



ACAT - Burundi

Report monitoring human rights violations and abuses committed in Burundi.

Period: December 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 National Congress for Liberty (CNL) and the Front for Democracy in Burundi (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.

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During the period covered by this report, twenty-seven (27) cases of murder, three (3) cases of abduction, one (1) case of arbitrary arrest and three (3) 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.

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

In December 2025, ACAT-Burundi recorded 27 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 3 December 2025, the lifeless body of a young man known as Jules Ndayikeza, aged 28, was found hanging from the roof beams inside his home on Higiro hill, in the commune and province of Gitega. According to local sources, the victim was killed elsewhere and then brought back to his home to simulate suicide. He was buried the same day without any prior investigation. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to clarify the circumstances of this death.
2. On 3 December 2025, the unidentified body of a man aged between 40 and 45 was found lying by the Nyagonga River on Ramba Hill in the commune of Mugere, Bujumbura province. According to local sources, the victim had been strangled, as evidenced by marks on his throat. The same sources indicate that he was killed elsewhere before being abandoned at the site where he was found, in order to mislead any investigation. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to clarify the circumstances of this death.
3. On 8 December 2025, the lifeless body of a young man was found in the Kinanira valley, on Buhoro hill, in the Jenda area of Rwbaga commune, Bujumbura province. According to local sources, when the police arrived at the scene, they noted that the body showed signs indicating that the victim had been shot elsewhere and then transported to the place where he was found in order to mislead any investigation. The same sources specify that the body was transferred to Jenda Hospital pending identification. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to clarify the circumstances of this death.
4. On 9 December 2025, the decomposed body of an unidentified man was discovered near the Nkaka River in the Rusuguti neighbourhood of the Ngozi district and commune in Butanyerera province. According to local sources, the body showed no apparent signs of violence, but residents suspect that the victim was strangled. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.

5. On 9 December 2025, Bucumi Léonidas, a native of Ruhande Hill, Nyabihigo area, Kayanza commune, Butanyerera province, was killed by an Imbonerakure named Bienvenu, nicknamed Cuma. According to local sources, the victim had entrusted his phone charger cable to Bienvenu so that he could recharge his phone for free, as Bienvenu had electricity at his home. Bucumi Léonidas went to Bienvenu's house to recharge his phone, but Bienvenu demanded payment of 1,000 Burundian francs, which the victim refused. According to witnesses, an altercation then broke out and Bienvenu violently attacked the victim, inflicting serious injuries to his neck. Bucumi Léonidas was taken to Kayanza Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. The alleged perpetrator was arrested and placed in custody at the Kayanza police station. ACAT-Burundi calls for the perpetrator of this crime to be punished in accordance with the law.
6. On 10 December 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified man was found floating in the Mubarazi River on Biganda Hill, in the Muramvya area and commune, Gitega province. According to local sources, the administrative authorities claim that the victim drowned, while local residents believe that he was killed and then thrown into the Mubarazi River. Given these contradictory versions of events, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the exact circumstances of this death.
7. On 11 December 2025, two bound bodies, those of a woman and a child, were discovered on the bridge commonly known as *kwa Madiridiri*, in the commune of Bukemba, Burunga province. According to local sources, the remains were buried by the Red Cross. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the exact circumstances surrounding these deaths.
8. On 13 December 2025, the lifeless body of Apollinaire Nahimana, aged 35, was discovered on Bitare hill, in the centre of Bugendana, in Gitega province. According to local sources, his genitals and one foot had been amputated. The same sources indicate that traces of blood were visible from the place where the body was found to the Bugendana-Kibimba road. Furthermore, the presence of tyre tracks suggests that the body was transported by vehicle before being abandoned at this location. The police and the municipal administrator visited the scene, and the body was then transferred to Mutaho Hospital.

In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the exact circumstances of this death.

9. On 13 December 2025, the lifeless body of an 18-year-old girl named Hakizimana Francine was discovered in a cornfield on Burengo Hill, in the commune of Matongo, Butanyerera province. According to local sources, the victim was sexually assaulted before being killed. ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched to shed light on the exact circumstances of this death.
10. On 14 December 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified mason's assistant from Ciriza hill, Rushubi commune, Isare commune, Bujumbura province, was discovered in Lake Tanganyika, in the Kanyenkoko neighbourhood, Rumonge commune, Burunga province. According to local sources, the body had injuries to the ribs and head. The civil protection police, local administrative authorities and the Red Cross went to the scene, and the body was transferred to Rumonge Hospital. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened to clarify the exact circumstances of this death.
11. On 15 December 2025, Tuyaga Berchmas, aged 60, was killed by unidentified individuals on Kanzu hill, in the Bugenyunzi area of Karusi commune. According to local sources, his body was found in a bush with serious injuries, presumably caused by knife wounds. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched to shed light on the exact circumstances of this death.
12. On 15 December 2025, the lifeless body of Leonard, a miner, was discovered in a small bush on Musumbe hill, Kabanga area, Gisuru commune. The body was taken to Kinyinya hospital before burial. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the exact circumstances surrounding this death.

13. On 17 December 2025, four bodies in an advanced state of decomposition and dressed in FARDC¹ uniforms from the Democratic Republic of Congo were discovered by farmers returning from their fields on the banks of the Rusizi River, on Rusiga Hill, Transversal 12, Cibitoke area and commune. According to local sources, the municipal administrator and the police went to the scene and ordered their burial before any preliminary investigation. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to clarify the exact circumstances of these deaths.

14. On 21 December 2025, the lifeless body of an unidentified woman, aged around 35, was discovered in the Rweru marsh, between the Bwoga and Zege neighbourhoods, in the town and province of Gitega. According to local sources, the victim's body showed no apparent injuries. Residents of the neighbouring neighbourhoods suspect that the victim was strangled by unidentified individuals, who then abandoned her body at this location in order to confuse the leads of the investigation. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to clarify the exact circumstances of this death.

15. On Sunday 21 December 2025, the lifeless body of 75-year-old Rose Kasa was discovered in the waters of the Karonga stream, separating the Yoba and Zege neighbourhoods in the town and province of Gitega. According to local sources, the victim was killed elsewhere before her body was transported and abandoned at this location in order to simulate drowning and distort any investigations. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to clarify the exact circumstances of this death.

16. On 21 December 2025, André Mabwa, aged over 80, was murdered at his home by as yet unidentified individuals on Rwamvura hill, Kigamba area, Cankuzo commune, Buhumuza province. According to local administrative sources, the motives for this crime are not yet known, and the perpetrators have taken the flight after the events. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the exact circumstances of this death.

¹Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo

17. On 24 December 2025, the lifeless body of Claver Buname, aged 40, was found on the banks of the Ruvyironza River, at the foot of Bubaji Hill, in the commune of Gishubi, Gitega province. According to local sources, the victim's body had a deep wound to the forehead. The same sources indicate that Claver Buname was murdered elsewhere by individuals who have not yet been identified. The body was transferred to the morgue of Ntita Hospital in the commune of Gishubi. According to local sources, Claver Buname had been missing since Monday, 22 December 2025, when he went to his field to harvest potatoes. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched to shed light on the exact circumstances of his death.

18. On 27 December 2025, six unidentified male bodies in an advanced state of decomposition were discovered by farmers in their fields, located between the 12th crossroad of Rusiga hill and the 1st avenue of Murambi hill, in the Cibitoke area and commune, Bujumbura province. According to local sources, three of the bodies found were wearing FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo) uniforms, while the others were dressed in civilian clothing. The administrative and security authorities were alerted and went to the scene, ordering the immediate burial of the bodies in a mass grave near the site where they were found. ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched to clarify the exact circumstances of these deaths.

In this report covering the month of December 2025, ACAT-Burundi notes with concern an increase in the burial of dead 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 where the 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. ABDUCTIONS

1. On 9 December 2025, Colise Ntandikiye, 50, a widow and mother of two children, residing in Kinanira I in the Musaga area of Bujumbura, was abducted at around 9 p.m. by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) near the Intwari stadium in the Rohero area of Bujumbura and taken to an unknown destination in a double-cab van with tinted windows and no licence plates. According to members of her family, Colise Ntandikiye was contacted at around 8 p.m. to meet near the Intwari stadium after her day's work at a funeral parlour near the headquarters of the Bank of the Republic of Burundi (BRB). According to local sources, when she arrived near the Intwari stadium, SNR agents intercepted her and took her away in their vehicle to an unknown destination. Later that night, around midnight, these SNR agents left Colise Ntandikiye in critical condition near the Red Cross headquarters in Bujumbura after severely torturing her to the point where she was unable to speak. Guards nearby immediately took her to one of Bujumbura's hospitals for emergency treatment.

2. On 14 December 2025, Tharcisse Ndrekuramba, a teacher, active member of the CNL and close associate of Agathon Gwasa, was abducted from his home by individuals believed to be agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR). The incident took place on Kariba Hill, in the Kanka area of Mwaro commune, Gitega province, before he was taken to an unknown destination. According to local sources, the abductors were travelling in a double-cab vehicle with tinted windows. They were reportedly accompanied by two local Imbonerakure, namely Augustin, director of ECOFO Rubamvyi, and Ndayizeye Sostène, legal advisor to the municipal administrator.

3. On 22 December 2025, a 60-year-old trader known as Révérien Nyanzira, alias Rugega, from Gahemba hill in the commune of Ruyigi, was abducted by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in front of the Interbank branch in Ruyigi, in Buhumuza province.

According to local sources, Révérien Nyanzira had gone to the bank to withdraw money so that he could then travel to Gitega to stock up on goods. Suddenly, a double-cab vehicle with tinted windows, belonging to the SNR, reportedly stopped in front of him. Officers reportedly got out abruptly and forced him into the vehicle, taking him to an unknown destination. Since that day, his family has had no news of him and does not know the reasons for his abduction.

IV. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND ILLEGAL DETENTIONS

Since 2 December 2025, Cyprien Sindihebura, a phytosanitary inspector at the Burundi-Tanzania border, has been detained at the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Ngozi, Ngozi commune, Butanyerera province. According to local sources, his arrest followed his refusal to authorise the entry of phytosanitary products from abroad belonging to a trader, as these products did not comply with the standards of the Burundian Bureau of Standardisation (BBN). He was released a few days later.

V. VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

In December 2025, in addition to killings and arbitrary arrests, other human rights violations were also documented. The *Imbonerakure*, young people affiliated with the ruling party, the CNDD-FDD, and described as militias by the United Nations, continue to abuse the power granted to them by the Burundian state by mistreating and torturing the population, particularly members of the opposition, with complete impunity.

ACAT-Burundi also notes that agents of the National Intelligence Service continue to torture individuals arrested in places of detention. The organisation further deplores the night-time transfers of detainees, carried out in order to conceal the critical condition of individuals who have been tortured.

✓ TORTURE

1. On 1 December 2025, Imbonerakure militiamen, led by an individual named Dany, violently attacked and seriously injured hill chief Franck Mpawenimana on Cabiza hill, in the Gihanga area of Mpanda commune, Bujumbura province. According to local sources, the attackers threw him to the ground before trampling on him and kicking him violently with their boots. This violence was allegedly committed in retaliation for an attempt by the hill chief to prevent gambling in public. The same sources indicate that Franck Mpawenimana was evacuated in critical condition to Saint-Augustin Hospital in Gihanga, where he is receiving intensive care, while his attackers remain at large.
2. On 16 December 2025, a man seriously injured by a machete was found on Kanyenkozo hill, Karevya cell, Burunga province. According to local sources, he was killed by Imbonerakure carrying out a night patrol.
3. On 24 December 2025, a resident of Makamba commune, in Burunga province, was wounded in the knee by a police officer. According to local sources, police officers were patrolling near the market when one officer noticed that the victim was carrying a

bottle containing fuel. A heated altercation ensued, during which the police officer demanded that the bottle be handed over. Although the victim eventually complied, the police officer nevertheless opened fire on him, injuring him in the knee.

ACAT-Burundi condemns these acts of torture perpetrated by state agents, who are responsible for ensuring respect for citizens' rights. These actions constitute a clear violation of Article 206 of Law No. 1/27 of 19 December 2017 revising the Penal Code. ACAT Burundi calls for an investigation to be opened so that the perpetrators are brought to justice and the victims are compensated, in accordance with Article 349 of the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure.

VI. CONCLUSION.

The month of December 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 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.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

➤ *To the Government of Burundi:*

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

➤ *National human rights institutions should:*

- ✓ Regain control 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 risk factors that could aggravate the human rights situation in Burundi.