



Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT-Burundi)

## MONITORING REPORT ON VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM

October, November, and December 2025

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Human dignity is a fundamental and inalienable right that must be respected in all circumstances and for all persons, including prisoners. However, in Burundi, respect for this right remains a serious concern in view of the conditions of detention observed in several prisons.

Many prisoners are victims of serious violations of their rights, including the arbitrary detention of individuals who have already served their sentences, been acquitted, or obtained a release order. These violations are compounded by particularly alarming living conditions, exacerbated by persistent and constantly increasing prison overcrowding.

Despite the clarity of national legal provisions and Burundi's international commitments to protect the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, these violations continue to be observed in several prisons across the country. The prisons in Mpimba (Bujumbura), Muramvya, and Gitega are among the most affected by overcrowding, with serious and direct repercussions on the health, dignity, and well-being of prisoners.

Burundi is a State party to, among others, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. These instruments impose on the State the obligation to guarantee dignity, security, access to healthcare, and protection against arbitrary detention for all persons deprived of their liberty.

In light of this worrying situation, this report aims to document these violations, analyze their causes, and call for the reforms needed to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and a lasting improvement in detention conditions in Burundi.

## II. INHUMAN AND DEGRADING TREATMENT

During the period covered by this report, a slight decrease in cases of physical abuse of detainees was observed in some prisons in the country. However, at Mpimba Central Prison, serious human rights violations persist, in particular sexual violence and abuse, as well as systematic intimidation of detainees.

Prisoners at Mpimba Central Prison, located in the Musaga area of Muha commune in Bujumbura, report persecution that they attribute to a prisoner with internal security responsibilities. The individual in question is Ezéchiél Ndayiyeze, nicknamed "Tiger," who is accused of creating a climate of fear and terror within the prison.

According to several consistent testimonies gathered by ACAT-Burundi, he allegedly formed and led a group of about forty young Imbonerakure operating inside the prison. This group allegedly engages in arbitrary searches, physical violence, and acts of intimidation against other inmates. Witnesses report that these individuals patrol day and night and organize a daily military-style parade inside the prison at around 4 p.m. "He claims that we are under Tiger's rule and that he punishes those he considers his opponents. Today, fear reigns everywhere in Mpimba," says an internal source.

The information gathered also indicates that these Imbonerakure, under the leadership of Ezéchiél Ndayiyeze, are illegally replacing the prison police, particularly during searches and the confiscation of cell phones belonging to certain prisoners.

In addition, Ezéchiél Ndayiyeze, alias "Tiger," is accused of sexually abusing female prisoners. According to witnesses, these acts take place in the women's health center located inside Mpimba Central Prison. Female prisoners who refuse to comply or attempt to resist are reportedly subjected to serious physical violence.

Given the seriousness of these allegations, ACAT-Burundi has played a role in raising awareness and alerting the public, in particular by bringing this case to the attention of the authorities and national and international opinion through a communication on social media. This approach is in line with ACAT-Burundi's mandate to prevent torture and combat all forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

In accordance with national and international law, the Burundian state remains responsible for any violations committed against persons deprived of their liberty, including when these violations are perpetrated by prisoners acting with the tolerance, complicity, or inaction of prison authorities.

The prisoners call on the competent judicial and administrative authorities to intervene urgently to put an end to these illegal practices, bring the alleged perpetrators to justice, and restore law and order and respect for human rights within the Mpimba central prison.

### III. LACK OF ADEQUATE MEDICAL CARE

The right to health is guaranteed by national and international texts ratified by Burundi. However, in the country's various prisons, this right is regularly violated, particularly with regard to prisoners requiring specialized care adapted to their medical conditions.

The case of Donatien Nsabimana, a prisoner in Ngozi prison, is illustrative. He is paralyzed and was hospitalized for a period of time. However, in November 2025, he was forced to leave the hospital and return to detention because he lacked the financial means to pay for his medical care.

Another worrying case is that of Éric Iradukunda, who is incarcerated in Bururi despite suffering from mental health issues that require appropriate medical monitoring and treatment.

### IV. ARBITRARY DETENTION

In Burundi, arbitrary detention remains a persistent practice, particularly affecting a category of prisoners accused of undermining the internal security of the state (ASIE) and participating in armed gangs (PBA), offenses that are often used abusively and indiscriminately against these prisoners. These practices have been observed in particular in the prisons of Mpimba, Muramvya, and Gitega.

The cases recorded by ACAT-Burundi are as follows:

- ✓ Political prisoners and individuals prosecuted in connection with the 2015 protests, who remain incarcerated despite their acquittal or after having served their full sentences.
- ✓ Prisoners who have been granted a presidential pardon but remain in detention.
- ✓ People imprisoned without a case file.
- ✓ Individuals held in detention for several years without being brought before a judge, as in the case of Christian Butoyi, who has been detained since 2014.
- ✓ People who have been granted provisional release but remain in prison due to documents known as "re-arrest warrants," even though they have never actually been released. This is particularly the case for Minani Gordosie and Ntibandaba Rachel, who have had three provisional release decisions and two re-arrest warrants issued against them.

The investigation conducted by ACAT-Burundi in prisons reveals that this abusive detention remains a reality, despite the clarity of the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure. The finding is that judicial decisions in favor of these categories of prisoners frequently encounter resistance from prison authorities and the public prosecutor's office when they are implemented.

## V. PRISON EQUIPMENT AND HYGIENE

During the reporting period, hygiene remained a major problem in several prisons in Burundi. Prisoners live in particularly precarious conditions, exposing them to serious health risks and the spread of disease.

- **Bururi Prison:** There is a severe lack of hygiene materials and products. In the cells reserved for men, the toilets are in an advanced state of disrepair: only six toilets are barely functioning for more than 260 prisoners, with only four showers available. Almost all of the taps are broken, worn out and no repairs have been made. In the women's section, all indoor toilets are out of order. The taps, which are badly damaged, leak water continuously and cannot be turned off.
- **Mpimba Central Prison:** The infrastructure is generally in poor condition. The showers and toilets have no doors, which undermines the dignity of the inmates and forces them to live in an unsanitary and foul-smelling environment.
- **Muramvya Prison:** The tin roofs have numerous holes, allowing rainwater to fall directly on the inmates. The showers and toilets have no doors, the beds are badly damaged and in urgent need of repair, and hygiene supplies are insufficient. In addition, access to water is very limited, with inmates receiving water at most three times a week.
- **Ruyigi Prison:** The cells for men are in an advanced state of disrepair and hygiene conditions are very poor. Due to a lack of space in the prison, some inmates are forced to sleep in the Pentecostal church located within the prison grounds.

It is therefore clear that access to decent sanitary conditions remains a major challenge in several prisons in Burundi, in violation of national and international standards on the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.

The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) stipulate, among other things, the separation of remand prisoners and convicted prisoners, permanent access to drinking water, decent sanitary facilities, supervision exclusively by the prison administration, and medical care equivalent to that available to the general population.

## VI. PRISON OVERPOPULATION

Despite the high hopes raised by visits from the commission tasked with reviewing prisoners' files with a view to reducing prison overcrowding, prison overcrowding remains a worrying reality in terms of prison capacity. The persistence of arbitrary detention, combined with the slow processing of defendants' cases, is one of the main causes of these alarming figures, which far exceed the official capacity of the prisons in Bubanza, Mpimba, Muramvya, Ngozi, Gitega, and Ruyigi.

The prison overcrowding data presented in this report show a massive structural gap between the official capacity of prisons and the actual prison population, reaching rates of over 900% in some cases. This situation makes it materially impossible to comply with minimum standards of hygiene, health, and human dignity.

### a. October 2025

Detention center	Capacity	Total number of prisoners	Number of defendants	Number of convicted prisoners	Occupancy rate
BUBANZA	200	402 with 8 infants	177 H and 19 F	188 M and 18 F	201.00%
BURURI	250	294 with 2 infants	158 H and 17 F	107 M and 12 F	117.60%
GITEGA	400	1297 with 12 infants	481 H and 68 F	654 H and 94 F	324.25%
MPIMBA	800	4076 with 16 infants	2363 H and 210 F	1,450 H and 53 F	509.50%
MURAMVYA	100	952 with 11 infants	410 H and 27 F	466 H and 49 F	952.00%
MUYINGA	300	552 with 4 infants	126 H and 14 F	364 M and 48 F	184.00%
NGOZI WOMEN	250	202 with 25 minors and 21 infants	79 F and 10 M	98 F and 15 M	80.80
NGOZI MALE	400	1712	642	1070	428.00
RUMONGE	800	1423	484 H and 34 F	857 M and 47 F	177.88
RUTANA	350	478 with 1 infant	220 H and 15 F	237 H and 6 F	136.57%
RUYIGI	300	716 with 3 infants	298 M and 25 F	349 men and 44 women	238.00%
		infants	F		

CRMCL RUYIGI	72	56	16	40	77.78%
CRMCL RUM	72	114	36	78	158.33

The prison population in October 2025 is 12,274 inmates + 74 infants = 12,348. The total number of defendants is 5,868 adults + 62 minors = 5,930. The total number of convicts is 6,211 adults + 133 minors = 6,344.

#### b. November 2025

Detention center	Capacity	Total number of prisoners	Number of defendants	Number of convicted prisoners	Occupancy rate
BUBANZA	200	417 with 8 infants	193 M and 20 F	186 M and 18 F	208.50
BURURI	250	284 with 2 infants	147 M and 19 F	106 M and 12 F	113.60%
GITEGA	400	1333 with 12 infants	523 M and 73 F	644 M and 93 F	333.25%
MPIMBA	800	4159 with 13 infants	2322 H and 205 F	1561 H and 71 F	519.88%
MURAMVYA	100	946 with 10 infants	374 M and 25 F	497 H and 50 F	946.00%
MUYINGA	300	570 with 6 infants	111 M and 15 F	394 M and 50 F	190.00%
NGOZI WOMEN	250	206 with 25 minors and 25 infants	80 F and 10 M	101F and 15 M	82.40
NGOZI MALE	400	1773	695	1078	443.25%
RUMONGE	800	1446	475 M and 35 F	886 M and 50 F	180.75
RUTANA	350	474 with 1 infants	218 M and 12 F	237 M and 7 F	135.43%
RUYIGI	300	753 with 5 infants	318 M and 27 F	363 H and 45 F	251.00%
CRMCL RUYIGI	72	52	17	35	72.22%
CRMCL RUMONGE	72	111	37	74	154.17%

The prison in November 2025 was of 12,524 inmates + 82 infants = 12,606. The total number of defendants is 5,887 adults + 64 minors = 5,951

The total number of convicted prisoners is 6,449 adults + 124 minors = 6,573

### c. December 2025

Detention center	Capacity	Total number of prisoners	Number of defendants	Number of convicted prisoners	Occupancy rate
BUBANZA	200	428 with 10 infants	198 M and 22 F	188 M and 20 F	214.00
BURURI	250	283 with 2 infants	141 M and 17 F	113M and 12F	113.20%
GITEGA	400	1339 with 13 infants	524 M and 73 F	648 M and 94 F	334.75%
MPIMBA	800	4149 with 16 infants	2360 H and 210 F	1534 H and 72 F	518.63%
MURAMVYA	100	980 with 12 infants	383 M and 31 F	511 M and 49 F	980.00%
MUYINGA	300	592 with 8 infants	123 M and 13F	401 M and 54 F	197.3
NGOZI WOMEN	250	213 adults with 24 minors and 23 infants	88 F and 11 M	101F and 13 M	85.2%
NGOZI MEN	400	1859	781	1077	464.75%
RUMONGE	800	1469 with 3 infants	496 M and 38 F	882 males and 49 females	183.63%
RUTANA	350	478	227 M and 12 F	232 M and 7 F	136.57
RUYIGI	300	781, s with 6 infants	314 M and 34 F	385 M and 49 F	260.33%
CRMCL <sup>1</sup> RUYIGI	72	52	19	33	72.22%
CRMCL RUMONGE	72	110	42	68	152.78%

The prison in December 2025 was of 12,733 prisoners + 92 infants = 12,825. The total number of defendants is 6,096 adults + 72 minors = 6,168. The total number of convicted prisoners is 6,451 adults + 114 minors = 6,565.

<sup>1</sup> CRMCL – Rehabilitation Center for Minors in Conflict with the Law



## VII. CONCLUSION

This report highlights major and persistent concerns regarding conditions of detention in Burundi's prisons during the period from October to December 2025. In particular, it documents inhuman and degrading treatment, grossly inadequate hygiene conditions, limited access to healthcare, recurrent cases of arbitrary detention, and chronic prison overcrowding that far exceeds the official capacity of prisons.

In light of these alarming findings, it is urgent that the competent authorities take concrete, effective, and sustainable measures to put an end to these violations. This implies, among other things, the immediate release of arbitrarily detained persons, the prompt execution of court decisions and pardons, the acceleration of the processing of defendants' cases, the reduction of prison overcrowding, and the substantial improvement of detention conditions and access to healthcare, in accordance with Burundi's national standards and international commitments.

Respect for human dignity in prisons cannot be considered a favor or a privilege, but is a legal and moral obligation of the State. Guaranteeing the fundamental rights of persons deprived of their liberty is an essential condition for building a fair and humane justice system that respects the rule of law, and for strengthening citizens' confidence in Burundi's judicial and prison institutions.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the Government of Burundi:

- └ Ensure effective respect for the rights of persons deprived of their liberty, as guaranteed by the Constitution, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and international instruments ratified by Burundi, by preventing and punishing all forms of inhuman, degrading, or arbitrary treatment in prisons.
- └ Rehabilitate, modernize, and maintain prison infrastructure to bring it into line with national and international standards for detention, particularly with regard to capacity, ventilation, lighting, access to drinking water, sanitation, sanitary facilities, and sleeping areas.
- └ Guarantee effective and equitable access to healthcare for all prisoners, ensuring the regular availability of essential medicines, the presence of qualified medical personnel within prisons, and the prompt treatment of cases requiring specialized care, including the systematic organization of medical evacuations to external hospital facilities in cases of emergency or serious illness.