



ACAT - Burundi

Report on the monitoring of human rights violations and abuses committed in Burundi.

Period: August 2025.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The political and security crisis that Burundi has been experiencing since April 2015 remains unresolved and continues to fuel human rights violations to the detriment of the Burundian people, who are paying a heavy price while aspiring, as elsewhere, to the rule of law. The trend in human rights violations documented since the beginning of the political crisis in April 2015 remains virtually unchanged.

These mainly include summary executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, acts of torture and ill-treatment, which continue to be observed.

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi, who was appointed to succeed the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, said in his statement on 23 September 2024 during the^{57th} session of the UN Human Rights Council that *"the human rights situation in Burundi remains a cause for concern. The country still deserves the constant attention of the Human Rights Council. The reasons that led to the establishment of the mandate have not fundamentally changed. The institutions responsible for implementing the various rights remain weak. The past year has given me the opportunity to observe a series of events which, taken together, could be early warning signs of serious violations of international law and international human rights law, particularly during the legislative and municipal elections scheduled for 2025, in line with the common risk factors identified in the analysis of criminal atrocities (A/70/741-S/2016/71) ...*

Civic space remains closed, with reprisals against media professionals, civil society organisations, etc. The State continues to systematically exercise control over the National Intelligence Service and the Imbonerakure militia, which are free to torture and intimidate the population.

They regularly engage in paramilitary training and are considered heroes at the highest levels of the State and enjoy the support of the authorities. I remain particularly concerned about the lack of independence of the judiciary. Cases brought following serious violations have rarely led to impartial investigations, and even more rarely to the prosecution and conviction of the perpetrators.

Arbitrary arrests have continued, mostly on political or rebellion grounds. Enforced disappearances have been used as a means of exerting pressure on voices dissenting from the current regime, particularly political opponents, their relatives or civil society organisations.

In several cases, witnesses saw the victims being put into a vehicle or saw them being taken away by SNR and/or Imbonerakure personnel.

Through its publications, ACAT-Burundi remains actively engaged in advocacy against these serious violations, collaborating in particular with regional and international human rights protection mechanisms in the hope that victims or their families will be able to exercise their right to file complaints with judicial bodies that guarantee a fair trial.

During the period covered by this report, 11 cases of murder, 7 cases of abduction, 2 cases of arbitrary arrest and 5 cases of torture were recorded.

In most cases, the alleged perpetrators are not prosecuted: dead bodies, most of them unidentified, are discovered in various locations throughout Burundi.

II. MURDERS

Assassinations and abductions continue in Burundi more than five years after President Évariste Ndayishimiye came to power. Repression has become recurrent, despite Article 24 of *the Burundian Constitution, which guarantees everyone the right to life. Furthermore, Articles 210 to 220 of the Penal Code criminalise and severely punish anyone who violates this fundamental right.*

During July 2025, ACAT-Burundi documented the discovery of eleven bodies in different parts of the country.

- 1) On the morning of 4 August 2025, the body of a young girl, Evelyne NSABIMANA, was found hanging from a palm tree with a rope made from part of her loincloth in the village of Kagoti, on Mutambara hill in the commune of Rumonge, in Burunga province. According to local sources, the victim's knees and feet were touching the ground, suggesting that she had been killed and that the perpetrators had staged a suicide. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.
- 2) On 5 August 2025, a man named Eliphaz MIBURO was killed in an armed attack on Bwiza hill, Bukinanyana commune. His wife and child were injured and taken to hospital for intensive care. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.

- 3) On 5 August 2025, the body of Claver NZEYIMANA, originally from the Kayanza commune in the Butanyerera commune, was discovered in a car at 5^e Avenue No. 33 in the Buyenzi area, Mukaza commune, Bujumbura province. According to witnesses, Claver NZEYIMANA was watching cars on this avenue. His body was taken to the Prince Regent Charles morgue. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.
- 4) On 7 August 2025, the lifeless body of Baranshagirije Salvator was discovered on Mboza hill, Mukaza commune, Bujumbura province. Sources at the scene indicate that the victim was strangled, as his body had wounds on the neck and blood in the mouth. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.
- 5) On 10 August 2025, the body of an unidentified man was found on the banks of the Mubarazi River at the foot of Mwumba Hill in the commune of Bugendana, Gitega province. According to eyewitnesses, the victim's body had numerous wounds to the face, indicating that he had been beaten to death with clubs. The same sources believe that the victim was killed elsewhere and his body transported to the place where it was found in order to cover up any traces for a subsequent investigation, as no traces of blood were found at the scene. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.
- 6) On 15 August 2025, the body of an unidentified man was discovered in Gatumba, Ntahangwa commune, in the province of Bujumbura, floating in the Rusizi River. According to local sources, the victim's body showed signs of torture and had been killed elsewhere and dumped at this location. The local authorities then ordered the burial on the same day without an investigation to determine the circumstances and the perpetrators. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.

- 7) On 16 August 2025, the lifeless body of 50-year-old Cuma Ndikumana was found on Taba hill in the Nyabikere area. According to witnesses, his attackers tied his body to a tree before fleeing. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
- 8) On 17 August 2025, the body of 42-year-old Joseph Nyamweru was found on Muhororo hill in the Nyabikere area. According to eyewitnesses, the victim's body had been horribly mutilated with a machete. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
- 9) On 19 August 2025, the lifeless body of Melchiade Nzeyimana, aged 48, was discovered on Ngugo hill in the Nyabikere area, near the buildings of the Nyabikere municipal secondary school. According to information from his home hill, Melchiade Nzeyimana was murdered after selling his cow, and his body showed signs of strangulation around the neck with blood in his mouth. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.
- 10) On 23 August 2025, the lifeless body of Mathias Mpakurera, aged 69, originally from Gasasa hill in the Makebuko area of Gitega commune and province, was discovered floating in the Ruvyironza river at the foot of Jurwe hill in the Bukoro area of Gishubi commune, Gitega province. According to witnesses, the decomposing body of Mathias Mpakurera was buried the same day on Jurwe Hill. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death.
- 11) On 26 August 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified man in his fifties was found on the banks of the Mugere River, at the foot of Gatobo Hill, in the Mayuyu area of the commune of Rwibaga, in the province of Bujumbura. According to local sources, the body had injuries to the head and right eye, indicating that the man had been beaten to death with clubs. The body was transferred to the morgue at Mukike Hospital pending burial. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.

In this report covering the month of August 2025, ACAT-Burundi notes with concern an increase in the number of burials of unidentified bodies discovered in various parts of the country, without prior identification of the victims or the opening of a judicial investigation, in clear violation of Article 109 of Law No. 1/09 of 11 May 2018 on the Code of Criminal Procedure of Burundi.

This article clearly stipulates that:

"In the event of the discovery of a corpse, whether or not it is a violent death, but if the cause is unknown or suspicious, the Judicial Police Officer (OPJ) shall, if possible, inform the Public Prosecutor before going to the scene and making the initial findings. The OPJ must go to the scene and make observations when it has been impossible to contact the Public Prosecutor. The report of observations must be communicated to the latter without delay."

The same article provides that the Public Prosecutor shall go to the scene if he or she deems it necessary, accompanied by any doctor, expert or technician competent to assess the nature, cause and circumstances of the death. He or she may also delegate this task to a Judicial Police Officer of his or her choice. In the event of a death whose circumstances remain unknown, whether or not an offence has been committed, the Public Prosecutor is required to open an investigation to determine the cause of death.

In light of the above, ACAT-Burundi recommends that:

- That administrators systematically inform the judicial police when a dead body is discovered, so that a report can be made and an investigation opened immediately.
- That the judicial police and the public prosecutor's office fulfil their legal obligations and ensure that no body is buried without a credible investigation having been carried out beforehand.

III. FORCED DISAPPEARANCES/ABDUCTIONS

- 1) On 1 August 2025, UWAMAHORO Nelly Ruth, 27, a trader at the Cotebu market, residing in Buterere II in the province of Bujumbura, was arrested at her workplace by two men in police uniform identified as intelligence agents by witnesses at the scene. According to sources at the scene, they confiscated her phones before forcibly taking her away in a white double-cab vehicle with tinted windows and no number plates. Since her abduction, Nelly Ruth has been missing and cannot be reached. Her family is worried. ACAT-Burundi is calling for independent and credible judicial investigations to be opened in order to find Nelly and bring the perpetrators of this abduction to justice.
- 2) On 8 August 2025, at around 6.30 p.m., Hadj Hakizimana, director of the HGS travel agency located at the "Chez Sion" market in Bujumbura, was abducted near the Intwari stadium by police colonel Jean Claver Nduwayo, head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) at Melchior Ndadaye airport. According to witnesses, Colonel Nduwayo had previously contacted Hadj Hakizimana, asking him to meet him for an interview near the stadium.

When Hadj arrived at the meeting place with several people he was transporting, he found the colonel already waiting for him. Shortly afterwards, two plainclothes SNR agents arrived in a white van with tinted windows belonging to the service. They handcuffed Hadj Hakizimana, blindfolded him and took him to an unknown destination. The victim's companions then intervened: they immobilised Colonel Nduwayo to prevent him from leaving in his Probox vehicle and alerted the population. The police intervened and took Nduwayo to the Bwiza Judicial Police cell. In the meantime, Nduwayo telephoned his accomplices, asking them not to harm the kidnapped man. Sources report that the next day, 9 August 2025, at around 4 a.m., the kidnappers brought Hadj Hakizimana back to the very place where he had been abducted, still blindfolded, in a TI-type vehicle. However, his abductors had stripped him of the money he had on him and the key to his vehicle. Surprisingly, police colonel Jean Claver Nduwayo was quickly released, although his Probox vehicle remained impounded at the Judicial Police.

- 3) On 11 August 2025, ARAKAZA Lewis, aged 21, residing on Mugere Hill, Gasekebuye commune, Bujumbura province, was reported missing. According to local sources, he was abducted by persons who have not yet been identified. According to his parents, he left home at around 10 a.m. and has not been heard from since. ACAT-Burundi calls for independent and credible judicial investigations to be opened in order to find Lewis and bring the perpetrators of this abduction to justice.
- 4) On 11 August 2025, Daniel, aged 30 and originally from Butamenwa hill, Nyabikere area, Shombo commune, disappeared while in police custody. According to local sources, Daniel had gone to a restaurant in the centre of Nyabikere (Gitega province), where he ordered a meal worth 2,000 FBU, even though he only had 1,000 FBU. The restaurant owner alerted the police commissioner, even though Daniel had already explained that he was waiting for his employer to pay the bill. Police officers arrived on the scene, arrested Daniel and violently tortured him. They then took him to the police station () in the Nyabikere area. As other detainees refused to have him incarcerated with them due to his critical condition, he was placed alone in a cell. Later, the police officers transported him to the Nyabikere health centre, but the nurses refused to treat him because of the seriousness of his condition. Since then, no one knows his fate.

ACAT-Burundi is calling for independent and credible judicial investigations to be carried out in order to find Daniel and prosecute those responsible for his abduction.

- 5) On 15 August 2025, three prisoners from Ngozi Central Prison, namely BAYUBAHE Isidore, NIMUBONA Ildfonse and Ernest, were handed over to agents of the National Intelligence Service by the prison director. Since that day, there has been no news of them. According to corroborating sources, the prison director summoned them, after which they were handcuffed and taken away in an intelligence vehicle. Information gathered by ACAT-Burundi indicates that BAYUBAHE Isidore died as a result of torture, while NIMUBONA Ildfonse is in critical condition and unable to stand.

The same sources report that the three prisoners are being held in the National Intelligence Service's detention centre, located near Regina Mundi Cathedral in Bujumbura.

ACAT-Burundi reiterates its condemnation of the arrests, which took the form of abductions, and the detentions in secret locations carried out by the National Intelligence Service. These practices constitute a violation of the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to arrest and detention, the Burundian Constitution, and the international conventions ratified by Burundi, which have constitutional status.

IV. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND ILLEGAL DETENTIONS

1. On 14 August 2025, NIKURA Gabriel, a trader, and Tharcisse, who was transporting his Brarudi products to customers, were arrested by police officers from Mayuyu on Rukina Hill, Mukike area, Rwibaga commune, Bujumbura province.

The next day, the same police officers returned and confiscated all the products he had in his possession. NIKURA Gabriel was then transferred to Mayuyu and taken to Bujumbura at around 3 p.m. Since then, his family has had no news of him.

V. VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

In addition to the killings and arbitrary arrests, other human rights violations were also documented during August 2025.

The *Imbonerakure*, young people affiliated with the ruling party, the CNDD-FDD, and described as militias by the United Nations, abuse the power granted to them by the Burundian state by mistreating and torturing the population, particularly those perceived as political opponents, without ever being challenged.

ACAT-Burundi also notes that agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) continue to torture people arrested in places of detention. It notes with regret that transfers of detainees are frequently organised at night in order to conceal the critical condition of some victims who have been tortured.

1. On 10 August 2025, BARINAKANDI was found unconscious, with a neck injury, in a gutter on Nyenzi hill, Busoni commune, Butanyerera province. The inhabitants of the hill suspect members of *the Imbonerakure*, notably Karorero Félix, Rugema and Salvator, who were on night patrol in the area at the time of the incident.
2. On 13 August 2025, Ruhegwe Patrice, a mechanic and member of UPRONA, was tortured by Imbonerakure led by Viateur Ndayisaba in a bar owned by Ndayisenga Élie, located on Ruhehe Hill, Bugabira area, Kirundo commune, Butanyerera province. According to local sources, the attack occurred after Ruhegwe Patrice opposed the Imbonerakure during political discussions. The victim was seriously injured and hospitalised at Kirundo Hospital.
3. On 20 August 2025, at around 1 a.m., Manassé Nibaruta was violently tortured by four Imbonerakure members on night patrol: Constantin Ndabirorere and his son Kelly Ndabirorere, Jean Claude Ndayishimiye alias *Bire*, and a certain *Bwayaze*. The incident took place on Murengeza hill, in the Musenyi area of Mpanda commune, in the province of Bujumbura. According to members of his family, this attack was allegedly ordered by Jean Bosco Ndayisenga, head of the CNDD-FDD on this hill. The attackers called the victim while he was sleeping in his home. As soon as he left his house, he was brutally beaten with clubs and sticks, then seriously wounded with a machete. The same sources report that, during this torture session, the Imbonerakure hurled insults at him, accusing him of supporting a certain Oswald, a candidate in the upcoming hill elections, who is campaigning for change on Murengeza hill.
4. On 23 August 2025, Gervais Hakizimana was tortured by several Imbonerakure led by Vincent Nemerimana, chief of Mutwana hill in Musongati commune, Burunga province, and Bernard Ntirandekura, local CNDD-FDD leader on this hill. According to local sources, the victim was subjected to lengthy torture sessions before being released with orders to disappear. The attackers accused him of campaigning for the hill and neighbourhood councillor elections scheduled for 25 August 2025, even though the official campaign period had already ended. According to the same sources, Gervais Hakizimana attempted to file a complaint with the Giharo police station the following day. However, his attempt was unsuccessful: the municipal commissioner replied that the judicial police officers were "busy dealing with electoral cases".

ACAT-Burundi strongly condemns these acts of torture perpetrated by state agents, whose mission is to protect the rights of citizens. By committing such abuses, these agents are violating Law No. 1/27 of 19 December 2017 revising the Penal Code, in particular Article 206, which makes torture a criminal offence.

ACAT-Burundi calls for independent and credible investigations to be opened so that the perpetrators are brought to justice and the victims obtain redress, in accordance with the provisions of Article 349 of the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure.

VI. CONCLUSION.

The month of August 2025, covered by this report, continues to be marked by serious human rights violations, in line with previous months. The recurring phenomenon of the discovery of dead bodies in various locations, rivers, bushes or other isolated places, followed by their hasty burial by the administrative authorities, raises serious suspicions of complicity between certain senior officials and the perpetrators of these crimes.

In a context where the judiciary and national human rights institutions, such as the Independent National Human Rights Commission (CNIDH) and the Ombudsman, appear to be under the control of the executive branch, investigations opened by the public prosecutor's office into violations of the right to life or cases of enforced disappearances are struggling to reach a conclusion, particularly when the victims are political opponents or human rights defenders.

Some local authorities, in collaboration with police officers and members of the Imbonerakure militia, are guilty of these abuses with complete impunity. This reflects a worrying trend among the authorities to renounce their duty to protect the population in favour of partisan or ideological interests.

Furthermore, the judiciary continues to condone these acts, which are in flagrant violation of the criminal procedures in force in Burundi. Many crimes committed within communities or households go unpunished, often due to corruption, widespread impunity or the status of the perpetrators, whether they are government officials or members of the Imbonerakure.

In view of this alarming situation, it is imperative that the Burundian authorities fully appreciate the seriousness of the ongoing violations and make a genuine commitment to putting an end to them.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS.

➤ *The Burundian government should:*

- ✓ Ensure the safety of the population and investigate the bodies that are regularly found in different parts of the country without the perpetrators of these murders being identified.
- ✓ Address the crimes committed by Imbonerakure youth during night patrols, which are becoming commonplace as impunity plagues the judicial system; security must be provided solely by the defence and security forces.

In response to the recurring phenomenon of discovery of dead bodies:

- **To the local administration:** to systematically inform the Judicial Police when a dead body is discovered, so that a legal report can be made and an investigation opened in accordance with the law;
- **The Judicial Police and the Public Prosecutor's Office:** to fulfil their legal obligations by ensuring that nobody is buried without a credible and transparent investigation, in strict compliance with the procedures laid down in the Code of Criminal Procedure.

➤ *To national human rights institutions:*

- ✓ Take action by using their legal powers to promote respect for human rights in Burundi in the face of numerous recurring cases of human rights violations.

➤ *To the international community:*

- ✓ Closely monitor the situation, taking into account the risk factors that could aggravate the human rights situation in Burundi.