



Report monitoring human rights violations and abuses committed in Burundi.

Period: January 2026.

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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 August 19, 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 organizations 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 people 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 care, 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 organizations continue to face intimidation and obstacles to their activities. The report calls on the authorities to ensure 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 release unconditionally all persons detained for the peaceful exercise of their civil and political rights.

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During the period covered by this report, 17 cases of murder, one case of abduction, several cases of arbitrary arrest, and two cases of torture were recorded. In most cases, the alleged perpetrators have not been brought to justice. Dead bodies, most of them unidentified, are regularly discovered in various locations throughout Burundi.

II. MURDERS.

Assassinations and kidnappings 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 criminalize and severely punish anyone who violates this fundamental right.***

In January 2026, ACAT-Burundi recorded 17 cases of murders in different regions of the country, in circumstances reflecting flagrant human rights violations, perpetrated in a climate of total impunity.

1. On January 1, 2026, the lifeless body of Aboudoul NZEYIMANA, a businessman residing in the Kibenga neighborhood, Kinindo area, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province, was found on the avenue known as "death avenue" in the Mukaza commune. According to local sources, the victim had gotten up very early, as was his habit, to go exercise, but never returned home. The same sources indicate that he was strangled and then thrown into the water, as visible marks on his neck and swelling of his stomach were observed. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to clarify the circumstances of this death.
2. On January 1, 2026, the lifeless body of Jérôme Bizimana was found in a bush, a few meters from the Mishiha road leading to the Burundi-Tanzania border. According to local sources, the body had injuries to the face and was transferred to Munzenze Hospital. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
3. On the evening of January 2, 2025, the decomposing bodies of two unidentified gold miners, bound at the neck, were discovered at the bottom of a mining shaft on Gisaba hill, in the Buhindo area of Cibitoke commune, in Bujumbura province. The two men had been missing since December 30, 2025, and were carrying a large quantity of gold. According to local sources, the victims' bodies were buried the same day in the town of Buhindo on the orders of local authorities. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched to shed light on the circumstances surrounding these deaths.
4. On January 3, 2026, the lifeless body of an unidentified person was discovered in a wooded area along the roadside on Rwigiri Hill, in the Kiriba area of Gitega commune and province. The victim had wounds on their cheek and injuries to their legs and feet. According to local sources, the body was transferred to the morgue at the Kirimbi health center pending identification by their family. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this death.

5. On January 4, 2025, the lifeless body of Lazarre Bakunduwukomeye, a 70-year-old man, was found at his home on Kivyibusha hill, in the Mpanda area and commune, in the province of Bujumbura. According to members of his family, he was murdered with a machete by individuals who have not yet been identified. He lived alone, having been separated from his wife for some time. The victim was regularly accused of witchcraft by those around him and had been receiving death threats for several days. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
6. During the night of January 5-6, 2026, Vincent, aged 30, father of three children and a trader, residing on Rusivya hill, Muyebe area, Mwaro commune, Gitega province, was killed with several machete blows by unidentified individuals. According to local sources, the perpetrators waited for him in his enclosure as he was returning home at around 9 p.m. The two brothers who were with him were arrested by the police as part of the investigation. ACAT-Burundi calls for these investigations to be conducted in accordance with the law and for those responsible to be prosecuted and punished in accordance with legal provisions.
7. On January 6, 2026, Bacanamwo Agathon, aged 54, a resident of Nyamiyaga hill, Mwaro commune, Gitega province, was found dead on the same hill. According to local sources, the perpetrators and the circumstances of his death remain unknown. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this death.
8. On January 10, 2026, Jean Ndikumana, a 53-year-old farmer, was shot dead by Burundian soldiers while on his way to his rice field in Rugombo, Cibitoke commune, Bujumbura province, on the banks of the Rusizi River, the natural border between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), near the Mparambo project military post. According to eyewitnesses, the victim, a resident of the Mparambo neighborhood, was on his way to his rice field on the banks of the Rusizi, accompanied by another man who was helping him maintain it. Before reaching their destination, the two men encountered a military patrol responsible for monitoring

the border, who ordered them to stop immediately. Panicked, the owner of the field tried to flee, and the soldiers opened fire, hitting him with several bullets, including five in the back and others in the ribs. He died instantly, while the man accompanying him was detained by the soldiers for questioning. ACAT-Burundi calls for investigations to be conducted in accordance with the law and for those responsible to be prosecuted and punished in accordance with legal provisions.

9. On January 14, 2026, the lifeless body of a man aged around 50 was found by passersby in a bush on Bumba hill, in the commune of Gisagara, Buhumuza province. According to local sources, the victim had been strangled, as the body showed signs of rope marks around the neck. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
10. On the night of January 17, 2026, Sérapion Nibizi, aged 47 and resident of Mihiza hill, Kiramira area, Cibitoke commune, was killed by Imbonerakure led by a certain Jacques Kwizerimana. According to local sources, at around 6 p.m. on the same day, Sérapion Nibizi, a married father of four, left his home to go to the Cibitoke trading center. On the way, he encountered three Imbonerakure led by their leader, Jacques Kwizerimana, who ordered him to stop, an order he did not comply with. The Imbonerakure then began to beat him violently, accusing him of disobeying them. Local residents intervened to ask them to stop the violence, but the Imbonerakure said they wanted to take him to the police cell. They tied his arms behind his back and transported him by motorcycle to the cell at the Buhindo police station. According to the same sources, Sérapion Nibizi was again violently beaten inside the cell, in the presence of a police officer on guard duty, a member of the youth league affiliated with the ruling party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), who did not intervene to stop the violence. The beating continued until the victim succumbed to his injuries. Subsequently, the Imbonerakure allegedly tied a rope around Serapion Nibizi's neck and hung his body inside the cell to simulate suicide. Faced with this

In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this death.

11. On January 19, 2026, the lifeless body of Kakana Cyprien was found on Buburu hill, in the commune of Mwaro, Gitega province. According to local sources, the body had stab wounds to the neck and abdomen. The same sources indicate that no traces of blood were found on his clothes, suggesting that the victim may have been killed elsewhere and then transported to the scene to mislead investigators. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this death.
12. On January 19, 2026, the lifeless body of Nzuguru Prudence was found in a residence located on the Kavumu hillside, Ruyeri hill, Bitare area, Bugendana commune, Gitega province. According to local sources, the victim was frequently accused of theft and witchcraft. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
13. On January 20, 2026, the lifeless body of 53-year-old Gérard Nyambuga was found hanging by a rope under an avocado tree in his cornfield on Mahonda hill, Gishubi commune, Gitega province. According to local sources, the body had injuries to the back and arms. The inhabitants of this hill believe that Gérard Nyambuga was killed elsewhere by unidentified individuals and that his body was then transported to the scene to simulate suicide and thus distort any investigation. In view of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be opened in order to clarify the circumstances of this death.
14. On January 21, 2026, Nduwayo's decomposing body was discovered on Burengo hill, in the commune of Ngozi, Butanyerera province. According to local sources, the victim was found after about three weeks without any sign of life. The body was buried the next day. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for

the opening of credible and independent investigations to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.

15. On January 28, 2026, the lifeless body of an unidentified elderly woman was discovered on the banks of the Nkaka River, on Buye Hill, in the commune of Butanyerera, Ngozi province. According to local sources, the victim was strangled and then stabbed, with deep wounds to her abdomen and legs. The motives for this murder remain unknown. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
16. On January 28, 2026, a motorcyclist was killed at around 6 p.m. near the Kizingwe River bridge in the Kanyosha area of Bujumbura province by two passengers he was carrying. According to witnesses, the attackers used a weapon. Local sources indicate that motorcyclists are frequently killed in similar circumstances. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be launched in order to shed light on the circumstances surrounding this death.

In this report covering the month of January 2026, 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 May 11, 2018, on the Code of Criminal Procedure of Burundi.

This article clearly states that:

"In the event of the discovery of a corpse, whether or not the death was violent, 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 Prosecutor. The observation report 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 offense 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:

- 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 fulfill their legal obligations and ensure that no body is buried without a credible investigation having been conducted beforehand.

III. KIDNAPPINGS

On January 16, 2026, GAHUNGU Thaddée, a former soldier (ex-FAB), residing in the commune of Musaga, commune of Mugere, and employed by the company Garda World Security, left his workplace at around 5 p.m. but never arrived home. According to local sources, he has been missing since that time. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible, independent, and thorough investigations to determine the circumstances of his disappearance.

IV. VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

In January 2026, 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 people arrested in detention centers. The organization also deplores the nighttime transfers of detainees, carried out in order to conceal the critical condition of people who have been tortured.

✓ TORTURE

1. On January 6, 2026, Hamissi, a young Imbonerakure known by the nickname "Mangue," died as a result of acts of torture allegedly inflicted on him by police officers from the Ruyigi provincial police station. The events date back to December 23, 2025, when Hamissi went to a cement wholesaler named Mathieu with a document signed by Nkunzimana Fiacre, secretary of the CNDD-FDD party in the commune of Ruyigi, and by Nkunzimana Valérie, development officer in the office of the governor of Buhumuriza, requesting 50 bags of cement. A few days later, the merchant demanded payment for the cement from Fiacre and Valérie, but Fiacre denied any involvement. Fiacre then allegedly ordered the Imbonerakure to arrest Hamissi for fraud and forgery. Hamissi was taken to the provincial police station in Ruyigi, where he was allegedly tortured by police officers on Fiacre's orders until he lost consciousness, in the presence of Nizigiyimana Jean Gentil, provincial police commissioner of Ruyigi. Hamissi was then transferred to Ruyigi hospital, where he died on January 6, 2026. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible, independent, and thorough investigations to be launched in order to establish responsibility and clarify the circumstances surrounding this death.
2. On January 7, 2026, Gaston Ntukamazina was tortured in the Jabe neighborhood, on Avenue de l'Imprimerie, in the Bwiza area of Mukaza commune, Bujumbura province, as he was returning home. According to local sources, individuals identified as Bob and Kevin were among the Imbonerakure involved in these acts. The same sources indicate that these Imbonerakure members enjoy the support of the neighborhood chief, Jean-Claude Bizimana. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi calls for credible, independent, and thorough investigations to identify the perpetrators and establish responsibility.

ACAT Burundi condemns these acts of torture perpetrated by state agents, who are responsible for ensuring respect for citizens' rights. These acts constitute a clear violation of Article 206 of Law No. 1/27 of December 19, 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.

V. CONCLUSION.

The month of January 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 justice system 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 favor 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 light of this alarming situation, it is imperative that the Burundian authorities fully appreciate the gravity of the ongoing violations and make a genuine commitment to putting an end to them.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- *The Government of Burundi should:*

- ✓ Ensure the safety of the population and investigate these bodies that are regularly found in different 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 rampant impunity the judicial system, security must be provided solely by the defense 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.