has given the Security Council three options for a police contribution to the United Nations presence in Burundi. The report notes that only the first of these options "could provide some degree of physical protection to the population against increased threats."²¹ The Security Council is thus under increasing pressure to authorize as soon as possible the deployment of a robust police protection and monitoring presence.



Road between Burundi Gitega and Bujumbura

Credit: CC 2.0 BY, Dave Proffer

Source: Flickr.com

¹⁸ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/burundi/report-burundi/>

¹⁹ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/joint-statement-un-security-council-should-authorize-robust-un-police-deployment>

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ <http://reliefweb.int/report/burundi/joint-statement-un-security-council-should-authorize-robust-un-police-deployment>

TRUTH-SEEKING PROCESSES

A first attempt towards creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was made in 1995, to cover the period starting from 1993. At the time, the government of Burundi asked the United Nations to set up the commission of inquiry because it did not feel it was strong enough to do so itself. A few years later, the 2000 Arusha Agreement laid down the general framework for 'combating impunity during the transition', but progresses towards establishing the stipulated TRC and other accountability mechanisms have been recorded only in 2011. However, preliminary National Consultations on transitional justice were organized in 2009, and represented the first opportunity for the population to express its opinion on transitional justice, and demonstrate broad popular support for dealing with the past. In 2011, the government appointed a technical committee to advise it on the establishment of the TRC, although the eleven members of the TRC were elected only in 2014. The selection was made by a mixed commission Parliament – Senate, who elected four women and seven men, representing the ethnic national dimension (six Hutus, four Tutsi, and one Twa). The civil society in Burundi has also been active throughout the process. In 2012, Impunity Watch in Burundi launched the project *Victimes à la Une*, to give a voice to the victims and better understand their expectations about processes of transitional justice.

MEMORY

The theme of memory is very present in the Burundian public debate, but quite absent on the streets of the country. Conferences and commemorative events focusing on existing documentation about the history of conflict to foster research and better understanding of recurring violence in Burundi are an established reality, with events such as the public conference at the University of Burundi realized by Interpeace with the Burundian Centre of Alert and Conflict Prevention. However, Burundi has few memorials remembering the genocides, and almost no regard for mass burial sites. There are some mausoleums in Bujumbura, in memory of the assassination in October 1993 of the first democratically elected Hutu president by Tutsi soldiers, and another one honoring independence hero Louis Rwagasore, a royal prince who won respect from both the Tutsi and Hutu communities. Some wall paintings and street decorations are sporadically found in the main cities, but in a much lesser dimension in comparison with – for example – Rwanda.

FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY AND REPARATION

Burundi has been slow in setting up national institutions to deal with the crimes perpetuated, and even those instruments that have been put in place do not receive unanimous support. One of the main points raised by critics to the TRC, is the fact that the current mechanisms promote impunity and hinder accountability for the crimes committed, becoming a sort of "pardon commission". At the same time, negotiations have continued towards establishing a Special Tribunal to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, but no advances have been recorded yet. According



Kibimba School Memorial
Credit: CC 2.0 BY, Dave Proffer
Source: Flickr.com

to many observers, the significantly expanded “temporary” immunities regime paved the way to a *de facto* amnesty, aided by the vague provisions of the Arusha Agreement on the subject, and by the lack of adequate national legal instruments. So far, reparation initiatives have focused mainly on the restitution of land, through the work of the National Commission on Land and Other Assets, and the Special Court. However, the lack of systemic institutional reform capable of ensuring access to a broader set of reparation measures by the most vulnerable is still an important cause for concern.

PEACEBUILDING

In Burundi, it was once taboo to mention ethnicity but, unlike Rwanda, the country has adopted the approach to openly face the issue of ethnicity to build resilience. Even during the war, while different ethnic groups did not dare to enter their neighbors’ area, radio stations deployed teams of mixed ethnicity in contrast with the Rwandan example of the Radio Mille Collines. Airtime was given to rebel leaders and civil-society activists and to tell stories of Burundians who had risked their lives to save people of different ethnicities. Journalists were trained in conflict resolution, and politicians now make light of their ethnic differences in public debates. National and international organizations such as Search for Common Ground have been involved in the process, producing a relevant amount of studies and expertise on the subject. In another project, this time funded by the United States Institute of Peace, 36 young leaders, men and women from each of Burundi’s 18 provinces identified by their community, were trained in leadership, nonviolent communication, and peaceful conflict resolution. The project led to 12 “Youth Inspired Talks”, town hall-style meetings highlighting positive role models for peace and fostering public discussion, and five regional “Peace Festivals”, bringing together leaders of civil society, political parties, and political youth wings around the theme of social cohesion. Each festival drew 1,500-3,000 attendees, and both talks and festivals were broadcast to spread its inspiring message even further. Post-electoral violence that exploded in 2015 and 2016 unfortunately marked several step-backs also in the peacebuilding processes that were already concluded. Burundi’s army is also composed of troops and opposition forces that were integrated pursuant to the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, as part of the compromise to end Burundi’s Civil War. In the first few months of 2016, there have been reports of police searching the homes of former soldiers and Tutsi members of the former Forces Armées Burundaises (ex-FAB).²²

²² <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/update-burundi-local-data-on-recent-unrest-26-apr-2015-24-april-2016/>



Second meeting of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue in Gitega

Credit: CC, Ikirihó

Source: burundi-agnews.org

“BURUNDIANS NEVER HATED EACH OTHER. IT WAS ALL ABOUT POLITICS AND DONE FOR POLITICAL GAIN. POLITICIANS USED MONEY TO CONVINCE PEOPLE TO CARRY OUT CRIMES AND KILLINGS.”

Rose Hakizimana, Burundian political commentator¹⁹

²³ BBC, What Burundi could teach Rwanda about reconciliation, 13 August 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-19182107>



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