

**H.E. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania**

**H.E. The Secretary General of the East African Community**

**H.E. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

**H.E. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**

**18 July 2019**

## **Urgent Appeal to Protect Burundian Refugees in Tanzania**

The present **Urgent Appeal** is being submitted by the undersigned Burundi Civil Society Organizations and other African and international organizations who agreed to arise together to call for urgent measures to ensure safety and security for the Burundian refugees in Tanzania camps.

**The severe human rights violations against Burundian refugees in Tanzanian refugee camps require urgent action by the Tanzanian Government, the East African Community, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Union and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.**

As a result of the political crisis that erupted in Burundi in 2015, more than 500,000 people were forced to flee into exile, many seeking safety in Tanzania. As of February 2019, 274,445 refugees were in three Tanzanian refugee camps: Nduta, Mtendeli and Nyarugusu, in the districts of Kibondo, Kankoko and Kasulu respectively, in Kigoma Region.

Repeated attacks by armed men allegedly coming from Burundi, including the Burundian Intelligence Service agents (SNR) and the notorious Imbonerakure

militia, have been reported several times. Since the beginning of 2019, nearly 200 human rights violations have been reported in the camps. The reports include cases of sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, torture and other degrading and inhuman treatment, enforced disappearances, and armed robberies, all such miseries refugees had fled from their country of origin. Allegedly, the harassment and violations have increased in an attempt to force the Burundian refugees to return home.

Furthermore, Tanzanian authorities, including President John Pombe Magufuli, Dr Damas Ndumbaro, Vice-Minister of Interior Affairs, and the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa, continue to insist that there is peace and security in Burundi, and pressing refugees to return home. The following deplorable incidents have been reported:

- Groups of armed Burundian men are based in the forests and areas surrounding refugee camps, causing havoc and committing horrendous crimes, including sexual violence against women and girls who leave the camps in search of firewood. More than 50 victims of sexual violence have been reported. (reference: <http://forschburundi.org/fr/appel-urgent-au-secours-des-refugies-burundais-en-tanzanie-le-calvaire-vecu-par-les-refugies-burundais-dans-les-camps-en-tanzanie-appelle-a-des-actions-urgentes-de-la-part-de-la-communaute-inter/>). Several men who accompany these women are reported to have been killed while trying to protect them.
- On 31 May 2019, a group of armed men in Burundian military uniforms opened fire, and attempted to rob a merchant in Nduta camp. Tanzanian police did not intervene, despite being close by.
- On 27 May 2019, an automatic weapon with ammunition was seized in Nduta camp. The person in possession of the weapon later admitted being an agent of the Burundian Intelligence Service (SNR).
- On 24 May 2019, another agent of the Burundian SNR was arrested in possession of 37 grenades that he intended to introduce in Nduta camp.
- On 3 April 2019, two refugees were attacked and injured by five masked and armed men, carrying guns and machetes, speaking Kirundi, in Nduta camp.

- On 1 April 2019, three armed Burundian men, among them Roger Dusabimana, a known agent of the Burundian SNR and native of the Busoni commune in Kirundo Province, were killed near Nduta camp.
- Attempts to flee the refugee camps, and to seek safety in other countries like Rwanda and Kenya, are systematically blocked by the Tanzanian authorities. On 16 March and 5 April 2019, at least 22 and 50 refugees, respectively, were arrested by Tanzanian police while attempting to flee from Nduta camp to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Some of them have been subsequently detained by Tanzanian police and kept incommunicado to their families.
- Various arbitrary measures have been taken against refugees, including strict prohibition of doing business or conducting any income generating activity. Moreover, pregnant refugee women from Nduta Camp are no longer authorized to receive care from the *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) health centre and ran a big risk for themselves and safe delivery.
- Concurrently, cases of suicide have increased as a result of the hardship Burundian refugees are subject to, and fear of death in case of deportation. At least eight of such cases, of whom two survived, were reported in Nduta camp.

**It is worth questioning the reason behind the presence of, and violations carried out by the Burundian National Intelligence Service and security forces on Tanzanian territory, around the areas where Burundian refugees are concentrated, with no commensurate preventive and protective measures for the refugees being taken by the Tanzanian authorities, in accordance with the International Conventions on Refugees in this respect.**

In light of the above, we strongly and passionately appeal to:

- **The Government of Tanzania:**

- ✓ To ensure that refugee camps are secure, and to ensure justice and accountability for the human rights violations against Burundian refugees; and
  - ✓ Allow refugees to move to other countries where they will feel more secure and enjoy more freedom, if they are no longer willing to assist and protect them, in accordance with the pertinent international Conventions as the country of asylum.
- **The East African Community (EAC):**
  - ✓ To urge the Tanzania Government to stop the ill treatment against Burundian refugees, as it is a clear violation of the regional and international human rights framework in which Tanzania is a party to.
- **The African Union (AU):**
  - ✓ To take all appropriate measures to ensure adequate protection of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, in accordance with its Constitutive Act, the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees, the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa as well as the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, including the respect of the sacred principle of non-deportation/refoulement of refugees.
- **The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons:**
  - ✓ To take urgent action to request emergency measures to put an end to the harassment of and violence against Burundian refugees in Tanzanian camps and to ensure that they are not forced to return home against their will.
- **The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):**

- ✓ To take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of Burundian refugees in Tanzania against any form of human rights violations and to continue providing the so much needed assistance to them, in collaboration with all other humanitarian Organizations.

### **The Signatories:**

1. Forum pour le Renforcement de la Société Civile(FORSC)
- 2.Mouvement des Femmes et Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité au Burundi(MFFPS)
3. Réseau des Citoyens Probes(RCP)
4. Union Burundaise des Journalistes(UBJ)
5. Action Chrétienne pour l'Abolition de la Torture(ACAT)
6. Collectif des Avocats pour la défense des Victimes de droit International commis au Burundi(CAVIB)
- 7.Association pour la Protection des Droits de l'Homme et des détenus(APRODH)
8. Forum pour la Conscience et le Développement(FOCODE)
9. Coalition Burundaise pour la Cour Pénale Internationale (CB CPI)
10. Ligue ITEKA
11. Atrocity Watch Africa (AWA)
12. Panafrican Lawyers Union (PALU)
13. DefendDefenders
14. Panafrika DefendDefenders Network
15. Coalition Burundaise des Défenseurs des Droits Humains (CBDDH)
16. Coalition de la Société civile pour le Monitoring Electoral (COSOME)
17. RAPRED Girubuntu Grands\_Lacs