



ACAT - Burundi

**Report monitoring human rights violations and abuses committed in Burundi.**

**Period: February 2026.**

## **Outline of this report**

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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 have been recorded, nearly half of which involve 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, characterised 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, 10 cases of murder, 2 cases of abduction and 5 cases of arbitrary arrest were recorded. In most cases, the alleged perpetrators have not been prosecuted.

Dead bodies, most of them unidentified, are regularly discovered in various locations throughout Burundi.

The information contained in this report is based on testimonies gathered in the field, credible local sources and cross-checking carried out by the ACAT-Burundi monitoring team. For security reasons, some sources remain anonymous.

## **II. MURDERS.**

Assassinations and abductions have persisted in Burundi for more than five years since 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 February 2026, ACAT-Burundi recorded 10 cases of assassinations in different regions of the country, in circumstances highlighting flagrant human rights violations, perpetrated in a climate of total impunity.

1. On 5 February 2026, Jedidiah Nishimwe, aged 25, was shot dead at his home in the Sororezo neighbourhood of Nyakabiga, Mukaza commune, in the province of Bujumbura (economic capital), not far from Mutanga Sud, by a soldier assigned to guard the Burundian Ombudsman, Ms Aimée Laurentine Kanyana. According to local sources, it all began on the night of Tuesday 3 February 2026, at around 10 p.m., when Ndorere, Jedidiah Nishimwe's father, encountered the perpetrator near their home, located in the centre known as Kamabuye-Sororezo, and

simply greeted him with the words: "Amahoro neza Mzee" (Peace be with you, my friend<sup>1</sup>). The young soldier felt offended and started a heated argument that escalated into a fight, even involving the victim, who tried to separate them. When he arrived at his base, he attempted to take revenge on the same day after putting on his uniform and taking grenades and his service rifle, but his comrades dissuaded him. It was then that he told them of his intention to commit a crime against the people with whom he had just argued.

The next morning, the soldier intercepted Jedidiah Nishimwe's father in his vehicle and attempted to murder him. This attempt failed thanks to the intervention of other soldiers who intervened and tried to reconcile them by means of a fine.

At dawn on 5 February 2026, the soldier broke into Ndorere's home with his rifle and immediately shot young Jedidiah Nishimwe, fatally wounding him in the head. He died instantly. According to the same sources, the military hierarchy finally intervened to arrest the perpetrator and hand him over to the military prosecutor.

ACAT-Burundi demands that the perpetrator be punished in accordance with the law and that law enforcement officers be made aware of the need to refrain from using excessive force, while demonstrating professionalism in the performance of their duties.

2. On 5 February 2026, at 11 a.m., Domitien Ndayizeye, aged 22, was shot dead by a police officer known as Abbas Bimenyimana on his native hill of Munege, in the Kabarore area of Kayanza commune (formerly Kabarore commune), in Butanyerera province.

According to testimony from his colleagues, police officer Abbas Bimenyimana acted under the direct orders of Abel Ahishakiye, an Imbonerakure responsible for security at the mining site located on the same hill, where he ensures his own safety along with other police officers. Ahishakiye allegedly ordered him to shoot the victim.

On the day of the tragedy, Domitien Ndayizeye was mining minerals with his colleagues in the village of Munakavuvu (located between the Munege and Kivuvu hills, in the same commune of Kayanza) when a large amount of water poured into the area where they were working. His colleagues asked him to rush to turn off the tap.

As he ran to do so, Abel Ahishakiye ordered police officer Abbas Bimenyimana to shoot the young man, suspecting him, without any evidence, of wanting to hide a quantity of allegedly stolen gold. The police officer immediately carried out the order and shot Domitien Ndayizeye, who died instantly.

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<sup>1</sup> Respectful greetings

Abel Ahishakiye is notorious in this province: his name has been regularly cited in reports by human rights organisations implicating him in serious violations, including enforced disappearances and summary and extrajudicial executions targeting real or suspected opponents of the CNDD-FDD.

Outraged by this tragedy, the other miners tried to stop the police officer, but Abel Ahishakiye intervened, threatening them with the same fate if they persisted.

Sources on the ground reported that Domitien Ndayizeye's body was taken to the morgue at the Kabarore health centre. His family and colleagues refused to proceed with his burial until those responsible for the crime had been arrested and brought to justice.

ACAT-Burundi calls for the perpetrator to be punished in accordance with the law and for the police to be made aware of the need to refrain from using excessive force and to demonstrate professionalism in the performance of their duties.

3. On 12 February 2026, at around 6 a.m., the lifeless body of an unidentified man was found in the Muyogo River, in the Muyogo neighbourhood, Makamba district and commune, in Burunga province.

According to local sources, the victim was killed elsewhere by individuals who have not yet been identified before his body was thrown into the river, which separates the Muyogo neighbourhood from the urban centre of Makamba, the capital of Burunga province.

According to the same sources, the body was transferred to the Makamba hospital morgue pending identification. 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.

4. On the morning of 12 February 2026, the lifeless body of an unidentified young man, aged around 30 and in an advanced state of decomposition, was discovered on the banks of the Ruvyironza River in the Bwoga neighbourhood of the Nyamugari area, in the commune and province of Gitega.

According to local sources, the body was buried the same day on the orders of the Bwoga neighbourhood chief, Fiacre Ndagijimana, without any preliminary investigation being opened to identify the victim, the possible perpetrators and the circumstances of his death.

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 13 February 2026, the decomposed body of an unidentified man was discovered on the banks of the Nyamagana River in the Rusiga neighbourhood of Cibitoke, in the province of Bujumbura.

According to local sources, the victim's body had a deep wound to the head, suggesting that he had been violently struck with a club before his body was abandoned at the scene.

The same sources specify that local administrative authorities, accompanied by members of the Imbonerakure youth league affiliated with the ruling party, visited the scene and ordered the transfer of the body to the morgue of the Cibitoke hospital, pending identification of the victim.

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.

6. On 14 February 2026, the lifeless body of 35-year-old Alice Ndimuruvugo was discovered in a river on Macu hill, in the commune and province of Gitega.

Two suspects, Irené Mbonwanayo and Séverin Nyabenda, were arrested and placed in detention at the police station in Gitega province.

ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death and for the perpetrators to be identified and punished in accordance with the law.

7. On 15 February 2026, IRAKUNDA Estella, aged 15, a resident of Kirama hill, Mudende area, Rumonge commune, Burunga province, was killed by imbonerakure. According to local sources, Estella, accompanied by two other children, left her home to fetch firewood. When they arrived at a forest on the hill, four Imbonerakure burst in and chased them. The two children escaped, but Estella was caught and raped by the Imbonerakure. Sources on the ground indicate that after the rape, the Imbonerakure inserted wood into her genitals and strangled her. The two children informed their parents that Estella had been caught by the Imbonerakure, including Emmanuel. Neighbours and parents waited for Estella to return, but in vain. At around 4 p.m., they decided to go and look for her. When they arrived, they found her body in the forest. Sources on the ground indicate that Emmanuel was apprehended by the police. 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.

8. On 18 February 2026, Nijimbere Beatrice, a teacher at Gikomero Primary School and wife of the chief of the Gikomero district in Muhanga commune, Butanyerera province, was killed by a grenade thrown into her bar at around 9 p.m., while Laetitia, a nurse, was seriously injured. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death and for the perpetrators to be identified and punished in accordance with the law.
  
9. On 19 February 2026, the lifeless body of 48-year-old Samuel Ciza was found in a ditch on Nyempundu hill, in the Nyamakarabo area of Mugina commune, Bujumbura province. According to local sources, Samuel Ciza's body had a large bruise on his head, suggesting that he had been murdered with a blunt object by individuals who have not yet been identified. Members of his family say that he left his home the night before to have a drink with acquaintances in the town of Gikomero and had not returned since. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death and for the perpetrators to be identified and punished in accordance with the law.
  
10. On 20 February 2026, the lifeless body of 25-year-old Jeanine Nkuzimana was discovered in the Nyakijanda River on Buhinda Hill in the commune and province of Gitega. The body was in an advanced state of decomposition. According to local sources, the victim had been missing since 15 February 2026. At this stage, the causes of death, the circumstances and the possible perpetrators are not yet known. ACAT-Burundi calls for credible and independent investigations to be carried out to clarify the circumstances of this death and for the perpetrators to be identified and punished in accordance with the law.

**In this report covering the month of February 2026, ACAT-Burundi notes with concern a resurgence of burials 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 initial observations. 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:**

- Administrators must systematically inform the criminal investigation department when a dead body is discovered, so that a report can be made and an investigation opened immediately.
- The criminal investigation department and the public prosecutor's office must fulfil their legal obligations and ensure that no body is buried without a credible investigation having first been carried out.

**III. KIDNAPPINGS**

1. On 22 February 2026, CUBWA Eric, aged 50, a farmer from Kabonga Hill, Kabonga area, Kabonga commune, Nyanza-Lac commune, Burunga province, was abducted at around 7 p.m. by unidentified individuals. They were travelling in a pick-up vehicle with tinted windows and took him to an unknown destination.

The following day, his family members began searching for him, including in various detention centres, but without success. In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible, independent and thorough investigations to be launched in order to determine the circumstances of his disappearance.

2. On 25 February 2026, Chadia Mukarempera left her home in the morning to go to her workplace at the CNIDH headquarters, located in Rohero, Avenue Muyinga, opposite the IPA University. However, she never arrived at her destination.

According to the information gathered, her unusual absence immediately raised concerns among her colleagues, who attempted to contact her on her various telephone numbers.

telephone, without success. Her phones were switched off, including her WhatsApp account. The entire day of 25 February passed without any information being obtained about her whereabouts or state of health. Her neighbours also reported that she had not returned home, which further heightened concerns. As of 26 February 2026, Chadia MUKAREMERA remained missing. According to corroborating sources, members of the CNIDH searched several places of detention, including the headquarters of the National Intelligence Service, but without success.

According to other information, her phone was briefly turned back on in the afternoon of 26 February and her WhatsApp account was activated for a short time before being deactivated again. These developments have heightened the concerns of her family and colleagues.

In light of this worrying situation, Chadia Mukaremera's family and colleagues are calling on the relevant authorities to do everything in their power to shed light on her disappearance and ensure her safety.

In light of this situation, ACAT-Burundi is calling for credible, independent and thorough investigations to be launched to determine the circumstances of her disappearance.

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

1. On the morning of 18 February 2026, two reporters from the private media outlet Papy Jamaica Vidéo, namely Amani Papy Ndikumana, alias Papy Jamaica (managing director of the media outlet), and his assistant, as well as journalist Tchandrou Nitanga, photographer and correspondent for Agence France-Presse (AFP), were arbitrarily arrested on the premises of the Burundian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Development Cooperation in Bujumbura, the economic capital of Burundi.

They were covering the visit of Hadja Lahbib, European Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, when they were arrested. According to eyewitnesses, they were waiting for the European Commissioner's statement after her meeting with Burundian Minister of External Relations Édouard Bizimana when they were arrested. Bizimana allegedly ordered their arrest, accusing them of "illegally taking pictures".

The three journalists were immediately taken to the National Intelligence Service (SNR) headquarters for questioning. They were reportedly questioned on several subjects, including their collaboration with foreign media and the

their income. Their phones were searched and confiscated by the intelligence services. They were finally released on the same day at around 9.15 p.m.

2. On the morning of 18 February 2026, two journalists from *Jimbere* magazine, Olivier Manirambona and Aline Niyonizigiye (a photographer and breastfeeding mother), as well as Siméon Ngenzebuhoro, a former member of parliament and party to the conflict, were arbitrarily arrested by the Ntahangwa public prosecutor's office.

The two journalists were on their way to witness the enforcement of a judgement handed down by the Ntahangwa High Court in a 21-year-old land dispute. Following their arrest, they were detained in the Ngagara district prison, north of Bujumbura.

According to local sources, they were accused, without evidence, of rebellion by the judges responsible for enforcing the judgement.

On Friday morning, the Attorney General at the Ntahangwa Court of Appeal, Eraste Ndayiragije, ordered their provisional release, even though they were initially expected to stand trial in flagrante delicto, which ultimately did not take place. He also decided to return their work equipment. However, he specified that the investigations were continuing and imposed on them the obligation not to leave the Bujumbura town hall without prior authorisation and to report to the public prosecutor's office every Friday.

## V. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Category	Number of cases	Provinces concerned	Alleged perpetrators
Murders	10	Bujumbura, Gitega, Burunga, Butanyerera	Military personnel, police officers, Imbonerakure, unknown
Kidnappings	2	Burunga, Bujumbura	Unidentified
Arbitrary detentions	5	Bujumbura	Public Prosecutor's Office, SNR

During February 2026, ACAT-Burundi observed:

- A resurgence of murders involving firearms.
- A worrying practice of rapid burials without investigation.
- The judicial system being used against journalists.
- An increased risk of enforced disappearances.

## **VI. CONCLUSION.**

February 2026 confirms the persistence of serious human rights violations in Burundi, continuing the trends observed in recent years. The documented killings, the recurring discovery of bodies in rivers, bushes or other isolated places, and their hasty burial without prior investigation, reflect a worrying climate of impunity. In the majority of cases recorded, the alleged perpetrators are neither identified nor prosecuted, reinforcing the feeling of a lack of accountability.

This situation also highlights a profound institutional failure. Judicial mechanisms struggle to function independently and effectively, particularly in cases involving state agents or members of the Imbonerakure youth league. National institutions supposed to guarantee the protection of human rights, such as the CNIDH or the Ombudsman, are unable to fully play their role as a counterweight, further weakening the rule of law.

The lack of credible judicial responses to these violations carries a real risk of normalising serious violations of the right to life, liberty and security. When crimes go unpunished, they tend to become part of social and institutional routine, thereby trivialising practices that are contrary to Burundi's Constitution and international commitments.

In light of these alarming developments, there is an urgent need for concrete and immediate action. The Burundian authorities must reaffirm their commitment to respecting fundamental rights, guarantee the independence of investigations, systematically prosecute those responsible, regardless of their status or affiliation, and put an end to practices that contravene existing criminal procedures. Without clear political will and effective measures, the cycle of violations and impunity will continue to erode citizens' trust in institutions and permanently undermine the consolidation of the rule of law.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- *To the Government of Burundi:*

- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Addressing crimes committed by Imbonerakure youth during night patrols, which are becoming commonplace due to impunity, is undermining the judicial system. security must be ensured solely by the defence and security forces.
- ✓ Guarantee the protection of journalists.
- ***National human rights institutions should:***
  - ✓ 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 risk factors that could worsen the human rights situation in Burundi.
  - ✓ Support independent mechanisms and make aid conditional on measurable progress.