



Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture

(ACAT-BURUNDI)

QUARTERLY REPORT ON THE PRISON SITUATION

PERIOD: JANUARY TO MARCH 2026 **"Between record overcrowding, institutional starvation, and the challenges of prison decongestion"**



Evariste Ndayishimiye at a sentencing and release ceremony at Mpimba Central Prison on April 27, 2021: a prison decongestion policy still hampered by opaque clemency measures, often tainted by fraud or corruption

April 2026

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
II. RESPECT FOR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY	4
II.1. Physical Violence and Use of Force	4
II.2. Violations of dignity related to infrastructure and space	4
II.3. Vulnerability of Specific Groups	4
II.4. Violations of integrity through food deprivation: starvation as degrading treatment	6
III. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND MEDICAL TREATMENT	8
III.1. Evolution of the health situation: from chronic precariousness to systemic failure.....	8
III.2. A widespread shortage of medication supplies	8
III.3. Obstacles to patient transfers and lack of qualified personnel	8
III.4. Medical releases: a two-tiered system.....	8
IV. ARBITRARY DETENTION AND JUDICIAL IRREGULARITIES.....	10
IV.1. Analysis of the situation: a systemic blockage of releases	10
IV.2. Illegal Detention After the Sentence Has Expired	10
IV.3. Failure to enforce acquittal rulings.....	10
IV.4. Case Study: The Judicial Ordeal of Miburo Mathieu (Muramvya Prison)	11
IV.5. Irregularities in pardon and mass release procedures	11
IV.6. Positive Note: Innovation by the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Bururi	11
V. HYGIENE, SANITATION, AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN PRISONS.....	12
V.1. Failure of sanitation services, water crisis, and energy insecurity.....	12
V.2. Severe deterioration of infrastructure, furnishings, and kitchen services.....	12
VI. TRENDS IN THE PRISON POPULATION: BETWEEN RECORD OVERCROWDING AND RELEASE MEASURES	15
VI.1. Statistical mapping and prison overcrowding	15
VI.1.1. Analysis of the upward trend in prison populations	15
VI.1.2. Localized overcrowding at inhumane levels	17
VI.1.3. Security alert: The impact of the March 31 explosions in Mpimba	18
VI.2. Analysis of the judicial structure of the prison population	18
VI.2.1. The Critical Burden of Pretrial Detention	18
VI.2.2. Disparities in the prison population by facility	19

VI.3. Focus on vulnerable groups: Women and Minors	20
VI.3.1. The situation of women: worsening precariousness	21
VI.3.2. Minors: A Sacrificed Childhood	21
VI.3.3. Release dynamics: limited impact	22
VI.4. Assessment of release mechanisms and limitations of the process	22
VI.4.1. The January mass pardons: a massive response contingent on integrity	22
VI.4.2. The Bururi Prosecutor’s Office’s actions: a model of proactive regulation	22
VI.4.3. The provisional releases in March: between medical and media imperatives	22
VI.4.4. Summary: Selective clemency	23
VI.5. Challenges of reducing overcrowding: analysis of bottlenecks and priority courses of action	24
VI.5.1. Identification of structural and administrative barriers	24
VII. GENERAL CONCLUSION.....	25
VIII. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND REMINDERS FROM ACAT-BURUNDI.....	26
APPENDICES: PRISON SITUATION FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY, AND MARCH 2026	27
Appendix 1: Prison conditions as of January 31, 2026.....	27
Appendix 2: Prison conditions as of February 31, 2026.....	28
Appendix 3: Prison Situation as of March 31, 2026	29

List of Tables

Table 1: Summary of Respect for Physical Integrity and Dignity (January–March 2026).....	7
Table 2: General Status of Medical Care (Q1 2026).....	9
Table 3: Quarterly Technical Summary (January–March 2026)	14
Table 4: Overview of Prison Population Trends by Facility (January–March 2026).....	16
Table 5: Status of Women and Minors as of March 31, 2026.....	21
Table 6: Summary of Congestion Relief Measures (Q1 2026)	23

List of Figures

Figure 1: Changes in the prison population by facility (Q1 2026).....	17
Figure 2: Breakdown of the prison population by legal status as of March 31, 2026	19
Figure 3: Breakdown of Remand Inmates and Convicted Inmates by facility as of March 31, 2026	20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Burundian prison system has reached a critical threshold where overcrowding, starvation, and judicial failures combined pose an immediate risk to the lives of detainees, engaging the direct responsibility of the State.

This ACAT-Burundi monitoring report for the first quarter of 2026 documents a continuing deterioration in detention conditions in Burundi. Despite official announcements of efforts to reduce overcrowding, the prison system faces a **structural failure** that directly threatens the lives and dignity of detainees.

Highlights of the Quarter:

- **Overcrowding beyond human limits:** The prison population has surpassed the critical threshold of **12,938** inmates, marking a net increase of **189 people** compared to the previous quarter. This trend exacerbates overcrowding in already overwhelmed facilities such as Muramvya (**1,032%**) and Mpimba (**528%**). Judicial inaction remains the driving force behind this crisis: with **47.5%** of inmates awaiting trial, the slowness of proceedings continues to paralyze the entire prison system.
- **Famine and precarious health conditions:** The quarter was marked by a **near-total depletion of flour and oil stocks**, plunging prisons into institutional famine. Sanitary conditions have reached crisis levels, as evidenced by the proliferation of bedbugs in Ruyigi and the use of **swamp water** for cooking in Muramvya.
- **Insecurity and major incidents:** Physical safety is compromised by internal violence, exemplified in particular by the murder of inmate **Gilbert Habonimana** in Mpimba. The quarter ended on a tragic note on March 31 with **the explosion of an ammunition depot** within a military camp adjacent to Mpimba Prison, resulting in deaths and injuries among the inmates.
- **Targeted and high-profile releases:** Measures of clemency led to the provisional release on health grounds of **General Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni**, **Colonel Michel Kazungu**, and journalist **Sandra Muhoza**, as well as the pardon of blogger **Kenny Claude Nduwimana**. While these gestures are welcomed, ACAT-Burundi deplores the fact that they remain selective in light of the plight of hundreds of anonymous individuals and political prisoners, such as **Elvis Arakaza** and **Tharcisse Niyungeko**, who remain in detention despite having served their sentences.
- **A deceptive reduction in overcrowding:** The impact of more than 500 releases in January 2026 is negated by a continuous influx of new arrivals. The process is undermined by **administrative irregularities at Mpimba** and by the illegal continued detention of acquitted prisoners, such as **Miburo Mathieu** (who has been detained since his acquittal in 2020).

- **The plight of the vulnerable:** The situation of **the 87 infants** living in prison and of inmates suffering from severe mental disorders (the cases of **Ndikuriyo Jean at Bururi Prison and Christian Butoyi at Mpimba Prison**) highlights a complete lack of specialized care.

Changes in the prison situation compared to the previous quarter

- **More admissions than releases:** The prison population rose from 12,749 to 12,938 inmates (+189 people). This figure demonstrates that new arrests outnumber releases, rendering pardons ineffective in the long term.
- **A justice system that moves too slowly:** Nearly half of the inmates (47.5%) are still awaiting trial. It is this inability to try or release defendants on bail that remains the main cause of prison overcrowding.
- **A total food shortage:** While there were already supply difficulties, stocks of flour and oil are now depleted. This famine is forcing detainees to resort to extreme measures, such as drinking water from the marshes.
- **A growing number of infants in danger:** The number of infants has risen from 70 to 87, a 24% increase. Without proper food and care, these children's lives are now directly threatened.
- **Rising violence and risks:** This quarter has been marked by serious incidents, including murders among prisoners and the explosion of a military ammunition depot next to Mpimba Prison on March 31. These incidents demonstrate that the state is no longer able to guarantee the physical safety of those incarcerated.

Urgent recommendations: ACAT-Burundi calls on the authorities to take immediate action to:

1. **Immediately release** all detainees who have been acquitted or have served their sentences.
2. **Restore vital supplies** of food and drinking water.
3. **Relieve overcrowding in critical facilities** through transfers and the acceleration of trials for defendants.
4. **Ensure the security** of prisons located near military sites.

Without immediate action regarding pretrial detention and the enforcement of court decisions, any policy to reduce overcrowding will remain ineffective.

I. INTRODUCTION

This quarterly report, covering the period from January to March 2026, is part of an ongoing effort to monitor and document detention conditions in Burundi. While the prison administration is expected to guarantee the dignity and safety of persons deprived of their liberty, observations from this first quarter reveal a situation of exceptional gravity, shaped by three major contexts.

First, a **political and judicial context marked by profound and ambivalent contrasts**. The beginning of 2026 was marked by contradictory signals: on the one hand, presidential clemency measures and provisional releases on medical grounds concerning high-profile figures; on the other, the systematic continued detention of political prisoners who have nevertheless served their sentences or received a final acquittal. This duality underscores a persistent instrumentalization of the judicial system, where release becomes a discretionary exception rather than a strict application of the law.

Next, a **suffocating economic crisis**. The widespread shortage of foreign currency and fuel, which is paralyzing the country, has ultimately made its way inside prison walls. This economic factor has become the primary driver of deteriorating living conditions. According to the administration, it justifies the inability to deliver basic hygiene products, to transfer the sick to hospitals, and, even more seriously, to ensure a regular supply of vital foodstuffs such as cornmeal and vegetable oil. This “logistical crisis” has escalated into a full-blown humanitarian emergency, plunging several facilities into chronic famine during the month of March.

Finally, **there is a context of unprecedented infrastructure saturation**. With a prison population of 12,938 inmates and 87 infants, the system has reached its breaking point. The 1,032% occupancy rate recorded at Muramvya Prison is no longer just a statistic: it is a source of serious physical ailments and inhumane and degrading treatment on a daily basis. Extreme overcrowding fosters the spread of parasites and exacerbates security tensions, which reached a climax during the tragic incident on March 31 at Mpimba Prison.

In the face of these challenges, this report accurately documents the facts gathered on the ground. Drawing on rigorous statistical data and firsthand accounts, it aims to provide a factual basis for national authorities and international partners. The objective is clear: to denounce arbitrary abuses and warn of the grave danger currently threatening Burundian detainees, so that compliance with **the “Nelson Mandela Rules”**¹ is no longer a mere aspiration, but an immediate requirement. The information presented in this report is based on data collected through a network of observers, firsthand accounts from detainees, and cross-checks with sources within the judicial system.

¹ The Nelson Mandela Rules represent a universally recognized model for prison management in the 21st century. They define minimum standards for incarceration, provide guidance, and establish clear benchmarks for prison staff on how to maintain safety, security, and human dignity: (https://www.un.org/fr/events/mandeladay/mandela_rules.shtml)

II. RESPECT FOR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY

The quarterly report reveals a worrying deterioration in detention conditions, where violations of dignity have become systemic and the physical integrity of detainees is seriously jeopardized by internal and institutional violence.

II.1. Physical Violence and Use of Force

The quarter was marked by serious incidents involving both security personnel and inmates in supervisory roles:

- **Use of lethal force (Mpimba, February):** The most tragic incident was the killing of inmate **Habonimana Gilbert**. Shot in the back by a police officer after he had already surrendered following an escape attempt, this case illustrates a disproportionate use of force. The perceived impunity (the police officer's almost immediate release) creates a climate of insecurity for the entire prison population.
- **Mistreatment and brutality (Muramvya & Bururi):**
 - In **Muramvya**, detainees have reportedly been regularly beaten by security personnel.
 - In **Bururi**, acts of violence have been reported by the detainee in charge of internal security, **Nduwayezu Appolinaire**, who brutalizes and beats his fellow detainees with impunity.

Under international law, these acts may be classified as cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, or even extrajudicial executions in certain cases.

II.2. Violations of dignity related to infrastructure and space

Extreme overcrowding is no longer merely a logistical challenge; it constitutes in itself inhuman treatment:

- **Deprivation of living space (Muramvya, Mars):** With an occupancy rate of **1,032%**, human dignity is denied. Inmates are forced to sleep in showers and toilets or to remain seated or standing all night. This situation causes **direct physical ailments** (edema and swollen legs).
- **Lack of privacy (Bururi & Muramvya):** In these two facilities, the doors to the showers and toilets have been torn off or are missing. This constant exposure of detainees while attending to their bodily needs constitutes a serious violation of their right to privacy.
- **Dilapidation and unsanitary conditions (Ruyigi & Muramvya):** The proliferation of bedbugs due to overcrowding (Ruyigi) and the requirement to sleep on the metal frames of broken beds or directly on the floor (Ruyigi, Muramvya, Bururi) cause long-term physical harm.

II.3. Vulnerability of Specific Groups

The duty of protection incumbent upon the Burundian State cannot be uniform; it must be exercised with heightened vigilance toward categories of detainees whose survival and mental

well-being depend entirely on specialized care. However, observations from this first quarter reveal the prison administration's inability to differentiate treatment between the general prison population and groups with critical vulnerabilities.

Far from being protected, the mentally ill, the elderly, and infants are the first victims of the collapse of basic services. By ignoring the specific needs related to age, mental health, or infant dependency, the prison system turns the incarceration of these groups into a doubly cruel punishment. This lack of administrative discernment, combined with the economic crisis, creates situations of "failure to assist a person in danger," where vulnerability is no longer supported but becomes a factor of exclusion and decline within the cells themselves.

It is within this context of institutional neglect that the following concerning cases arise:

- **Vulnerability of the aging population (Ruyigi):** The situation of the **aging population** is particularly concerning at **Ruyigi** Prison, the only facility to have formally reported this quarter a high proportion of inmates aged **60 to 80**. Generally speaking, the Burundian prison system fails to provide adequate care for this category of prisoners, whose physical frailty is exacerbated by the harshness of the environment. At Ruyigi, the total absence of geriatric care, specific nutritional diets, and leniency measures turns the incarceration of these seniors into an unbearable ordeal, bordering on an undignified and unassisted end of life.
- **Critical Impact on Infants in Prison:** It is imperative to highlight the situation of **the 87 infants** currently living behind bars in Burundi (data as of March 31, 2026). These children, who have committed no wrongdoing, bear the full brunt of the consequences of their mothers' detention:
 - **Nutritional deficiencies:** The shortage of flour and oil directly affects the quality of breast milk and weaning foods, exposing these children to early malnutrition and developmental delays.
 - **Toxic environment:** Extreme overcrowding (notably the **1032%** occupancy rate at Muramvya in March) and the lack of drinking water expose infants to severe respiratory and skin diseases.
 - **Developmental trauma:** Growing up in an environment of tension, violence, and sensory deprivation deprives these children of healthy early development, leaving a lasting mark on their psychological well-being. The lack of basic hygiene products (soap, disinfectants) turns prison cells into breeding grounds for infection for these vulnerable children.
- **Psychiatric distress and systemic failure of medical care:** The Burundian prison administration fails to guarantee the right to specialized care for inmates suffering from mental illnesses. Two cases illustrate this failure, both in its current state and its historical context:
 - **Ndikuriyo Jean (Bururi Prison):** His case is emblematic of a recent failure. Suffering from severe mental disorders, he remains incarcerated in a standard cell despite a clear impairment of his faculties. The failure to transfer him to a psychiatric facility or provide appropriate therapeutic care exacerbates his condition on a daily basis, constituting a flagrant violation of the patient's rights.

- **Christian Butoyi (Mpimba Prison):** A symbol of tragic institutional neglect, this detainee has been held behind bars since **September 8, 2014**. Despite a well-documented and recognized psychiatric condition, Christian Butoyi is entering his twelfth year of detention without a clear legal record or medical care. His prolonged confinement in an overcrowded prison environment, in defiance of his obvious lack of criminal responsibility, transforms his sentence into a veritable psychiatric confinement.
- **Addictive behaviors and the failure of institutional oversight:** Beyond vulnerabilities related to age or mental health, a new form of vulnerability is emerging from administrative inaction in the face of addiction. At Muramvya Prison, chronic alcoholism, fueled by the clandestine sale of hard liquor in small bags, is devastating a segment of the prison population. These inmates, whose addiction is not accompanied by any medical or psychological monitoring, are sinking into extreme health precariousness, rendering their physical integrity entirely illusory.

II.4. Violations of physical integrity due to food shortages: starvation as degrading treatment

The widespread food shortage observed during this quarter, and particularly in March, has gone beyond a mere supply issue to become a life-threatening situation and a serious violation of the integrity of detainees.

- **Physical exhaustion:** In several facilities (Bururi, Ngozi, Ruyigi, Bubanza, Muramvya), the complete depletion of cornmeal stocks over periods ranging from **10 to 40 days** disrupted the already precarious nutritional balance. The reduction of the daily ration to legumes (beans) alone—often poorly cooked due to a lack of fuel or salt—has caused massive weight loss and a decline in immune defenses among detainees.
- **The vulnerability of the most vulnerable:** This shortage hits the most fragile inmates with particular severity, notably **the elderly** (60–80 years old), those **with chronic illnesses** (diabetics, tuberculosis patients, HIV-positive individuals), and **infants** living in prison. For these groups, the lack of flour and oil is not merely a deprivation but a direct path toward irreversible physiological distress.
- **Deterioration of oil and food supplies:** Testimonies gathered in Bururi report the distribution of oil mixed with impurities, making the consumption of meals not only unhygienic but potentially toxic, causing frequent stomach problems in a context where medical care is nonexistent.
- **Forced use of unsafe water:** In Muramvya, the lack of adequate food was exacerbated by a water crisis. The forced use of swamp water to cook the scarce food available exposed detainees to major epidemic risks, further compromising their physical resilience, already weakened by hunger.
- **Starvation as a tool of dehumanization:** By failing to ensure the fundamental right to healthy and sufficient food, the State subjects detainees to a daily struggle for physical survival. This situation of institutional starvation reduces human beings to their basic needs for survival, destroying all dignity and constituting a form of cruel and degrading treatment prohibited by international conventions.

Prolonged deprivation of food and drinking water constitutes a serious violation of the right to life and can be equated with a form of torture by omission.

Table1 : Summary of Respect for Physical Integrity and Dignity (January–March 2026)

Category of Violation	Key Events & Location	Impact on Detainees
Violence & Use of Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shooting death of Gilbert Habonimana (Mpimba). • Brutality by "internal security" forces (Bururi). • Violence by security personnel (Muramvya). 	Climate of terror, impunity for perpetrators, and severe physical trauma.
Overcrowding & Living Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record overcrowding (1032%) in Muramvya. • Detainees sleeping standing up or in the bathrooms. • Extreme overcrowding in Ruyigi and Mpimba. 	Development of edema (swollen legs), chronic exhaustion, and dehumanization.
Violations of Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete lack of doors on showers and toilets (Bururi, Muramvya). • Dilapidated sanitary facilities. 	Daily violations of modesty and fundamental human dignity.
Food Shortages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flour shortages lasting 10 to 40 days (Ngozi, Bururi, Bubanza, etc.). • Contaminated oil and lack of salt. 	Institutional famine , massive weight loss, and weakened immune systems.
Vulnerable Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 87 infants at risk of malnutrition and poor sanitation. • Elderly inmates (ages 60–80) without an appropriate diet. • Untreated mental health cases (Ndikuriyo Jean at Bururi Prison and Christian Butoyi at Mpimba Prison). 	Increased risk to the lives of the innocent (children) and criminal neglect of the sick.
Social Climate & Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal sale of hard liquor in Muramvya. • Proliferation of bed bugs (Ruyigi). 	Addictions, internal insecurity, and widespread skin infections.

III. ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

III.1. Evolution of the health situation: from chronic precariousness to systemic failure

While the previous quarterly report already highlighted difficulties in accessing healthcare within prisons, the first quarter of 2026 marks a critical turning point. We are witnessing a dangerous transition: the “precariousness” of medical services, once characterized by delays, has mutated into **systemic failure**. The logistical and financial collapse observed over the past three months has depleted clinic stockpiles, rendering the right to health care purely theoretical. While the previous quarter offered hope for a normalization of supplies, the current situation reveals an administration that has completely abandoned its mission of health protection, leaving inmates to face illness alone.

III.2. A Widespread Shortage of Medication Supplies

A thematic analysis of the facilities reveals an unprecedented shortage of medical supplies:

- **Empty clinics:** In **Ngozi**, **Bururi**, and **Ruyigi**, the on-site clinics no longer have any basic medications. This shortage forces prisoners—already hit hard by the economic crisis—to pay for their own treatments at private pharmacies outside the prison, which is impossible for most of them.
- **Incomplete or inappropriate care:** In **Muramvya**, patients receive partial treatments due to the scarcity of supplies. This rationing of care promotes drug resistance and worsens the overall health of the prison population.

III.3. Obstacles to transfers and lack of qualified staff

The right to external hospital care has become a privilege granted with extreme parsimony:

- **Abusive security restrictions:** In **Muramvya**, authorities systematically refuse transfers to the public hospital under the pretext of an escape risk. Only patients deemed “dying” or in critical condition (cases reported in **Bururi**) obtain authorization for evacuation, sometimes too late.
- **Political discrimination:** In **Ruyigi**, segregation is observed: political prisoners are regularly denied authorization to seek treatment at the hospital. Furthermore, the facility’s clinic has no permanent doctor to treat serious or chronic conditions.

III.4. Medical releases: a two-tiered system

March was marked by selective measures granting provisional release to a handful of detainees on health grounds. Although ACAT Burundi welcomes the release of prominent figures such as **General Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni**, **Colonel Michel Kazungu**, and journalist **Sandra Muhoza** in light of the deterioration of their health, these measures seriously violate the universal and constitutional principle of equality before the law () to the detriment of the prison population as a whole. In fact, hundreds of prisoners suffering from chronic illnesses, severe addictions, or age-related infirmities remain held in conditions that hasten their deaths, without benefiting from such medical leniency.

This discriminatory management of access to care reveals an instrumentalization of the prison system, where inmates' survival depends on their social or political status.

Table2 : General Status of Medical Care (Quarter 1 - 2026)

Facility	Condition of the infirmary	Access to hospital transfers	Critical Observations
BURURI	Complete shortage of medications.	Restricted to " terminally ill " cases.	No care provided for mental health cases (N. Jean).
MURAMVYA	Incomplete or inappropriate treatment.	Almost systematic refusal (fear of escapes).	Emergence of health issues linked to illicit alcohol consumption and unsafe water.
RUYIGI	No permanent doctors. Stock shortages.	Political discrimination: political prisoners denied access.	No specific care for elderly inmates (ages 60–80).
NGOZI	Lacks basic medications.	Dependent on the inmate's financial resources.	Prisoners must purchase their own medications.
GITEGA	Precarious situation.	Selective (High-profile medical releases in March).	Sharp contrast between exceptional releases and the fate of the prison population.

IV. ARBITRARY DETENTION AND JUDICIAL IRREGULARITIES

IV.1. Analysis of the situation: a systemic blockage of releases

Despite official rhetoric about reducing overcrowding, the first quarter of 2026 has been marked by the **institutionalization of arbitrary detention**. Practices observed on the ground reveal that an acquittal or the completion of a sentence no longer guarantees freedom. This systemic deadlock stems from two major abuses: on the one hand, the illegal detention of **political prisoners** whose incarceration turns into **unlawful** confinement after their sentences have expired; on the other hand, **opaque acts of clemency**, often tainted by fraud or corruption. Caught between a disregard for the finality of judgments and administrative inertia, the prison is no longer a place of justice, but a detention facility where the rule of law gives way to arbitrary security measures.

IV.2. Illegal Detention After the Sentence Has Expired

Several facilities are holding individuals in cells even though they have served their full sentences. This practice, observed mainly in **Muramvya**, **Gitega**, and **Ruyigi**, primarily affects political prisoners:

- **Muramvya Prison:**
 - **Niyungeko Tharcisse:** A soldier convicted in the Mukoni case, whose sentence ended on **06/28/2023**.
 - **Irakoze Richard** and **Mucowintore Alexis:** Convicted of rebellion, they should have been released on **October 4, 2024**.
- **Ruyigi Prison:**
 - **Elvis Arakaza:** An emblematic case of a political prisoner kept in detention despite the formal expiration of his sentence.

IV.3. Failure to enforce acquittal rulings

Disregard for court decisions is particularly flagrant in the case of detainees declared innocent by the courts but who remain deprived of their liberty:

- **Habonimana Roger:** Acquitted on January 25, 2026 (Muramvya).
- **Miburo Mathieu:** Acquitted since November 8, 2020, meaning more than **5 years of arbitrary detention** following his trial (Muramvya).
- **Niyonizigiye Felix:** Also, still detained despite an acquittal (Muramvya).

These practices constitute a direct violation of Burundi's international obligations and could be the subject of communications to United Nations treaty bodies.

IV.4. Case Study: The Judicial Ordeal of Miburo Mathieu (Muramvya Prison)

Profile: Detained at Muramvya Prison.

Legal status: Acquitted by court decision.

Date of acquittal: November 8, 2020.

1. The Facts: Freedom Denied for 5 Years

Miburo Mathieu was found innocent of all serious charges against him by a final court ruling issued in November 2020. Despite this acquittal, which should have led to his immediate release, he began his sixth year of arbitrary detention in March 2026.

2. Analysis of the Stalemate: Innocence Without Freedom

This case is emblematic of the disregard for the finality of a court ruling. Keeping a man who is legally free in a cell demonstrates that:

- The primacy of security over the judiciary: The prison administration or security services appear to have arrogated to themselves the right to suspend the enforcement of court decisions, particularly in cases perceived as “political.”
- The absence of effective remedies: The fact that an acquitted man remains behind bars for five years highlights the failure of the oversight and inspection mechanisms intended to correct such abuses.

3. Impact and Legal Classification

For Miburo Mathieu, this situation no longer constitutes an “administrative error,” but rather an illegal detention orchestrated by the state. On a human level, spending 65 months in a cell while innocent—under conditions of starvation and overcrowding (1032%)—amounts to a form of psychological torture.

The case of Miburo Mathieu perfectly illustrates the breakdown of the social contract: when the justice system exonerates someone but the state keeps them behind bars, prison loses its function as an instrument of justice and becomes merely a tool of arbitrary repression. His case warrants a request for his immediate and unconditional release.

IV.5. Irregularities in the processes of pardons and mass releases

The waves of releases that took place in January and March were marred by suspicions of fraud and corruption, distorting the humanitarian objective of the presidential pardon: **Lack of transparency and corruption (Ngozi & Mpimba):** On January 23 in Ngozi (198 released) and January 16 in Mpimba (302 released), the selection procedures were criticized. In Mpimba, reports indicate that the deputy director added individuals not on the initial lists, disregarding criteria of vulnerability or merit.

Administrative and technical delays: In Ngozi, the suspension of videoconference hearings due to a lack of internet connection is paralyzing the processing of release cases, prolonging the pretrial detention of many defendants.

IV.6. Positive note: The innovation of the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Bururi

It is worth noting the initiative of the Public Prosecutor in **Bururi**, who, through bi-monthly visits and the systematic hearing of individuals charged with minor offenses, has managed to resolve cases and order immediate releases (e.g., 20 people released on February 26). This model of proactive management remains, however, an isolated exception.

V. HYGIENE, SANITATION, AND LIVING CONDITIONS IN PRISONS

Physical conditions of detention have reached a critical level characterized by a total lack of essential services.

Generally speaking, the Burundian prison system is undergoing an unprecedented health crisis. The state's inability to provide basic services—water, sanitation, electricity, and building maintenance—is no longer a temporary failure but a structural reality exacerbated by the national economic situation. While the prison administration systematically cites a lack of foreign currency and fuel shortages to justify the absence of sanitation supplies, the first quarter of 2026 confirms that this situation has now evolved into a total collapse of logistical services.

This widespread shortage is transforming detention facilities into places of total deprivation and hotbeds of infection. The absence of essential cleaning supplies (soap, disinfectants, brooms) for over two years in some facilities forces inmates to fend for themselves or endure utterly unsanitary conditions. Ultimately, the dilapidated state of the buildings, combined with extreme overcrowding, not only weakens the physical structures; it inflicts a direct and irreversible blow to the dignity of the detainees, stripping them of their privacy and their most basic health and safety.

V.1. Failure of sanitation services, water crisis, and energy insecurity

Sanitary conditions in the facilities have reached a critical threshold, turning detention centers into hotbeds of major epidemic risks while degrading basic safety conditions:

- **Water emergency (February–March):** The most serious case involves **Muramvya** Prison, where a disruption in the water supply by REGIDESO forced detainees to use **water from surrounding swamps** for cooking and drinking. In **Ruyigi**, water is available only intermittently (3 to 4 days a week).
- **Energy insecurity and technical failures:** Although electricity is maintained in **Bururi**, other centers experience outages that impact the institution's minimal operations. In **Ngozi**, grid instability and the lack of backup solutions have led to the suspension of videoconference hearings, thereby paralyzing judicial proceedings and indefinitely prolonging pretrial detention.
- **Shortage of supplies (January–March):** In **Bururi**, no hygiene products (soap, disinfectant, brooms, brushes) have been distributed for over two years. Detainees must fend for themselves or endure completely unsanitary conditions.
- **Pest infestation:** The combination of overcrowding, a lack of pest control products, and darkness in certain cells has led to a massive **bedbug** infestation in **Ruyigi**, causing skin infections and constant physical distress.

V.2. Advanced deterioration of infrastructure, furniture, and kitchen facilities

The widespread dilapidation of buildings and basic facilities now compromises the basic dignity and physical well-being of detainees:

- **Unsanitary kitchen facilities:** Meals are prepared under deplorable hygienic conditions. In **Muramvya**, the dilapidated state of cooking equipment is exacerbated by the use of unsanitary water from swamps for food preparation. This combination of defective equipment and contaminated ingredients turns the kitchen into a potential vector for waterborne and digestive diseases.
- **Violation of privacy:** In **Bururi** and **Muramvya**, the absence of doors on showers and toilets (which have been torn off or never replaced) leaves detainees permanently exposed while using the facilities, violating their fundamental right to privacy.
- **Dilapidated buildings and sleeping arrangements:** The roofs in **Ruyigi** and **Muramvya** have significant leaks, flooding the cells when it rains. There is a chronic shortage of mattresses; in **Muramvya**, detainees sleep on the metal frames of broken beds reinforced with scrap wood. In **Ruyigi**, overcrowding forces some inmates to sleep on the floor.
- **Waste management:** Water tanks and trash bins are worn out and insufficient in nearly all centers, leading to the accumulation of garbage and worsening the unsanitary conditions of common areas.

“This widespread deterioration of the physical environment is not limited to the physical degradation of the premises; it directly fuels social tensions, addictive behaviors, and internal violence already documented in the section on personal safety.”

Table3 : Quarterly Technical Summary (January–March 2026)

Indicator	Observed Status	Major Impact
Drinking water	Frequent disruptions (Muramvya/Ruyigi).	Consumption of swamp water (serious risk of epidemics).
Hygiene	No soap/disinfectant for 2 years (Bururi).	Proliferation of bed bugs and skin diseases.
Buildings	Leaky roofs and lack of doors (showers/toilets).	Serious violation of modesty and human privacy.
Facilities	Broken beds, lack of mattresses, worn-out water tanks.	Sleep disorders, edema, and unsanitary living conditions.
Electricity	Unstable power grid and outages (Ngozi).	Suspension of video hearings and stalling of proceedings.
Kitchen	Outdated equipment and use of contaminated ingredients.	Vector for digestive diseases and nutritional deterioration.

VI. EVOLUTION OF THE PRISON POPULATION: BETWEEN RECORD OVERCROWDING AND RELEASE MEASURES

An analysis of prison dynamics during the first quarter of 2026 reveals a central paradox: despite sustained efforts to reduce the prison population, the system remains in a state of critical saturation. This chapter examines the ongoing tension between **record-high overcrowding**—which has reached alarming levels in facilities such as Muramvya—and the implementation of various **release measures**.

By examining overall statistics and studying release mechanisms—whether presidential pardons, provisional releases, or local interventions by the public prosecutor’s office—we will analyze the actual effectiveness of these efforts. The aim is to understand why, despite the release of hundreds of individuals, the overall prison population remains above the 13,000-inmate threshold, thus presenting the Burundian prison system with a decongestion challenge that currently seems insurmountable without profound structural reforms.

VI.1. Statistical Mapping and Prison Overcrowding

Summary of trends :

- Constantly rising overcrowding
- Ineffectiveness of release measures
- Prevalence of pretrial detention

VI.1.1. Analysis of the upward trend in prison populations

The first quarter of 2026 confirms an alarming underlying trend: despite the implementation of various measures to reduce overcrowding, the prison population continues to rise. In Burundi, the prison system has crossed a critical threshold, rising from **12,749** inmates as of December 31, 2025, to **12,938** as of March 31, 2026.

This net increase of **189 individuals** in just three months reflects a structural imbalance between the flow of admissions and the flow of releases. This persistent net increase demonstrates that exceptional clemency measures, such as the presidential pardons issued in January, are systematically absorbed and then negated by a criminal justice policy that continues to prioritize mass incarceration, even for minor offenses.

The statistical overview below (Table 4) provides an overview of prison dynamics for this first quarter, highlighting the overall trend in prison populations by facility; data disaggregated by gender as well as specific monthly details are available in the **appendices** to this report.

Table4 : Summary of Prison Population Trends by Facility (January–March 2026)

T: Total; Pr: Pretrial detainees; Co: Convicted inmates; %: Occupancy rate.

Facility	Capacity	January 2026				February 2026				March 2026				Quarterly Trend
		T	Pr	Co	%	T	Pr	Co	%	T	Pr	Co	%	
BUBANZA	200	421	201	220	211%	433	221	204	217%	422	205	217	211%	↗ Stable
BURURI	250	276	151	125	110%	281	150	131	112%	289	155	134	116%	↗ Slight increase
GITEGA	400	1,379	645	734	345%	1,399	681	718	350%	1,402	675	727	351%	↗ Continued increase
MPIMBA	800	4,221	2573	1503	528%	4,077	2,394	1,683	510%	4224	2,587	1,637	528%	↗ Saturation
MURAMVYA	100	995	414	581	995%	1000	403	597	1000%	1032	444	588	1032%	↗ Review (1032%)
MUYINGA	300	611	159	452	204%	613	150	463	204%	614	138	476	205%	↗ Stable
NGOZI (Women)	250	173	76	97	69%	173	67	106	69%	203	73	130	81%	↗ Sharp increase (March)
NGOZI (Men)	400	1,728	643	1,085	432%	1,759	678	1081	440%	1820	727	1093	455%	↗ Steady increase
RUMONGE	800	1,477	563	914	185%	1,498	587	911	187%	1,512	609	903	189%	↗ Up
RUTANA	350	469	236	233	134%	446	205	241	127%	443	199	244	127%	↘ Slight decrease
RUYIGI	300	794	363	431	265%	803	378	425	268%	784	334	450	261%	↘ Decrease (March)
CRMCL RUYIGI	72	78	38	40	108%	71	36	35	99%	69	16	53	96%	↘ Decrease
CRMCL RUMONGE	72	125	62	63	174%	126	64	62	175%	124	21	103	172%	↘ Stable
Totals	4,294	12,747	6,124	6,478	297%	12,679	6014	6,657	295%	12,938	6,183	6,755	301%	

VI. 1. 2. Localized overcrowding at inhumane levels

A broad reading of the figure masks extreme regional disparities where prison density is no longer merely a matter of overcrowding, but of endangering the lives of others. Overcrowding is particularly critical in urban centers and provincial prisons with limited capacity:

- **The Muramvya Epicenter:** With an occupancy rate now peaking at **1,032%**, this facility represents the most severe case documented this quarter. Here, the very concept of “capacity” has vanished, giving way to overcrowding where personal living space has been reduced to nothing.
- **Overcrowding in major facilities:** The prisons in **Mpimba** (528%) and **Ngozi Men’s** (455%) operate under constant strain, where managing basic needs (sleep, food, hygiene) has become an insurmountable logistical challenge for the administration.

This constant demographic pressure is the main driver of the human rights violations documented in this report. It transforms the already dilapidated infrastructure into hotbeds of tension and disease, rendering any attempt at rehabilitation illusory in favor of a simple logic of detention.

The black line (legal capacity) immediately illustrates the extent of overcrowding in each facility.

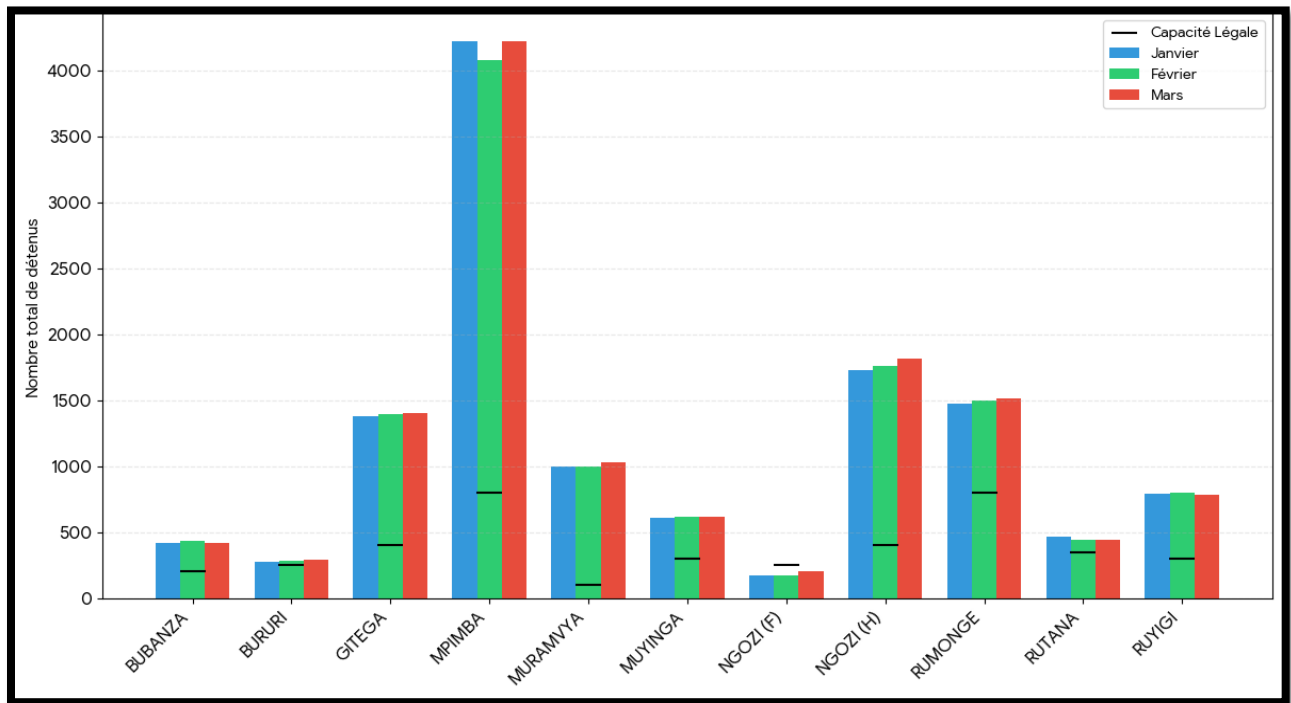


Figure1 : Changes in population by facility (Q1 2026)

Analysis of the graph :

- **The "shock" of Muramvya:** The bar for March (red) peaks at **1,032 inmates**, more than ten times the authorized capacity (black line at 100 places). This is the country's most critical breaking point.
- **Mpimba's Overcrowding:** Despite a visible drop in February (green) following the January releases, the population began rising again in March, reaching a level of extreme overcrowding at around **4,224** individuals.
- **The general upward trend:** With the exception of Ruyigi and Rutana, which show a slight decline in March, the majority of facilities (Gitega, Ngozi, Rumonge) exhibit an upward trend over the three-month period.
- **The capacity paradox:** For nearly all prisons, actual populations are well above legal capacity, making living conditions fundamentally contrary to international standards of human dignity.

VI.1.3. Security Alert: The Impact of the March 31 Explosions in Mpimba

The end of the quarter was marked by a serious incident that occurred on March 31, 2026, at the ammunition depot located in the immediate vicinity of the **Mpimba** Central Prison. The explosions and falling projectiles within the prison grounds caused significant property damage and, more tragically, resulted in fatalities and numerous injuries among the inmates.

This event triggered widespread panic, exacerbated by the extreme overcrowding of the facility (528% occupancy). In a space where 4,224 people are confined, the lack of an evacuation plan and the cramped conditions of the cells greatly increased the risk of deadly stampedes. This incident highlights the critical vulnerability of facilities located in densely populated urban areas and raises the urgent question of securing the perimeters surrounding detention facilities.

VI. 2. Analysis of the Judicial Structure of the Population

VI. 2. 1. The Critical Burden of Pretrial Detention

An analysis of the composition of the prison population reveals that overcrowding is not solely the result of criminal activity, but also of structural judicial delays. As of March 31, 2026, pretrial detention affects **6,183 people**, or nearly half of the total prison population (**47.8%**). This systematic reliance on pretrial incarceration—which should legally remain the exception—has now become the primary driver of overcrowding in detention centers.

This situation traps thousands of individuals, who are theoretically presumed innocent, in a system incapable of processing their cases within a reasonable timeframe. It also renders traditional clemency measures ineffective: since presidential pardons target only those who have been convicted, they cannot affect this pool of pretrial detainees who continue to fill the cells.

The pie chart below (**Figure 2**) illustrates this disproportionate distribution, highlighting the imbalance between those serving a final sentence and those whose legal fate remains pending.

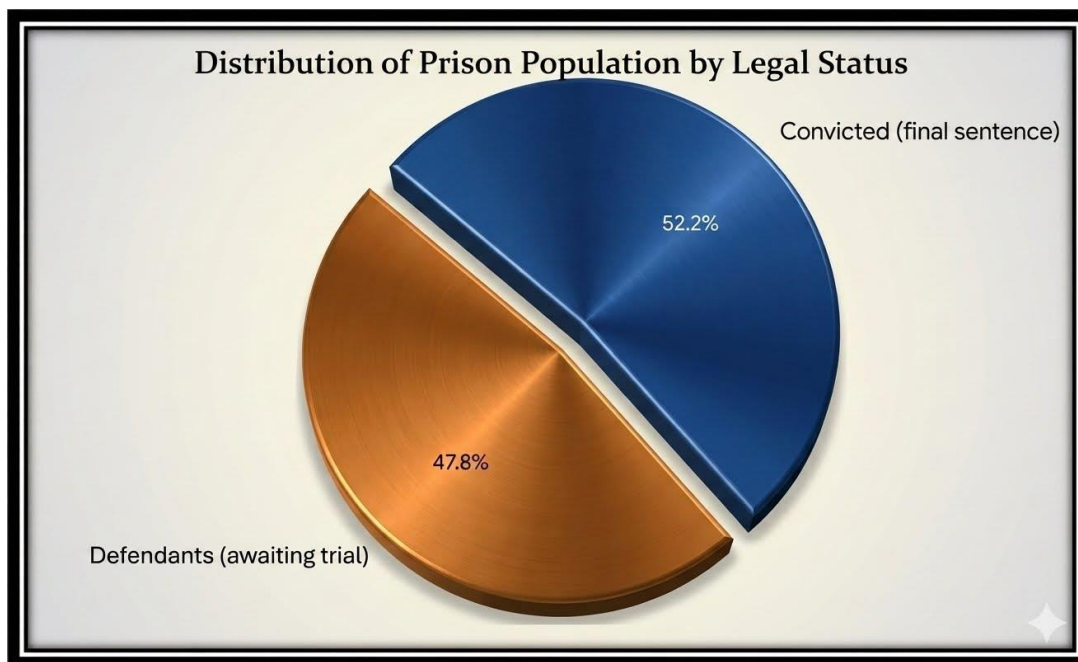


Figure2 : Distribution of the prison population by legal status as of March 31, 2026

Analysis of Judicial Status (March 2026):

- **A Justice System at a Standstill:** Nearly half of the prison population (**47.8%**) consists of individuals awaiting a final judgment. This figure demonstrates that prison overcrowding is not solely linked to crime, but to the excessive slowness of judicial proceedings.
- **Presumption of innocence undermined:** With more than **6,183 defendants** held behind bars, the principle of freedom as the rule and detention as the exception is being undermined. This backlog of defendants automatically fuels overcrowding, particularly in **Mpimba**, where they make up the majority of the population.
- **A lever for reducing overcrowding:** This chart demonstrates that accelerating the processing of court cases or increasing the use of alternatives to pretrial detention would instantly free up nearly half of the occupied spaces

VI.2.2. Disparities in the Prison Population by Facility

While judicial backlog is a national reality, it does not manifest itself in the same way in every province. A detailed analysis by facility reveals highly heterogeneous population profiles, requiring that decongestion solutions be tailored to each center.

While some prisons are literally overwhelmed by the slowness of preliminary proceedings, others are grappling with an excess of convicted inmates whose fate depends entirely on administrative clemency or sentence reductions.

The graph below illustrates these contrasts, providing a geographic overview of the crisis between the population of pretrial detainees and that of convicted inmates.

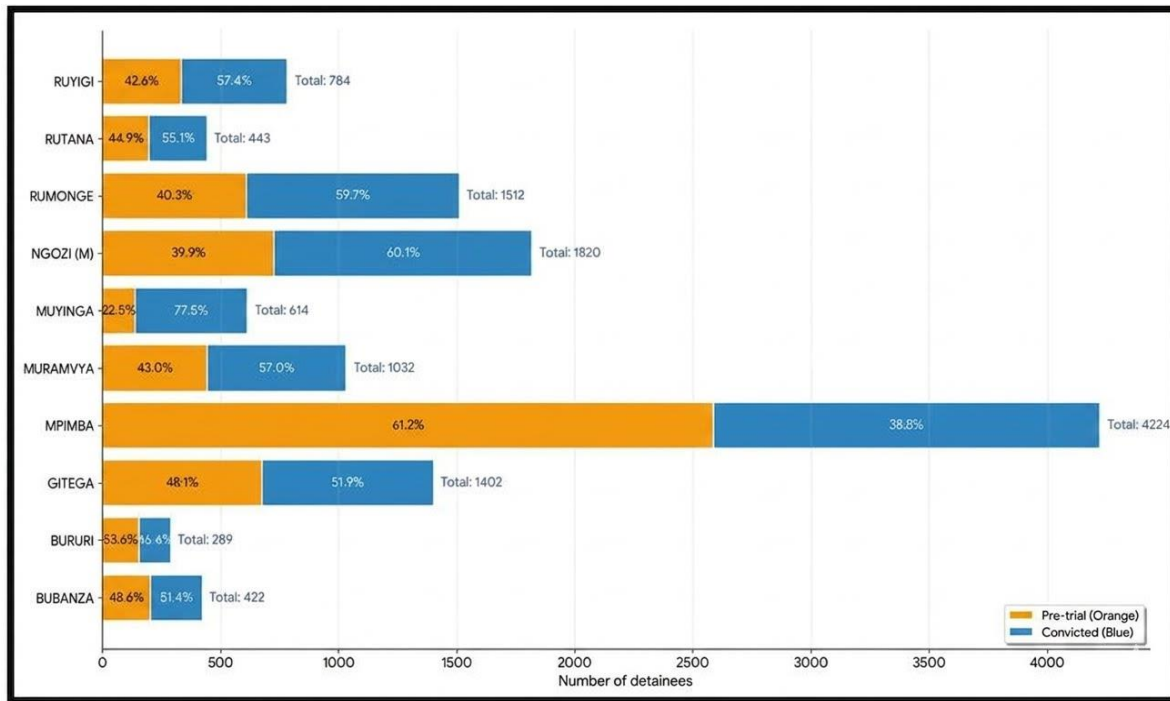


Figure3 : Distribution of Pretrial Detainees vs. Convicted Inmates by Institution as of March 31, 2026

Analysis of the chart :

- **Predominance of pretrial detainees (Orange):** In **Mpimba**, the orange bar is significantly longer than the blue one. Nearly **60%** of inmates in the economic capital have not yet been tried, confirming that the overcrowding in this prison is judicial in origin.
- **Profile of Convicted Inmates (Blue):** Conversely, prisons such as **Ngozi (H)** or **Muyinga** house a majority of convicted inmates. Here, reducing overcrowding would depend more on clemency measures (pardons, sentence reductions) than on speeding up trials.
- **Hybrid overcrowding:** In **Muramvya**, the balance between pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners shows that the **1,032%** overcrowding must be addressed on both fronts simultaneously: by speeding up trials and releasing those who have completed their sentences.

VI.3. Focus on Vulnerable Groups: Women and Minors

Beyond the overall overcrowding statistics, the situation of women and minors reveals specific vulnerabilities that the system struggles to protect, despite the requirements of international conventions. The table below (**Table 5**) presents the statistical breakdown of these vulnerable groups within the prison population, detailing the numbers of women, minors in conflict with the law, as well as the concerning situation of infants living in detention with their mothers.

Table5 : Situation of Women and Minors as of March 31, 2026

Category	Defendants	Convicted	Total	Note
Women (Adults)	531	358	889	Sharp increase in Ngozi in March.
Minors	41	178	219	Overcrowding at the Rumonge Regional Medical Center.
Infants	-	-	87	Direct victims of the famine.

VI.3.1. The situation of women: worsening precariousness

As of March 31, 2026, the female prison population, although numerically smaller than that of men, faces disproportionate detention conditions:

- **Specific overcrowding:** At **Ngozi (Women’s)**, the country’s only all-female prison, the population rose from 173 in January to **203 adults** in March, a 17% increase. While the occupancy rate remains lower than that of men (81.2%), overcrowding is exacerbated by the presence of young children.
- **The plight of nursing mothers:** The quarter ends with **87 infants** living behind bars. These children, who have committed no wrongdoing, suffer from institutional starvation (shortages of flour and oil) and unsanitary conditions, which seriously compromise their early development.

VI.3.2. Minors: A Sacrificed Childhood

The detention of minors, which should be a measure of last resort, remains a troubling reality:

- **Population and distribution:** There are **219 minors** (41 pretrial detainees and 178 convicted) within the system. A large proportion are concentrated at the **Ngozi Women’s Prison** (26 minors) and in the Rehabilitation Centers for Minors in Conflict with the Law (**CRMCL**).
- **Overcrowding in rehabilitation centers:** The **CRMCL in Rumonge** illustrates the failure of specialized care, with an occupancy rate of **172%** (124 minors for 72 places). This overcrowding prevents any meaningful rehabilitation, turning these centers into mere detention facilities.
- **Living conditions:** Like adults, minors are affected by the food shortages in March. The absence of effective school or vocational training programs during this quarter condemns them to forced idleness, increasing the risk of recidivism upon their release.

VI.3.3. Release Trends: Limited Impact

Although women and minors were designated as priorities during the January pardons and the interventions by the Public Prosecutor’s Office in **Bururi** (where 4 women and 1 child were released in February), the influx of new arrivals in March offset these efforts. The stagnation of cases involving juvenile defendants remains a major obstacle to their social reintegration.

VI.4. Assessment of Release Mechanisms and Limitations of the Process

The first quarter of 2026 was marked by an apparent commitment to reducing overcrowding, utilizing various legal and administrative measures. However, an analysis of release trends reveals inconsistent application of leniency, creating a release dynamic whose effectiveness varies depending on the status of detainees and the specific locations.

VI.4.1. The January mass pardons: a massive response contingent on good behavior

The implementation of presidential pardon decrees constituted the main wave of releases at the start of the year, officially targeting the most vulnerable inmates:

- **At Ngozi Prison:** On January 23, 2026, **198 people** were released. Selection criteria prioritized the elderly as well as inmates who had already served a significant portion of their sentences for minor offenses.
- **At Mpimba Prison:** On January 16, 2026, **302 people** were released. While the number of releases is significant, it should be noted that the process was marred by reports of administrative irregularities. These suspicions of fraud in the compilation of the lists suggest that the presidential pardon may have been misused to favor extrajudicial criteria.

VI.4.2. The Public Prosecutor’s Office in Bururi: A Model of Proactive Regulation

The **Bururi** prison distinguished itself this quarter through a pragmatic and consistent approach to population management. At the initiative of the Public Prosecutor, bi-monthly visits were instituted to directly interview defendants charged with minor offenses.

The concrete impact: This initiative led to the release of **20 people** (15 men, 4 women, and 1 child) on February 26, 2026. This “community justice” mechanism demonstrates that a constant presence of the public prosecutor’s office on the ground allows for more effective handling of cases of abusive pretrial detention than large-scale national pardons, which are often too slow.

VI.4.3. Provisional releases in March: between medical and media imperatives

March was marked by targeted releases in response to critical health situations or high-profile cases:

- **High-profile cases:** The provisional release of journalist **Sandra Muhoza** (after 685 days in detention) on March 4, followed by the presidential pardon granted to blogger **Kenny Claude Nduwimana** of the “,” signals a commitment to resolving cases closely monitored by the international community.

- **High-profile medical releases:** The provisional release of **General Alain-Guillaume Bunyoni** and **Colonel Michel Kazungu** on March 11, motivated by the deterioration of their health, underscores that humanitarian imperatives can take precedence over detention. However, these measures contrast with the fate of the prison population (particularly in Ruyigi and Muramvya), where elderly detainees or those suffering from similar medical conditions do not benefit from such administrative expediency.

VI.4.4. Summary: Selective clemency

In conclusion, while these mechanisms have enabled the release of more than 500 individuals from the prison system this quarter, the “speed” of clemency remains uneven. It is swift for high-profile cases or those receiving attention from the highest levels of government, consistent in Bururi thanks to the involvement of a magistrate, but remains tragically slow for anonymous or political prisoners whose sentences have already expired.

Table6 : Summary of measures to reduce prison overcrowding (Quarter 1 - 2026)

Period	Facility	Inmates & Profiles	Legal Mechanism	Impact & Observations
January	Ngozi & Mpimba	500 inmates (elderly, minor offenses)	Presidential Pardon	A massive initiative marred by allegations of irregularities in Mpimba.
February	Bururi	20 detainees (15 men, 4 women, 1 minor)	Prosecutor’s Office Regulation	Procedural innovation: immediate releases following biweekly hearings.
March	Gitega & Ngozi	Key figures (A.G. Bunyoni, M. Kazungu, S. Muhoza ²)	Provisional release	Humanitarian measures on grounds of critical health conditions (685 days for S. Muhoza).
March	Mpimba	Kenny Claude Nduwimana (Journalist)	Individual pardon	Release following a request for clemency and

² *Although the period covered by this report ends on March 31, it should be noted that on April 13, 2026, the Ngozi Court of Appeal issued its final verdict in the case of Sandra Muhoza. Sentenced to six months in prison for “racial hatred”—a sentence she had already largely served—and cleared of the charge of undermining territorial integrity, the journalist regained her full freedom, bringing a definitive end to two years of legal proceedings.*

				completion of the original sentence.
Nationwide	Nationwide	General population	Sentence reductions	Advocacy efforts underway for the chronically ill and those aged 65 and older.

VI.5. Challenges in reducing overcrowding: analysis of bottlenecks

VI. 5. 1. Identification of structural and administrative barriers

While the release trends documented this quarter are real, their impact is offset by structural barriers that prevent a sustainable reduction in the prison population.

- **Compromised procedural integrity:** The effectiveness of clemency measures is undermined by administrative malfunctions. Irregularities observed in the compilation of lists, particularly in Mpimba, suggest that arbitrary criteria sometimes replace vulnerability criteria, depriving legitimate beneficiaries of their right to clemency.
- **The primacy of security over the judiciary:** The most rigid obstacle lies in the refusal to execute release orders (acquittals and completion of sentences) for cases of a political nature. This disregard for res judicata artificially keeps individuals who are legally free in detention, creating a pool of “permanent detainees” whom ordinary clemency measures do not affect.
- **The policy of systematic pretrial detention:** Finally, efforts to reduce overcrowding are hampered by a constant influx of new inmates. The near-automatic use of pretrial detention for minor offenses immediately fills the vacated spaces, turning the prison system into a “revolving door” where new incarcerations replace those released.

Priority areas for action aimed at reducing overcrowding in prisons are proposed in the “Recommendations” section of this report.

VII. GENERAL CONCLUSION

The Burundian prison system no longer functions as a mechanism of justice, but as a space of mass detention where fundamental rights are systematically violated. Monitoring of the prison situation in Burundi for the first quarter of 2026 reveals an unprecedented state of human and institutional distress. A cross-sectional analysis of the six chapters of this report reveals a prison system on the brink of collapse, where the mission of rehabilitation has given way to a logic of precarious survival and arbitrary repression.

With **12,938** inmates and **87** infants, overcrowding has reached a critical threshold. This deterioration is symbolized by inhumane occupancy rates, standing at **301%** nationwide and peaking at **1,032%** in the Muramvya prison alone. Far from being inevitable, this record-breaking overcrowding stems from a systemic judicial gridlock: the slowness of proceedings, illustrated by a rate of pretrial detainees nearing 48%, paralyzes the infrastructure and neutralizes the effect of ad hoc clemency measures.

In terms of physical well-being, the toll is tragic. The quarter was marked by acute **institutional famine**, a proliferation of parasites linked to unsanitary conditions, and access to drinking water that has become a luxury. This climate of tension reached a security crisis on **March 31, 2026, in Mpimba**, where the explosion of an ammunition depot within a **neighboring military camp** resulted in fatalities and numerous injuries among the detainees, illustrating the administration's inability to guarantee the civil security of an overcrowded population. The situation of vulnerable groups, particularly the **87 infants** and detainees suffering from untreated mental health conditions such as **Ndikuriyo Jean**, reflects a moral and medical failure of the institution.

Finally, an analysis of the decongestion mechanisms reveals a two-tiered approach to leniency. While provisional releases were granted in March, the overall process remains marred by administrative irregularities at **Mpimba** and by the illegal detention of inmates who have been acquitted or have served their sentences, such as **Miburo Mathieu**.

Ultimately, ACAT-Burundi reiterates that prison must not be a place of dehumanization or arbitrary detention. Without a firm political will to regulate admissions, respect the finality of judgments, and ensure effective civil protection, the Burundian prison system will remain a tragic impasse for human rights and a constant challenge to human dignity.

VIII. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND REMARKS FROM ACAT-BURUNDI

In light of the systemic failures detailed in this monitoring report, ACAT-Burundi submits a series of recommendations structured around **three strategic pillars**. These interventions prioritize the humanitarian emergency—exacerbated by famine and overcrowding—while initiating the fundamental reforms essential to eradicating judicial abuses and ensuring that detainees are treated in accordance with international principles of human dignity.

Urgent Measures

- ☞ Immediate release of all detainees acquitted by the courts or who have served their full sentences (e.g., the case of Miburo and others).
- ☞ Vital restoration of food supplies (flour, oil, salt) and drinking water to end institutional starvation.
- ☞ Immediate transfer and medical care for critical cases, elderly prisoners, and detainees suffering from severe mental disorders.
- ☞ Ensure civilian security in prisons by moving ammunition depots and military zones away from detention facilities (following the Mpimba incident).

Structural reforms: Decongestion through the legal system

- ☞ Mass processing of pretrial detainee cases: Reduce the number of detentions warrant by implementing biweekly visits by prosecutors' offices to rule on the fate of the 6,183 pretrial detainees.
- ☞ Transparency in pardons: Audit release lists to ensure that clemency benefits the vulnerable (the sick, the elderly) without administrative corruption.
- ☞ Activating legal releases: Make parole boards operational and effectively implement community service (TIG) for minor offenses.
- ☞ Accountability: Activate compensation mechanisms for victims of arbitrary detention to discourage abusive arrests.

International commitments

- ☞ Compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules by rehabilitating basic infrastructure to ensure dignity, privacy, and hygiene.
- ☞ Protection of vulnerable groups (women, minors, and infants) in accordance with international conventions on the rights of children and women.
- ☞ Hold the state accountable by activating compensation mechanisms for victims of arbitrary and abusive detention.

APPENDICES: PRISON CONDITIONS FOR JANUARY, FEBRUARY, AND MARCH 2026

Appendix 1: Prison Population as of January 31, 2026

Detention Center	Capacity	Total number of prisoners	Number of pretrial detainees	Number of convicted prisoners	Occupancy rate
BUBANZA	200	421, including 10 infants	181 men and 20 women	200 M and 20 F	210.50%
BURURI	250	276 including 3 infants	139 M and 12 F	113 M and 12 F	110.40%
GITEGA	400	1,379 including 11 infants	570 M and 75 F	642 M and 92 F	344.75%
MPIMBA	800	4,221 including 20 infants	2,363 males and 210 females	1,450 M and 53 F	527.63%
MURAMVYA	100	995 including 10 infants	382 males and 32 females	530M and 51F	995.00%
MUYINGA	300	611 including 8 infants	143 males and 16 females	401 M and 51 F	203.67%
NGOZI WOMAN	250	173 adults, including 28 minors and 24 infants	76 F and 14 M	97 F and 14 M	80.40%
NGOZI MEN	400	1,728	643	1,085	432.00%
RUMONGE	800	1,477 including 5 infants	523 M and 40 F	866 M and 48 F	184.63%
RUTANA	350	469	223 M and 13 F	226 M and 7 F	134.00%
RUYIGI	300	794, including 9 infants	324 M and 39 F	382 M and 49 F	264.67%
CRMCL RUYIGI	72	78	38	40	108.33%
CRMCL RUM	72	125	62	63	173.61%

M: men; F: women; J: juveniles

The prison population in January was 12,775 inmates + 100 infants = 12,875

The total number of pretrial detainees is 5,907 adults + 114 minors = 6,021

The total number of convicted prisoners is 6,637 adults + 117 minors = 6,754

Appendix 2: Prison Population as of February 31, 2026

Detention Center	Capacity	Total number of prisoners	Number of pretrial detainees	Number of convicted prisoners	Occupancy rate
BUBANZA	200	433, including 8 infants	199 M and 22 F	186 M and 18 F	216.50%
BURURI	250	281 including 3 infants	141 M and 9 F	119 M and 12 F	112.40%
GITEGA	400	1,399 including 11 infants	602 males and 79 females	626 M and 92 F	349.75%
MPIMBA	800	4,077 including 17 infants	2,207 males and 187 females	1,602 M and 81 F	509.63%
MURAMVYA	100	1,000 including 8 infants	374 M and 29 F	546 M and 51 F	1000.00%
MUYINGA	300	613 including 7 infants	137 M and 13 F	410 M and 53 F	204.33%
NGOZI WOMAN	250	173 adults, 30 minors, and 24 infants	67 women and 16 men	106 women and 14 men	81.20%
NGOZI MEN	400	1759	678	1,081	439.75%
RUMONGE	800	1,498 including 4 infants	542 males and 45 females	863 M and 48 F	187.25%
RUTANA	350	446	191 M and 14 F	237 M and 7 F	127.43%
RUYIGI	300	803, including 11 infants	332 M and 46 F	379 M and 46 F	267.67%

CRMCL RUYIGI	72	71	36	35	98.61%
CRMCL RUMONGE	72	126	64	62	175.00%

The prison population in February 2026 was 12,709 inmates + 93 infants = 12,802

The total number of pretrial detainees is 5,905 adults + 116 minors = 6,021

The total number of convicted prisoners is 6,577 adults + 111 minors = 6,688

Appendix 3: Prison Population as of March 31, 2026

Detention Center	Capacity	Total number of prisoners	Number of pretrial detainees	Number of convicted prisoners	Occupancy rate
BUBANZA	200	422, including 7 infants	188 M and 17 F	196 M and 21 F	211.00%
BURURI	250	289 including 3 infants	143 M and 12 F	122 M and 12 F	115.60%
GITEGA	400	1,402 including 10 infants	600 M and 75 F	635 M and 92 F	350.50%
MPIMBA	800	4,224 including 17 infants	2,398 M and 189 F	1,565 M and 72 F	528.00%
MURAMVYA	100	1,032 including 9 infants	412 males and 32 females	536 M and 52 F	1032.00%
MUYINGA	300	614 including 6 infants	125 M and 13 F	423 M and 53 F	204.67%
NGOZI WOMAN	250	203 adults, 26 minors, and 21 infants	69 women and 4 minors	108 women and 22 minors	81.20%
NGOZI MEN	400	1,820	727	1,093	455.00%

RUMONGE	800	1,512 including 4 infants	571 males and 38 females	849 M and 54 F	189.00%
RUTANA	350	443	183 M and 16 F	237 M and 7 F	127.43%
RUYIGI	300	784 and 10 infants	295 males and 39 females	402 M and 48 F	261.33%
RUYIGI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL	72	69	16	53	95.83%
CRMCL RUMONGE	72	124	21	103	172.22%

The prison population is 12,938 inmates + 87 infants = 13,025

The total number of pretrial detainees is 6,142 adults + 41 minors = 6,183

The total number of convicted prisoners is 6,577 adults + 178 minors = 6,755