



ACAT-Burundi

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

**Period: September 2025.**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The political and security crisis that Burundi has been experiencing since April 2015, which remains unresolved, 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 pattern of human rights violations documented since the beginning of the political crisis in April 2015 remains largely unchanged.

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

*At the 60th session of the Human Rights Council, held on 19 August 2025, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights presented his report on the state of human rights.*

*Between November 2023 and March 2025, numerous civil society organisations documented persistent cases of torture and ill-treatment, attributed mainly to the National Intelligence Service (SNR), the police and the Imbonerakure. These abuses often target members of the opposition, particularly the CNL and FRODEBU, and take the form of physical and psychological abuse inflicted outside any legal framework, without access to a lawyer, a doctor or a fair trial. Despite the commitments made to the Committee against Torture in 2023, no concrete measures have been taken, and the follow-up report expected in 2024 has not been submitted.*

*Between August 2023 and June 2025, a total of 89 cases were recorded, often accompanied by illegal detention in secret locations, while 11 extrajudicial executions and 137 arbitrary arrests were reported.*

*Arbitrary arrests have increased: 86 cases were recorded, nearly half of which involved opponents from ten different parties. The authorities frequently extend preventive detention beyond the legal time limits and sometimes refuse to release individuals who have served their sentences. These practices lead to chronic overcrowding in the prison system, marked by degrading conditions of detention (overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, lack of healthcare, internal violence).*

*The Special Rapporteur noted a growing restriction of civic space, marked by limitations on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Human rights defenders and civil society organisations continue to face intimidation and obstacles to their activities. The report calls on the authorities to guarantee a safe and inclusive environment that promotes citizen participation.*

*The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to put an end to these practices, to respect freedom of movement, and to unconditionally release all persons detained for the peaceful exercise of their civil and political rights.*

Through its publications, ACAT-Burundi remains committed to actively advocating against these serious violations, notably by collaborating 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, 17 cases of murder, 7 cases of abduction, 1 case of arbitrary arrest and 5 cases of torture were recorded.

In many cases, the alleged perpetrators remain unpunished, while dead bodies, most often unidentified, are discovered in various parts of the country.

## **II. MURDERS.**

Assassinations and abductions continue to occur 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.***

In September 2025, ACAT-Burundi recorded 17 cases of assassinations in different regions of the country, in circumstances reflecting flagrant violations of human rights, perpetrated in a climate of total impunity.

1. On 2 September 2025, the lifeless body of Jean Marie, aged around 30 and originally from Nyamagana hill in the commune of Bugendana in Gitega province, was discovered on a football pitch in the Shatanya neighbourhood of the commune and province of Gitega. According to local sources, the victim worked as a night watchman in a pharmacy opposite the building known as *Kombokombo*. The body was transferred to Gitega Regional Hospital pending burial. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to clarify the circumstances of this death.

2. On 2 September 2025, Rémégie Murekambanze, an activist with Agathon Rwasa's wing of the National Congress for Liberty (CNL) party, was murdered by a police officer identified as Élie Butoyi. The tragedy occurred on the Nyabisaka hillside, Ntobwe hill, Mungwa area, Gitega commune and province, at around 5.30 p.m. The victim had just been arrested in the rural district of Karera, where he lived, and was being transferred by motorbike to the prison in the Mungwa area. According to witnesses at the scene, Murekambanze asked the police officer to stop for a moment so that he could buy some phone credit to call his family. When the police officer refused, the victim insisted. In response, Élie Butoyi allegedly pushed him violently to the ground before shooting him more than 20 times, causing his immediate death.  
Alerted by the local population, the municipal administrator of Gitega, Dr Jacques Nduwimana, quickly dispatched a vehicle to take the body to the regional hospital in Gitega. Meanwhile, the perpetrator fled on a motorbike. ACAT-Burundi calls for the perpetrator of this crime to be prosecuted and punished in accordance with the law.
3. On 2 September 2025, an unidentified young woman from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was killed by a Burundian soldier on Nyamitanga hill, in the Ndava area of Bukinanyana commune, in Bujumbura province.  
According to eyewitnesses, the victim, who was pregnant, was carrying ten cans of fuel from the DRC. She was shot several times while undergoing a military check during a patrol near the Rusizi River, on the border between Burundi and the DRC. Her body was then transferred to the morgue of Gasenyi Hospital by the municipal administrator of Bukinanyana.  
ACAT-Burundi demands that the perpetrator of this crime be identified, prosecuted and punished in accordance with the law.
4. On 4 September 2025, the lifeless body of Athanase Manirakiza, a retired police officer, was discovered in a tripsacum field on Gitwaro hill, in the Binyuro area of Bururi commune, in Burunga province. According to local sources, Athanase Manirakiza had been missing since Tuesday 2 September 2025, when he was returning from the post office in Rweza, in the commune of Vyanda, where he had gone to withdraw money. The same sources indicate that he was murdered by strangulation by unidentified individuals, who also took the money he was carrying. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to shed light on the circumstances of this death.

5. On 4 September 2025, the body of Appolinaire Nduwamungu, a retired soldier and member of Uprona, originally from Gozi hill, Mwumba area, Matana commune, Murembwe province, was discovered in the Murembwe valley, on Gitsinda hill, Mugamba commune. According to local sources, the victim had head injuries, some of which were severe open wounds.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to clarify the circumstances of this death.

6. On 7 September 2025, Michel Mvukiye, aged 60 and a member of the CNDD-FDD party, was killed by unidentified individuals on Ruhata hill, Nyaruhinda area, Karusi commune, Gitega province. According to local sources, his wife survived the attack, although she was wounded in the arm by two machete blows.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this murder.

7. On 7 September 2025, Michel Mvukiye, aged 60 and a member of the CNDD-FDD party, was killed by unidentified individuals on Ruhata hill, in the Nyaruhinda area of Karusi commune, Gitega province. According to local sources, his wife escaped the attack, although she was seriously injured in the arm by two machete blows.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this murder.

8. On 10 September 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified man was found in a gutter on Buconyori Avenue, in district 6 of the Ngagara area, Ntahangwa commune, Bujumbura province. According to eyewitnesses, the victim was completely naked and wrapped in a bag, but showed no visible signs of violence. It is believed that the man was killed elsewhere and that his body was transported to this location in order to cover up the traces for a subsequent investigation.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this murder.

9. On 10 September 2025, Gédéon Ngaruko, his wife and their grandson were killed in an explosion caused by a grenade thrown into their home on Karira Hill in the Gahogo neighbourhood of Musinga commune, Buhumuza province. According to testimonies from residents of Karira Hill, neither the perpetrators nor the motive for this crime have yet been identified.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this murder.

10. On 13 September 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified child, aged around two, was discovered by farmers in an irrigation canal in Village 5, Buringa area, Mpanda commune, Bujumbura province. According to the farmers, the child's body showed no apparent injuries.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this disappearance.

11. On 16 September 2025, the lifeless, decapitated and badly decomposed body of an unidentified man was discovered in a bush on Gabiro-Ruvyagira hill, Rugombo area, Cibitoke commune, Bujumbura province. On the same day, the municipal administrator of Cibitoke, Éloge Najeneza, ordered the immediate burial of the body, without waiting for an investigation to be opened to identify the victim and establish responsibility for the crime.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to shed light on the circumstances of this murder.

12. On 16 September 2025, the badly decomposed body of a man identified as *Ndegeya* was discovered in the locality of Rwankona, Kiremba hill, Bururi commune, Burunga province, where he used to sleep. According to local sources, his identity remains uncertain, although he appears to be from Gitega, in the commune of Mutaho. The same sources report that the hill chief ordered his burial on the day of the discovery.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to shed light on the circumstances of this murder.

13. On 19 September 2025, the lifeless body of Gomere Nishemezimana was found on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, in the commune of Nyanza. Originally from Gasoroze, in the province of Buhumuriza, he worked as a domestic servant for Verias Bigire in the Bogorwa neighbourhood. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this murder.

14. On 20 September 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified teenage girl, aged around 15, was discovered lying on National Road No. 16, in the Nyamuswaga Valley, on Mahwa Hill, in the commune of Matana, Burunga province. According to local sources, the victim had head injuries suggesting that she had been killed with clubs. The same sources specify that, on the orders of the local administration, the body was buried the next day at the place where it was found, without any

investigation being opened to establish the circumstances of the crime and identify the perpetrators. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to shed light on the circumstances of this murder.

15. On 27 September 2025, two decomposed bodies belonging to unidentified men were found abandoned in the bush on Rusiga hill, in the commune of Cibitoke, Bujumbura province, near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The discovery was made by soldiers on patrol, alerted by a foul odour. According to local sources, the municipal administration ordered the immediate burial of the bodies without first opening an investigation to identify the victims and the perpetrators of this double crime. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to shed light on the circumstances of this murder.

16. On 30 September 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified man, aged between 50 and 60, was found in the Gikungu Rural neighbourhood, Gihosha area, Ntahangwa commune, not far from the place commonly known as *Kwa Ntiba*. According to local sources, the body had a head wound and the arms were tied with a rope. Police officers from the neighbourhood went to the scene but left with only information about the victim's identity, leaving the body there for several hours.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this murder.

**In this report covering the month of August 2025, ACAT-Burundi notes with concern an increase in the number of burials of bodies found 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:**

- Administrators to 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 21 September 2025, Audace Icoyitungiye, a retired soldier from Nyamugari hill in the former commune of Gisozi in Mwaro province and a resident of the Mutakura neighbourhood, was abducted by five police officers in a double-cab van belonging to the Burundi National Police, with tinted windows and no number plates. The abduction took place on the Nyabagera bridge, at a location commonly known as "Chez Commune", in the Mutakura neighbourhood, Cibitoke area, Ntahangwa commune, Bujumbura province. The police officers drove him to an unknown destination in the direction of the Mutakura-Buterere section. According to local sources, Audace Icoyitungiye worked at Binagana Hospital in Bujumbura after having worked for many years at the Kamenge Military Hospital before his retirement. On the day of his abduction, he was returning from Sunday mass at the Ngagara camp, accompanied by his youngest son and another man whose identity has not been revealed. It was the latter who allegedly pushed him into the van before the police officers took him away. Family members said that Audace Icoyitungiye had received several phone calls on the same day from a police officer named Benjamin Nzambimana, born in 1977 in Gahingwa, Rutegama commune, Muramvya province. A former member of the ex-FAB, he joined the Burundi National Police in 2005. However, Benjamin Nzambimana himself had been abducted on Friday, 19 September 2025. Since that day, his telephones, which had remained connected until then, were disconnected at the very moment of Audace Icoyitungiye's abduction.

These elements suggest that the two abductions are linked and that their captors may be the same.

2. On 25 September 2025, at around 11:30 a.m., Didier Mugisha, aged 38, was abducted by six agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR), two of whom were wearing Burundi National Police uniforms. The operation took place inside the compound of the headquarters of the Commercial Bank of Burundi (BANCOBU) in a white double-cab van without licence plates. The victim was then taken to an unknown destination.  
According to local sources, Didier Mugisha, a resident of the Nyabugete neighbourhood in the municipality of Mugere, in the province of Bujumbura, had gone to BANCOBU to withdraw money.
3. On 25 September 2025, two men were abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) near the BANCOBU headquarters. Some of the agents were wearing Burundi National Police uniforms, while others were in plain clothes. The victims were forcibly taken away in a Tucson vehicle. According to witnesses, the police officers present at the scene prohibited anyone from taking photographs.
4. On 25 September 2025, Thierry Niyomwungere was abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service. He was found on the night of 26 September 2025, abandoned near the Foyer de Charité in Bujumbura. According to sources on the ground, he showed visible signs of violence and had been blindfolded during his secret detention.
5. On 25 September 2025, two men, namely Nkuriyingoma Égide, aged 31, who was repatriated from Rwanda in February 2025, and Niyongabo Jean Damascène, aged 35, a demobilised ex-combatant of the former Palipehutu-FNL armed movement, were abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service in Nyanza, in the province of Burunga.

***ACAT-Burundi reiterates its condemnation of arrests carried out in the form of abductions, as well as detentions in secret locations, 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 international conventions ratified by Burundi, which have constitutional status.***

#### **IV. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND ILLEGAL DETENTIONS**

On 14 September 2025, Alexis Nimubona, a resident of Sweden, was arrested upon arrival at Bujumbura International Airport by police officers who had his photograph. According to local sources, this operation was allegedly ordered by an officer named Assan. After his arrest, he was detained in the cells of the Bujumbura Judicial Police.

#### **V. VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL INTEGRITY**

In addition to assassinations and arbitrary arrests, other human rights violations were also documented during September 2025. The Imbonerakure, young people affiliated with the ruling CNDD-FDD party and described as militias by the United Nations, abuse the authority granted to them by the Burundian state by mistreating and torturing the population, particularly members of the opposition, without ever being held to account. Furthermore, ACAT notes that agents of the National Intelligence Service continue to subject arrested persons to acts of torture in places of detention. The organisation is also concerned about the transfer of detainees at night, intended to conceal the critical condition of prisoners who have suffered serious abuse.

##### **✓ TORTURE**

1. On 9 September 2025, Immaculée Mukeshimana, aged 65, and her 22-year-old daughter, Calinie Nzokira, were seriously injured with machetes by two Imbonerakure known as Ntakiruta alias *Kayuki* and Mani alias *Gikoko*, on Bubondo hill, in the Mugina area and commune, in the province of Bujumbura. According to information gathered at the scene, the two women were in their field of about one hectare, recently acquired following a judicial division of family land. Since the division, Immaculée Mukeshimana had received several death threats. As they were preparing to cultivate their field, the two Imbonerakure, armed with machetes, violently attacked them. Alerted by the screams, local residents rushed to the scene and found the victims lying in a pool of blood. They were evacuated in critical condition to a local health facility for treatment. The same sources report that the attackers immediately fled after committing this double crime.

2. On 15 September 2025, Théoneste Juma, local leader of the UPRONA party in the Butezi area, his wife Judith and their children Sarah, Naasson and Leyarine were violently beaten and seriously injured by Imbonerakure from Kibimba hill, Butezi area, Musongati commune, in Burunga province. The victims were taken to Giharo Communal Hospital at around 10 p.m.

According to testimonies gathered from residents of Kibimba hill, the attackers justified their actions by claiming they were "family disputes". However, Théoneste Juma's family denounced the attack as politically motivated, pointing out that he had been harassed by local CNDD-FDD officials since he left that party in 2019 to join UPRONA.

According to the same sources, the perpetrators of this violent attack remain at large and no investigation has been opened to arrest them.

***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 September 2025, covered by this report, continues to be marked by serious human rights violations, in line with previous months. The recurring phenomenon of dead bodies being found 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 come to fruition, 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 tendency on the part of the authorities to neglect 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 an effective commitment to put an end to them.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS.

➤ *The Government of Burundi 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 cases of 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 the 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 no body 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.