



Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture

MONTHLY REPORT ON THE MONITORING OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

MAY 2026

“Right to Life and Access to Justice: Analysis of Institutional Responses to Documented Violations”



Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
I. INTRODUCTION	4
I.1 A report in line with ACAT Burundi’s mission	4
I.2 Methodological Approach	5
II. MURDERS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE	5
II. 1. General Context and Legal Framework	5
II. 2. Presentation of cases documented by ACAT-Burundi	6
II. 3. Statistical analysis of documented cases (May 2026)	8
II. 4. Findings and Legal Violations	12
II. 5. Recommendations	13
III. KIDNAPPINGS AND FORCED DISAPPEARANCES	14
III. 1. General Context and Legal Framework	14
III. 2. Overview of cases documented by ACAT-Burundi	14
III. 3. Overall Analysis and Characteristics of the Abductions	16
III. 4. Findings and Legal Violations	18
IV. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS	18
IV. 1. General context and systemic observations	18
IV. 2. Legal violations and recommendations to the State	19
V. VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL INTEGRITY	19
V. 1. Cases of torture documented by ACAT-Burundi	19
V. 2. Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment in Prisons	20
V. 3. Assault and battery	20
V. 4. Findings and Legal Violations	21
VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	21
VI. 1. Conclusion	21
VI. 2. Recommendations	22
APPENDICES	24

Appendix 1: Cases of Murder 24
Appendix 2: Cases of Kidnapping 32
Appendix 3: Cases of torture 37

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ACAT-Burundi: Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture in Burundi
- BUCECO: Burundi Cement Company
- CNIDH: Independent National Human Rights Commission
- CNL : National Congress for Freedom
- CNDD-FDD: National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
- UN: United Nations
- OPJ: Judicial Police Officer
- PNB: Burundi National Police
- SNR: National Intelligence Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report by ACAT-Burundi for the month of May 2026 paints an alarming picture of the human rights situation in Burundi, confirming the repressive trend already documented in previous months. After six years of the current institutions in power, state mechanisms for ensuring public safety and judicial oversight reveal significant shortcomings in the face of recurring abuses.

The quantitative summary of violations documented during the month of May 2026 highlights the scale of the security crisis and the level of impunity through the following statistical indicators:

Quantitative summary of violations

- **Killings:** 7 bodies discovered (85.71% of cases in Gitega and Bujumbura).
- **Abductions / Enforced Disappearances:** 5 documented cases (60% of victims were members of the state security apparatus).
- **Torture and ill-treatment:** 4 major cases (including 2 deaths resulting from injuries or denial of medical care).
- **State judicial response:** 0.00% of investigations opened (100% immediate impunity).
- **Forensic obstruction:** 28.57% of bodies hastily buried on the same day they were discovered.

Field investigations conducted by the organization highlight a deep interconnection between local insecurity and state failures. The abuses documented this month—whether involving stabbings, the use of lethal force by the police, abductions by intelligence services, or fatal torture committed by the Imbonerakure militia—all face a systematic paralysis of the judicial system. This inertia is particularly serious in cases where the alleged perpetrators have been formally identified by the public, but also where the criminals remain unknown due to the total absence of on-the-ground investigations.

This passivity on the part of prosecutors is exacerbated by the administrative practice of hasty burials carried out by local authorities, who deliberately violate the Code of Criminal Procedure to obstruct forensic examinations. In the face of this denial of justice, ACAT-Burundi calls for urgent reforms and the immediate prosecution of all perpetrators and their superiors. It notes a

continuous and widespread weakening of the judicial safeguards offered to victims and their families.

I. INTRODUCTION

The right to life, liberty, and security is the most important pillar of the Constitution of Burundi (Articles 19, 24, and 25), which recognizes “*international human rights instruments duly ratified*” by Burundi, including the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Yet, the political and security crisis that began in April 2015 continues to result in serious human rights violations. Despite the Burundian people’s aspiration to live in a just country governed by respect for the principles of good governance and human rights, the situation remains alarming. The country is still plagued by murders, kidnappings, unjust arrests, and regular acts of torture.

I.1 A report in line with ACAT Burundi’s mission

True to its mission of protecting and defending human rights in general and combating torture by denouncing acts of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, ACAT-Burundi presents its report for the month of May 2026.

Information gathered on the ground shows that the space for public freedom has been completely shut down. This situation has become even more dire following the June 2025 legislative elections. As explained by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Burundi, Fortuné Gaétan Zongo, in September 2025, these elections eliminated opposition political parties that could have challenged the ruling power. He added that “*civil and political rights have posed a real challenge for Burundians.*” *Numerous reports have documented serious violations, including arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions, acts of torture, and enforced disappearances attributed to the security services and the Imbonerakure militias¹.*” Burundi’s diplomatic efforts abroad have had no impact on the ground. Political intolerance remains high, the media self-censors out of fear, and opponents are forced to remain in exile.

The month of May 2026 confirms that violence is taking hold everywhere and is often protected by institutions. Analysis of the facts reveals a clear profile of the victims and perpetrators. The targeted by the crackdown are most often actual or perceived opponents, journalists, or members of civil society. While uncertainty prevails regarding the identity of the perpetrators in the majority of cases, the cases that have been solved directly implicate state agents, notably the Burundi National Police (PNB) and the National Intelligence Service (SNR), often acting in concert

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/statements-and-speeches/2025/10/declaration-du-rapporteur-special-sur-la-situation-des-droits-de>

with local leaders of the Imbonerakure youth league. A new development is that insecurity now affects ordinary citizens as well as members of the police and the army themselves.

I.2 Methodological Approach

ACAT-Burundi employs a rigorous approach in compiling this report. The information presented was gathered by our network of anonymous local observers deployed across various provinces of the country. It is based on direct testimonies from victims or their families, as well as cross-checks and verification with multiple independent sources. Each incident undergoes a verification process. Due to security constraints, fear of reprisals, and limited access to certain areas, some cases could not be documented exhaustively. ACAT-Burundi nevertheless applies a principle of caution and includes in its reports only data deemed credible and sufficiently corroborated.

On the ground, ACAT Burundi faces major obstacles: witnesses' fear, a lack of cooperation from the authorities, and the hasty burial of victims without prior investigation—as required by Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure—a flagrant omission by the relevant institutions that perpetuates a climate of impunity that risks becoming a mode of governance. This report denounces this situation with a view to advocating for truth and justice.

Observed trends: During the month of May 2026, a comprehensive analysis of the documented violations reveals three major findings: the persistence of impunity in cases of violations of the right to life, the recurrent use of abductions and enforced disappearances as a means of neutralizing targeted individuals, and the continuation of acts of torture or ill-treatment involving state agents or actors acting with their tacit approval.

II. MURDERS AND VIOLATIONS OF THE RIGHT TO LIFE

II. 1. General Context and Legal Framework

More than six years after the 2020 change in government, the Republic of Burundi remains deeply scarred by the ongoing occurrence of murders, summary executions, and abductions. Yet the national legal framework is unequivocal: Article 24 of the Burundian Constitution guarantees the sacred and inviolable nature of the right to life, while Articles 210 through 220 of the Penal Code impose severe penalties for homicide. These provisions are further reinforced by international instruments ratified by the country, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Despite this protective legal framework, human insecurity remains a daily reality for citizens. A comprehensive analysis of the violations documented by ACAT-Burundi highlights a critical institutional failure: near-systematic impunity. Local authorities regularly obstruct the uncovering of the truth by authorizing hasty burials without prior autopsies. This lack of thorough on-site

investigations not only deprives families of their right to justice but also exonerates the perpetrators of these crimes.

II. 2. Overview of cases documented by ACAT-Burundi

It is within this climate of impunity that the homicides recorded during the month of May 2026 occurred. The rigorous documentation gathered on the ground highlights an alarming diversity of modus operandi, illustrating violence that is both widespread and extreme. The documented cases include physical assaults with knives or blunt objects (machetes and clubs), a death by strangulation during an ambush, and the disproportionate use of lethal force by an officer of the Burundi National Police (PNB). Added to this list are the discovery of bodies under unexplained circumstances, whether inside a home or in a riverbed.

Mapping these crimes reveals a concentration of incidents in the provinces of Gitega and Bujumbura, as well as an isolated case in the province of Buhumuza. Furthermore, the diverse profiles of the victims—including women, men of all ages, and a retired military officer—demonstrate the indiscriminate nature of the insecurity, which spares no social group. At the time of this report's publication, the most serious finding is the complete absence of any judicial investigations initiated into these cases.

Table 1: Summary of Murder Cases and Body Discoveries (May 2026)

Details of each case and the legal analysis are included in the Appendix section of this report

Date	Victim	Age	Location	Circumstances / Condition of the body	Suspected motives	Legal Proceedings & Observations
3/05	Deogratias Bigirimana	54	Rutegama Hill, Gitega commune and province.	Injuries to the face and legs (suspected use of a machete).	Unresolved	None. Body buried on the day of discovery (no autopsy).
4/05	Mugabonihera	Unknown	Resident of Mena Hill, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province.	Fell into an ambush by unidentified individuals; strangled with a rope.	Suspected family conflicts between the victim and his wife.	None. No information on the opening of an investigation at the time of the report's publication.
9/05	Anitha Ndayishimiye	34	Inside her home, Mugutu Hill, Gitega commune and province.	The body had begun to decompose at the time of discovery.	Unsolved	None. Body buried the same day without an investigation to determine the cause of death.
05/10	Unidentified lifeless body	Unknown	Muzenga neighborhood, Kanyosha area, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province (in the Kanyosha River).	Unresolved.	Unresolved	None. No proceedings reported.
05/12	Pétronie Nzeyimana	60 years old	Maza Hill, Gishubi commune, Gitega province.	Multiple facial injuries (suspected use of clubs).	Unresolved	Unresolved. No investigation opened.
05/14	Éric Niyongabo	Unknown	Samwe Hill, Rugombo area, Cibitoke commune, Bujumbura province.	Shot in the lower back (through the navel) by a police officer.	Unresolved	None. No information indicates that an investigation has been opened to date.
05/21	Jean-Claude (Retired soldier)	~50 years old	Mugera, Gisagara commune, Buhumuza province.	Unknown.	Unknown	None. No ongoing legal proceedings.

II. 3. Statistical Analysis of Documented Cases (May 2026)

A quantitative and cross-referenced analysis of the seven (7) bodies recorded during the month of May 2026 reveals clear trends regarding the profiles of the victims, the mapping of violence, and the failure of the state's response. Before analyzing the specifics of these violations in detail, the summary table below outlines the key indicators of insecurity and the institutional response for this period.

Table 2: Statistical Indicators of Violations of the Right to Life and Impunity (May 2026)

Indicators Analysis	Value for the month of May 2026
Total number of documented victims	7 bodies
Geographic concentration (Gitega / Bujumbura)	85.71% (6 out of 7 cases)
Motives not clarified or unknown	85.71% (6 out of 7 cases)
Cases buried hastily without a forensic examination	28.57% (2 out of 7 cases)
State criminal response rate (Investigations)	0.00%

II.3.1 Demographic profile of victims

Analysis of individual characteristics shows that violence strikes indiscriminately, regardless of gender, age, or social status:

- **Distribution by gender:** Men account for **57.14%** of cases (4 victims: Deogratias, Mugabonihera, Éric, and Jean-Claude), women for **28.57%** (2 victims: Anitha and Pétronie), and one body remains unidentified (**14.29%**).
- **Age groups:** Although uncertainty prevails in 42.86% of cases (3 unknown ages), the available data reveal an average age of **49.5 years**. The profiles range from a young woman aged 34 (Anitha Ndayishimiye) to an elderly woman aged 60 (Pétronie Nzeyimana).
- **Social diversity:** Crime affects civilians in their private family lives just as much as it does a former member of the armed forces (the retired soldier Jean-Claude).

II.3.2. Mapping of Violence

The lethal insecurity mapped during this month is concentrated in two major provinces, which together account for **85.72%** of the violations:

- **Gitega Province (42.86% / 3 cases):** The incidents are spread across the hills of Rutegama, Mugutu, and Gishubi.
- **Bujumbura Province (42.86% / 3 cases):** The incidents occurred on Mena Hill, in the Muzenga neighborhood (Kanyosha River), and on Samwe Hill (Cibitoke commune).
- **Buhumuza Province (14.28% / 1 case):** A single case was documented in the Gisagara commune.

II.3.3. Classification of Modus Operandi and Suspected Motives

The range of execution methods illustrates extreme physical violence, ranging from local score-settling to institutional violence:

- **Bladed weapons and blunt objects (28.57% / 2 cases):** The severe injuries inflicted on the faces of Deogratias Bigirimana and Pétronie Nzeyimana indicate that they were likely killed with machetes or clubs.
- **Asphyxiation by strangulation (14.29% / 1 case):** Mugabonihera was killed with a rope during an ambush. This is the only case where a specific motive is suspected, linked to family conflicts with his wife. For the other 6 victims, the motives remain completely unknown.
- **Use of lethal force by a state agent (14.29% / 1 case):** The case of Éric Niyongabo is critical, as the victim died from a gunshot wound to the pelvis inflicted by a PNB police officer.
- **Unresolved suspicious deaths (42.86% / 3 cases):** This includes a body found in a state of decomposition at home (Anitha Ndayishimiye), an unidentified body recovered from a river, and the unknown circumstances surrounding the death of soldier Jean-Claude.

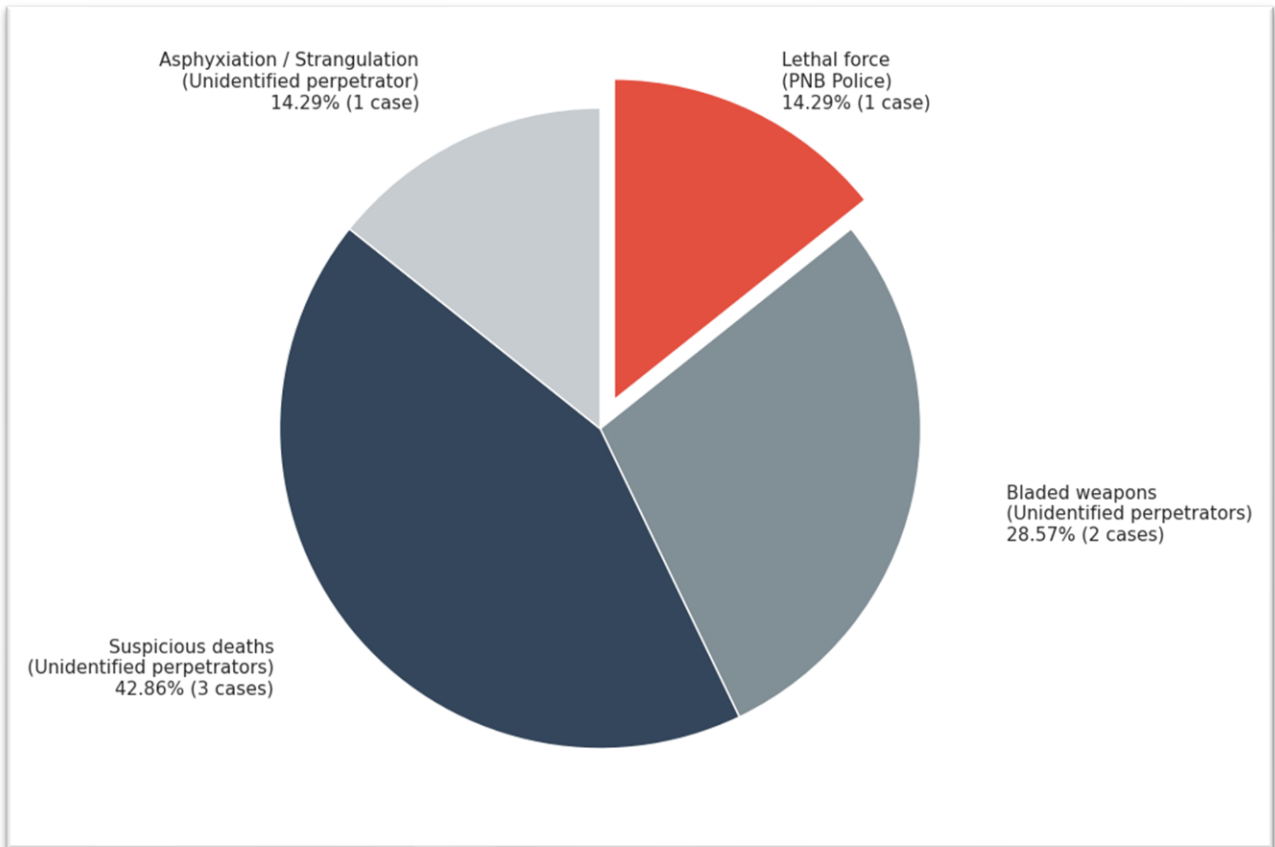


Chart 1: Breakdown of Modus Operandi and Identification of Perpetrators (May 2026)

Beyond the direct perpetrators of the violations, responsibility may extend to hierarchical and administrative superiors who failed to take action in response to these crimes. The fact that certain perpetrators, although identified by the public (as in the case of Éric Niyongabo from the Rugombo area in Cibitoke, killed by a police officer), remain at large, demonstrates a failure in the chain of command and selectivity in law enforcement.

II.3.4. Assessment of Judicial Action

The most alarming indicator in this analysis is the complete paralysis of accountability and truth-seeking mechanisms:

- **Rate of investigations opened: 0%** (no proceedings initiated in any of the 7 cases).

- **Immediate impunity rate: 100%.** Even the case directly involving a National Police (PNB) officer has not been prosecuted.
- **Forensic obstruction (28.57% / 2 cases):** In Gitega, local authorities ordered the hasty burial of Deogratias Bigirimana and Anitha Ndayishimiye on the very day they were discovered. This recurring practice prevents autopsies from being performed, destroys evidence, and ensures the anonymity of the perpetrators.

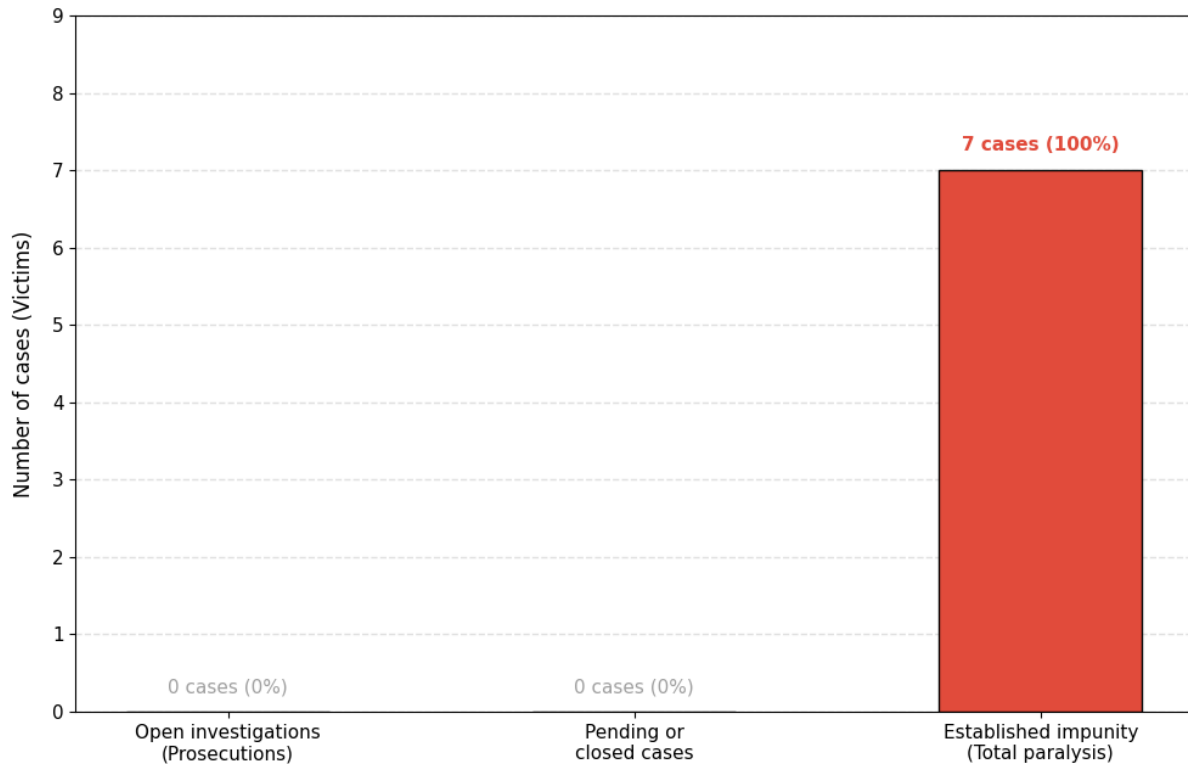


Chart 2: Judicial Follow-up on the May 2026 Homicides (Impunity Rate: 100%)

This chart on judicial follow-up illustrates a total institutional paralysis in the face of violations of the right to life. The exclusive dominance of the “Impunity Confirmed” category (100%) demonstrates that no public action has been taken, leaving the perpetrators of these crimes immune from prosecution. The absence of active investigations (0%) is fueled upstream by hasty burials, which hinder forensic examinations and permanently bury the truth along with the victims.

II. 4. Findings and Legal Violations

In this report covering the month of May 2026, ACAT-Burundi strongly condemns the recurring practice of burying bodies found in various localities without prior identification or the opening of investigations. An examination of the seven (7) documented cases highlights a flagrant and systematic violation of the national and international legal framework by the Burundian authorities. Beyond the criminal act itself, it is the deliberate inaction or passive complicity of the state apparatus that constitutes a serious breach of the rule of law.

II.4.1. The flagrant violation of the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure

These actions constitute a flagrant violation of Article 109 of Law No. 1/09 of May 11, 2018, on the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure, which provides 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) who is notified shall, if possible, inform the Public Prosecutor before going to the scene and making the initial findings. The report of findings must be communicated to the Public Prosecutor without delay.”

The law also specifies that the Public Prosecutor must, if necessary, seek the assistance of experts or medical professionals to determine the actual causes of death. Above all, it mandates the systematic opening of an investigation whenever the circumstances of the death remain unknown. The absence of these legal procedures fosters a climate of impunity and deprives the victims’ families of their right to truth and justice.

II.4.2. Denial of the Right to Protection of Life and to Justice

The most damning indicator in this report (the 0.00% rate of investigations opened) embodies this disregard for existing laws:

- **Failure to apply the Constitution:** Article 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi expressly stipulates that *“the right to life is sacred and inviolable.”* The persistence of unpunished murders renders this guarantee meaningless.
- **Inaction by prosecutors:** By failing to initiate any truth-seeking proceedings for all cases of violence (machete, clubs, strangulation), the Burundian criminal justice system is guilty of denial of justice, in violation of Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.

II.4.3. The illegality of hasty burials (28.57% of cases)

In the cases of Deogratias Bigirimana and Anitha Ndayishimiye in Gitega, local administrative authorities ordered the bodies to be buried on the very day they were discovered. By rushing these burials without the mandatory involvement of a judicial police officer or a medical examiner, as required by the aforementioned Article 109, the local authorities are committing a flagrant obstruction of justice. They are knowingly destroying the physical evidence necessary to identify the perpetrators.

II.4.4. The Case of Éric Niyongabo

The murder of Éric Niyongabo by an officer of the Burundi National Police (PNB) in Cibitoke highlights the most critical legal violations:

- Breach of equality before the law: The continued release of a police officer formally identified by the public violates Article 19 of the Constitution.
- Violation of international principles: According to the UN Principles on the Prevention of Extrajudicial Executions, the State has a strict obligation to investigate every instance of the use of lethal force by its agents. The absence of prosecution demonstrates a failure in the chain of command, engaging the criminal liability of the hierarchical and administrative superiors who protect the perpetrator.

Details on this case can be found in the appendices (pages 31, 32, and 33).

In short, the systematic absence of investigations and the resort to hasty burials indicate a material breach of the duty of care incumbent upon judicial authorities. Failure to comply with the procedures set forth in Article 109 deprives families of their fundamental legal guarantees to truth and justice.

II. 5. Recommendations

In light of the serious violations observed and the systematic impunity surrounding violations of the right to life in Burundi, ACAT-Burundi makes the following urgent recommendations:

To the Ministry of Justice

- Order the immediate opening of impartial, independent, and thorough judicial investigations into these seven (7) cases as well as into all the murders documented in previous months that have gone uninvestigated, in accordance with the obligations of Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

- Put an immediate end to the recurring practice of hasty burials ordered by local administrative authorities, by requiring the systematic issuance of a death certificate and the performance of a forensic examination (autopsy) for any discovery of a dead body or suspicious death.

To the Ministry of the Interior, Community Development, and Public Security

- Proceed with the provisional suspension of the Burundi National Police (PNB) officer formally identified by the public as responsible for the murder of Éric Niyongabo in Cibitoke, so that he may be brought before the competent courts.
- Initiate disciplinary and criminal proceedings against the administrative and police superiors who, through their passivity or intent to cover up, shield their subordinates' abuses and obstruct the enforcement of the law.

III. KIDNAPPINGS, AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

III. 1. General Context and Legal Framework

Alongside the discovery of bodies, ACAT-Burundi expresses its deep concern over the persistence of cases of abductions and forced disappearances on Burundian territory. These acts, often perpetrated in the dark or out of sight, plunge families into prolonged anguish and constitute flagrant violations of individual freedoms.

Legally speaking, these practices directly violate **Article 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi**, which guarantees individual liberty and stipulates that no one may be arrested or charged except in accordance with the procedures provided by law.

In the month of May 2026 alone, ACAT-Burundi documented **five (5) victims** in four (4) cases of abductions and enforced disappearances.

III. 2. Overview of cases documented by ACAT-Burundi

The evidence gathered in the field reveals recurring modus operandi, characterized by the use of bait calls, unmarked vehicles, or the direct involvement of state security agents.

Table 3 below summarizes the identities of the five kidnapped victims, the timeline, the locations of the incidents, and the circumstances of their disappearances:

Table 3: Summary of documented abduction cases (May 2026)

Date	Victim	Profile / Age	Location	Last reported location	Circumstances of the abduction
May 5	Samuel Nshimirimana	Unknown	Gisyo neighborhood, Kanyosha area, Bujumbura municipality.	His home	Receives a call from a supposed friend. Upon leaving, unidentified individuals forcibly take him into a <i>Probox</i> car with license plate JA 7135 and tinted windows.
May 11	Jean Marie Vianney Manirakiza	41 years old	Cibitoke Market, Cibitoke commune, Bujumbura province.	Cibitoke Market	Former CNL activist and geologist at the BUCECO factory. Abducted at 11:16 a.m. by agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) as he was returning from a mission.
May 15	Vianney Ndayikeza	Unknown	Nyagasaka Hill, Buruhukiro area, Rumonge commune and province.	His home	Police officer assigned to the Rumonge police station, at home mourning the death of his child. Disappeared mysteriously after leaving the house following a phone call.
May 22	Vincent Nsengiyumva (alias Master)	Unknown	District I, Nyabugete, Ruziba area, Mugere commune,	<i>Mina Resto Bar</i> (Nyabugete)	SNR informant. Accompanied by his friend Anicet to the ground floor of the bar following a suspicious call. Both

			Bujumbura province.		were abducted by unidentified individuals.
May 22	Anicet Nsengiyumva	Unknown	District I, Nyabugete, Ruziba area, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province.	<i>Mina Resto Bar</i> (Nyabugete)	SNR informant. Received a call asking him to come down. Abducted along with his friend Vincent. His vehicle (<i>Voxy</i> , FA 9379) was found abandoned on the beach with keys and phones inside.

III. 3. Overall Analysis and Characteristics of the Abductions

A cross-examination of these four cases reveals specific operational dynamics:

- The telephone trap as a common denominator:** In the majority of kidnappings, the act was immediately preceded by a suspicious phone call aimed at confirming the victim’s presence or isolating them outside their safe zone. In the case of police officer Vianney Ndayikeza, the kidnappers cynically took advantage of a time of family tragedy and mourning to trap him.
- The involvement and targeting of state officials:** The targeting is highly political or institutional. The report documents the abduction of a former political opponent (CNL) by the National Intelligence Service (SNR), the simultaneous disappearance of two of the SNR’s own informants (Vincent and Anicet), and that of an active-duty police officer. This diversity demonstrates that security services are both actors and targets of these abduction networks.
- Sophisticated equipment and logistics:** The use of vehicles with tinted windows (*Probox*, *Voxy*) and the ability to operate in broad daylight (11:16 a.m. in Manirakiza) demonstrate the kidnappers’ confidence that they will go unpunished.

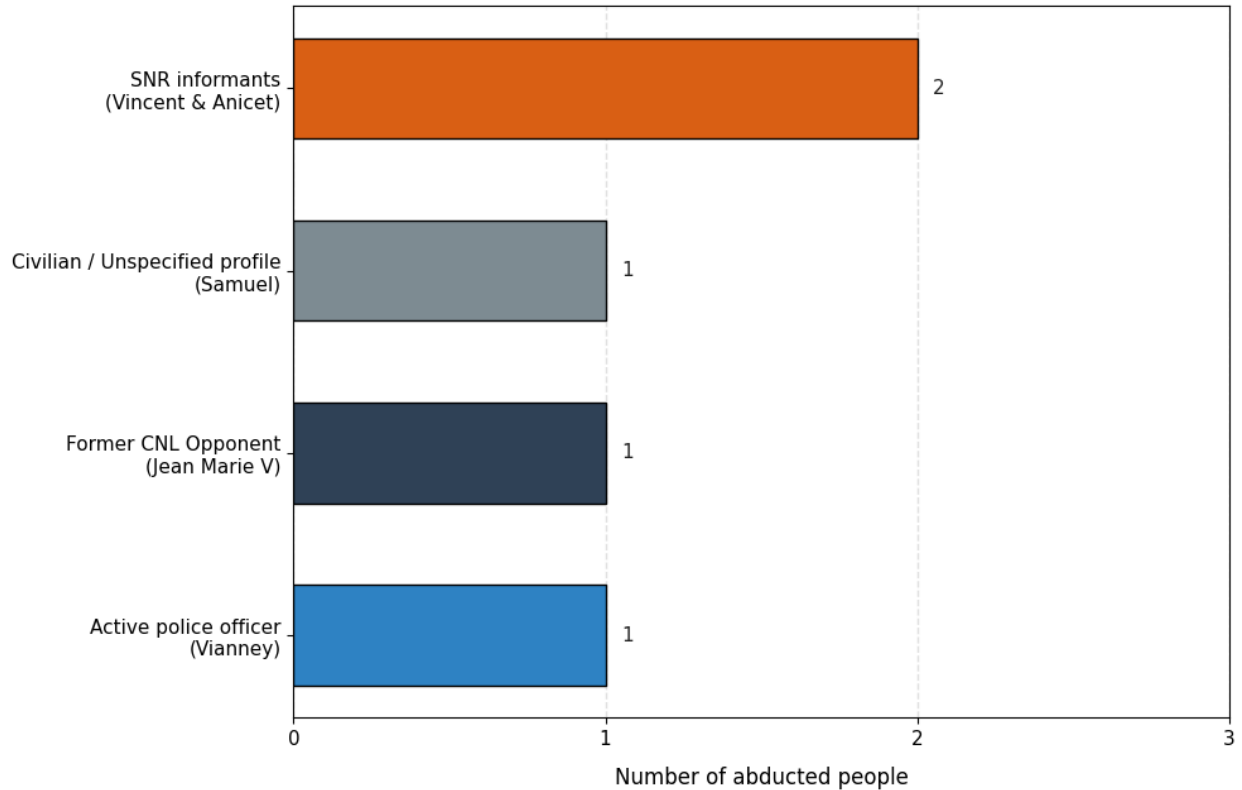


Figure 3: Breakdown of abduction victims by profile (May 2026)

“The graph highlights the distinctly institutional and political nature of enforced disappearances in May 2026. The data reveal that **60%** of those abducted this month are directly affiliated with state security or intelligence agencies (two SNR informants and one active-duty police officer). This statistic demonstrates that insecurity and the failure of individual protection guarantees now affect members of the defense and security forces themselves, illustrating the widespread and uncontrolled nature of this phenomenon.”

III. 4. Findings and Legal Violations

ACAT-Burundi expresses its deep concern regarding the inaction of the security services and the judicial police. The failure to deploy patrols or immediately trace phone records after the discovery of the abandoned vehicle belonging to the two SNR informants on the shores of Lake Tanganyika illustrates a flagrant material breach of investigative obligations.

In short, the failure to conduct urgent investigations to locate these five individuals and ensure their physical safety constitutes a violation of the right to liberty and security, paving the way for potential extrajudicial executions.

IV. ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

IV. 1. General Context and Systemic Observations

Although no specific individual cases were fully documented during this reporting period, ACAT-Burundi remains deeply concerned about the persistence of arrest procedures that do not comply with legal standards. The organization reiterates that any deprivation of liberty must strictly respect the judicial safeguards provided for by the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Burundi.

In general, the organization's field observations highlight the recurrence of serious violations of legal procedures:

- **Systematic lack of warrants:** Arrests continue to be carried out by officers of the Burundi National Police (PNB) or the National Intelligence Service (SNR) without the prior presentation of legal documents or judicial warrants, in violation of Article 25 of the Constitution.
- **Illegal exceeding of police custody limits:** Many people remain detained in police cells beyond the limits set by law. These prolonged detentions directly violate **Article 15 of the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure**, which strictly limits police custody to a period of **14 days**, renewable only once with the written authorization of the Public Prosecutor.
- **Abusive and prolonged pretrial detention (Prisons):** Within correctional facilities, the organization observes that many defendants whose detention warrants have expired or have not been properly renewed by the court remain in custody, turning their imprisonment into arbitrary deprivation of liberty.
- **Detention in unofficial or secret locations:** The continued practice of detaining individuals in private transit facilities, residences, or dungeons not recognized by law deprives

detainees of any legal protection. These practices keep them beyond the reach of judicial oversight, making them particularly vulnerable to disappearance or ill-treatment.

IV. 2. Legal Violations and Recommendations to the State

The absence of these legal procedures fosters arbitrariness and deprives citizens of their constitutional guarantees. ACAT-Burundi strongly recommends to the Burundian State that detention must remain the exception and freedom the rule. Holding citizens in detention without bringing them before an investigating judge within the legal time limits constitutes a flagrant violation of Burundi's international obligations, notably Article 6 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which prohibits arbitrary detention.

V. VIOLATIONS OF PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

Beyond the killings and enforced disappearances, the month of May 2026 was marked by an alarming resurgence of physical violence across the country. In this regard, ACAT-Burundi points to shared responsibility between state agents, who abuse their authority, and members of the youth league affiliated with the ruling party (*Imbonerakure*), who illegally assume law enforcement powers. The organization notes that torture is a crime severely punished under **Article 206 of the Burundian Penal Code**. The documentation of four major violations this month, including acts of torture resulting in death and serious cases of medical negligence in prisons, illustrates the systemic and unpunished nature of these violations of human dignity.

V. 1. Cases of torture documented by ACAT-Burundi

The rigorous documentation gathered in the field during this period highlights three emblematic cases of acts of torture:

- **The Case of Jean Bosco (Bujumbura City Hall):** On the night of Saturday, May 2, 2026, in the Mugoboka neighborhood of the Nyakabiga district (Mukaza commune), Jean Bosco was the victim of a brutal attack while walking home. Two members of the *Imbonerakure* youth league intercepted him and subjected him to severe torture, striking him violently on the head. Hearing the victim's screams, neighborhood residents intervened, subdued the two attackers, and handed them over to law enforcement. They are currently being held in the Nyakabiga detention center, while the victim was taken to an emergency care facility. The incident took a political turn when the local *Imbonerakure* leader, a man named Karenzo, attempted to oppose the arrest of his men, claiming they had committed no wrongdoing.
- **Case of Kibaju (Bujumbura Province):** On May 10, 2026, around 11 p.m., a young man named Kibaju was tortured at the Kabezi displacement site (Mugere commune) by police

officers guarding the residence of the commune administrator. Following an altercation during which a man named Claver kicked Kibaju, the police intervened. Instead of defusing the situation, the officers attacked the young man, beating him violently before leaving him in critical condition. The victim was transported unconscious to Kanyosha Hospital.

- **Case of Jean de Dieu Hakizimana — Act of torture resulting in death (Gitega Province):** On May 20, 2026, Jean de Dieu Hakizimana, aged 28, was arbitrarily arrested and tortured on Zege Hill (Gitega commune). The alleged perpetrators are two *Imbonerakure* members: Onésphore Nduwarugira (deputy chief of Zege Hill) and Fulgence Bimenyimana (local CNDD-FDD party leader), who accused him of stealing a goat. Transferred in critical condition to the holding cell at the Gitega provincial police station around 8:00 p.m., the young man succumbed to his injuries the following day, May 21, 2026. His body was transferred to the regional hospital morgue before being buried on May 22, 2026. At the time of this report's publication, the alleged perpetrators of this fatal assault had not been brought to justice.

V. 2. Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment in Prisons

Investigations conducted by the organization within prisons reveal a critical situation, characterized by material violations **of Article 33 of the law governing the prison system, which nonetheless guarantees the right of every detainee to be transferred to an external medical facility when necessary.** The refusal to provide health care to a person deprived of liberty entails the criminal liability of prison officials and that of the Burundian state. As illustrated by the case documented below, this medical negligence is frequently fatal:

- **Case of Miburo Moussa (Death by Denial of Care):** On May 12, 2026, Miburo Moussa, a detainee at Ngozi Prison and a native of Kirundo (Butanyerera Province), died as a result of a lack of adequate medical care. Despite the alarming deterioration of his health, he was not transferred to a hospital. For two days, while he was in critical condition, treatment was limited to the administration of acetaminophen. Urgent efforts by his fellow inmates to secure his emergency evacuation were systematically refused by the prison director, leading to the inmate's death.

V. 3. Assault and Battery

Although no specific cases of assault and battery have been formally recorded this month, ACAT-Burundi remains on high alert. The climate of repression maintained by the *Imbonerakure* against members of the opposition fosters frequent physical attacks which, although not individually documented this month due to fear of reprisals, contribute to a strategy of widespread terror aimed at restricting civic space.

V. 4. Findings and Legal Violations

Analysis of these cases highlights two major legal violations committed by Burundian authorities during the month of May 2026:

- **Political interference and the de facto immunity of the Imbonerakure:** The attitude of local official Karenzo in Nyakabiga and the lack of prosecution against the attackers in Gitega demonstrate that the ruling party's youth league enjoys political protection that paralyzes the administration of justice, thereby encouraging repeat offenses.
- **Failure to provide assistance to a person in danger in a prison setting:** The refusal by the administration of Ngozi Prison to authorize medical evacuation in the case of Miburo Moussa constitutes a flagrant violation of Article 33 of the Prison Act and amounts to cruel and inhuman treatment that resulted in unintentional death.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

VI. 1. Conclusion

The month of May 2026 is part of an ongoing cycle of serious and systematic human rights violations in Burundi. The documentation gathered on the ground confirms that the Constitution's promises regarding the right to life, liberty, and security are not respected in daily life. This right to life, a fundamental pillar of any rule of law, is repeatedly violated in various forms: assassinations, enforced disappearances, and acts of torture.

Monitoring of violations during this month highlights three major issues:

1. **Serious violations of the right to life:** The discovery of seven (7) bodies is evidence of extreme violence. These individuals were killed by stabbing, strangulation, or, in one specific case in Cibitoke, by a fatal shooting by a police officer.
2. **Alarming arrests and abductions:** Five (5) people were abducted after receiving suspicious phone calls. Significantly, the majority of these disappearances involve government officials and intelligence agents themselves, proving that insecurity spares no one.
3. **Torture and ill-treatment:** The youth league of the ruling party (*Imbonerakure*) continues to commit acts of torture, which have sometimes resulted in the victim's death, as in Gitega. Furthermore, conditions in prisons remain inhumane, as illustrated by the death of a detainee in Ngozi following a systematic denial of medical care.

The recurring phenomenon of lifeless bodies found in public spaces (rivers, bush) and hastily buried without identification or investigation attests to a deliberate intent to conceal. These practices, often carried out by local administrative officials in collaboration with state agents and members of the *Imbonerakure* youth league, reveal that the authorities have abandoned their duty to protect the population in favor of sectarian interests. The requirement for a medical examination, though provided for in Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, is ignored to obstruct the truth.

Impunity remains the driving force behind these crimes. ACAT-Burundi notes with bitterness that the judicial system, far from being a bulwark against arbitrariness, too often serves as a cover for the perpetrators of violations, as evidenced by the **0.00% rate of investigations opened** this month. Systemic corruption and interference by the executive branch also paralyze national institutions such as the CNIDH and the Ombudsman. This situation renders any hope of successful investigations illusory, particularly when the victims are political opponents or human rights defenders.

In light of this alarming situation, ACAT-Burundi reiterates that compliance with criminal procedures cannot be optional. The impunity that plagues the Burundian judicial system only fuels future violence. The organization therefore urgently calls on the government to order independent investigations, put an end to clandestine burials, and arrest the perpetrators, regardless of their status or political party. This is the only way to bring justice to the victims' families and protect all citizens of Burundi.

The violations documented during the month of May 2026 are not isolated incidents but are part of a broader context characterized by recurring violations of fundamental rights and the absence of adequate judicial responses. This situation further undermines the rule of law and reinforces the population's sense of insecurity.

VI. 2. Recommendations

In light of the alarming situation in May 2026 and the systematic impunity that undermines the rule of law in Burundi, ACAT-Burundi makes the following urgent recommendations:

To the Government of Burundi

- **Strictly enforce Article 109 of the Code of Criminal Procedure** by ordering prosecutors to immediately open independent judicial investigations whenever a dead body is discovered, a kidnapping occurs, or an act of torture is committed.

- **Formally prohibit local administrative authorities** (governors, administrators, and village chiefs) from ordering the hasty burial of victims without a prior forensic examination (autopsy) and without the authorization of a Judicial Police Officer (OPJ).
- **End the executive branch's interference in judicial matters** to ensure the genuine independence of judges and enable the prosecution of all perpetrators of violations, including state agents (PNB, SNR) and members of the *Imbonerakure* militia.
- **Guarantee the free exercise of civil and political rights** by expanding civic space and protecting members of opposition parties (such as the CNL), civil society actors, and journalists from harassment and unjust arrests.
- **Restore the independence and effectiveness of national regulatory institutions**, notably the CNIDH and the Ombudsman, by protecting them from any political or administrative pressure.

To the Ministry of Justice and the Prison Administration

- **Order the immediate arrest of all perpetrators of crimes formally identified by the public**, such as the police officers involved in the fatal shooting in Cibitoke or the local party officials implicated in the fatal torture in Gitega.
- **Enforce Article 15 of the Code of Criminal Procedure** regarding the limits of police custody (14 days) by conducting regular inspections of police and SNR detention facilities to release those detained illegally.
- **Strictly enforce Article 33 of the Prison System Act** by ensuring that no prison director can refuse the medical transfer of a sick detainee to an outside hospital, in order to prevent tragic deaths due to denial of care.

To the International Community (UN, African Union, European Union)

- **Maintain heightened political and diplomatic vigilance regarding Burundi**, firmly supporting the mandate of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the country.
- **Make any resumption or increase in financial and technical aid** to Burundi's justice and security sectors contingent upon clear, measurable, and verifiable results in the fight against impunity and respect for legal procedures.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cases of Assassinations

CASE № 01

1. Profile of the main victim

- Identity: Deogratias Bigirimana
- Age: 54 years old.
- Location: Rutegama Hill, in the municipality and province of Gitega.

2. Timeline and Facts

On May 3, 2026, the body of Déogratias Bigirimana, aged 54, was found approximately 500 meters from his home on Rutegama Hill (Gitega commune and province), not far from an office of the Burundian Revenue Authority (OBR).

According to witnesses at the scene, the body had injuries to the face and legs, indicating that he was killed with a machete. The body was buried the same day without a prior investigation. The exact circumstances of his death have not yet been clarified.

3. Modus operandi and physical findings

Testimonies collected on site by ACAT-Burundi describe extreme violence, characterized by:

- Severe injuries to the face and legs.
- Physical evidence indicating that death was caused by a machete.

4. Contextual analysis and issues

Lack of a judicial response: The body was buried on the same day it was discovered without a prior investigation, hindering the clarification of the circumstances of the death and the identification of the perpetrators.

5. Legal analysis of the case

A. Under Burundian Law

The Burundian legal framework imposes strict procedures in the event of the discovery of a body showing signs of violence:

- The obligation to conduct an initial investigation (Code of Criminal Procedure): In cases of suspicious or violent death, the Judicial Police Officer (OPJ) or the Public Prosecutor's Office is required to go to the scene to conduct an initial investigation, secure evidence (the suspected machete, signs of a struggle), and identify witnesses. A hasty burial without these steps constitutes a serious violation of procedure.
- Prohibition on burial without authorization: Burundian law prohibits the burial of a person who has died a violent death without a prior investigation and a burial permit issued by the judicial authority following a medical examination.
- Criminal classification: The facts describe an assassination (premeditated murder or murder by ambush) or murder, crimes defined and punishable under the Burundian Penal Code. The absence of an investigation prevents accurate classification and fosters impunity.

B. In light of International Conventions

Burundi is bound by several instruments (African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) that impose specific obligations:

- The Right to Life (Art. 6 of the ICCPR): This right does not merely mean that the State must not kill, but that it must protect life. The failure to investigate a violent death is considered by the UN Human Rights Committee to be a violation of the right to life.
- The Minnesota Protocol: This international standard on investigations into potentially unlawful deaths stipulates that authorities must act with diligence, competence, and independence. The immediate burial of a mutilated body without an autopsy is a direct violation of these international standards.
- Right to an effective remedy: By failing to launch an investigation, the State is depriving the family of Déogratias Bigirimana of their right to access justice and the truth.

C. Summary of Violations

Lack of due diligence: The inaction of the Gitega authorities in the face of an obvious crime.

Obstruction of justice: The rapid burial without a medical examination may be interpreted as an attempt to conceal evidence of the crime.

State Liability: If an investigation is not opened retroactively, Burundi may be held liable before regional courts (the East African Court of Justice) for failing to protect its citizens.

Conclusion: Legally, the public prosecutor in Gitega should order an exhumation of the body to perform an autopsy and open a criminal investigation against persons unknown in order to comply with the country's legal obligations.

Burundi's liability before regional and international bodies is based on specific texts that the state has committed to respecting. In the event of judicial inaction (failure to investigate a murder), the following legal grounds may be invoked:

A. At the level of the East African Community (EAC)

Burundi's liability may be invoked before the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) for breach of the principles of the Treaty.

- Article 6(d) of the Treaty Establishing the East African Community: This article stipulates that member states undertake to respect the principles of good governance, the rule of law, and the recognition, promotion, and protection of human rights in accordance with the African Charter.
- Article 7(2) of the same Treaty: Member States undertake to respect the universally recognized principles of human rights. The failure to investigate a machete murder is a clear violation of the rule of law.

B. At the African Union level

A case may be brought before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the basis of:

- Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR): "The human person is inviolable. Every human being has the right to respect for his or her life and to the physical and moral integrity of his or her person."
- Article 1 of the ACHPR: This article requires States not only to recognize these rights, but above all to adopt measures (legislative or judicial) to give them effect. Failure to investigate constitutes a violation of this duty to act.

C. At the United Nations level

Although it is an international (non-regional) body, Burundi is bound by:

- Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR): "The right to life is inherent in the human person. This right shall be protected by law." UN case law specifies that this protection includes the obligation to conduct an effective investigation into suspicious deaths.
- Article 2.3 of the ICCPR: Guarantees the right to an effective remedy for anyone whose rights have been violated, which implies an obligation for the State to bring the perpetrators to justice.

4. Technical Reference Standards

- The Minnesota Protocol (United Nations): This is not a treaty, but the global legal standard used by international courts to determine whether an investigation into a suspicious death was properly conducted. It defines the obligation to perform an autopsy and preserve evidence, which was not respected in the case of Déogratias Bigirimana.

Summary of the legal arguments for a complaint:

To bring a case before these bodies, the petitioner (family or NGO) will argue that the State of Burundi failed in its duty of "due diligence." This legal concept means that the State is liable not only if it kills, but also if it fails to take action to punish the killers, thereby creating a climate of impunity contrary to its international obligations.

CASE № 02

1. Victim Profile

- Identity: MUGABONIHERA
- Age: unknown
- Location: Mena Hill, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province
- Date of the incident: May 4, 2026

2. Facts and physical findings

On May 4, 2026, the lifeless body of MUGABONIHERA, a resident of Mena Hill, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province, was discovered on the same hill

According to the information gathered, the victim was at a bar located not far from his home on May 3, 2026. Around 10 p.m., he was reportedly ambushed by unidentified individuals who allegedly strangled him with a rope. His body was discovered the following day.

Her brother, named Didas, went to the police station to report the death. He was arrested by the police and placed in custody in the holding cell at the Mugere police station. Other information gathered indicates that the murder may be linked to family conflicts between the victim and her husband. Investigations are necessary to determine the causes and perpetrators of her death.

LEGAL ANALYSIS.

1. Under Burundian positive law

- **The arbitrary arrest of Didas (the whistleblower):** Arresting a citizen who came in good faith to report his brother's murder constitutes a major procedural abuse. The Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure requires **serious evidence of guilt** to justify an arrest. Unless there is immediate material evidence linking Didas to the crime, his detention constitutes an **arbitrary arrest and detention** by

the Mugere police. This practice violates the principle of voluntary testimony and discourages citizens from cooperating with the justice system.

- **The duty of diligence of the Judicial Police Officer (OPJ):** The OPJ at the Mugere police station has a legal obligation to open an investigation file, have the body examined by a doctor to confirm death by strangulation, and focus his inquiries on the wife's schedule and the "known" suspects from the bar, rather than keeping the informant in a cell.

2. Under international law

- **Breach of the duty to protect life:** Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 4 of the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)** require Burundi not only to prohibit murder but also to conduct official, effective, and transparent investigations when a crime is committed on its territory.
- **Violation of the right to liberty and security:** By detaining Didas without valid legal grounds, the Mugere police are directly violating Article 9 of the ICCPR and Article 6 of the ACHPR, which stipulate that **no one may be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention**. The Burundian state may be singled out by UN mechanisms for the abusive use of police custody against the victims' relatives.
- **Violation of the Presumption of Innocence:** Detaining the victim's brother upon his arrival at the police station unlawfully reverses the burden of proof, placing an unsubstantiated presumption of guilt upon him.

CASE № 03

1. Victim Profile

Identity: Anitha NDAYISHIMIYE

Location: Mugutu Hill, in the commune and province of Gitega.

Date: May 9, 2026.

2. Facts and Physical Findings

On May 9, 2026, the lifeless body of Anitha Ndayishimiye, aged 35, was found inside her home located on Mugutu Hill, in the commune and province of Gitega. According to local sources, the body of Anitha Ndayishimiye, who lived alone in her home, had begun to decompose at the time of discovery. The body was buried the same day without an investigation being opened to determine the circumstances and cause of the murder.

3 Legal Analysis.

The discovery of **Anitha Ndayishimiye's** decomposing body at her home and her immediate burial without an investigation constitute a serious violation of Burundian criminal procedure rules and a culpable omission on the part of local authorities.

Here is the legal analysis of this situation.

1. The flagrant violation of the Code of Criminal Procedure

The burial of a person who died under suspicious circumstances without a prior investigation directly violates **Law No. 1/09 of May 11, 2018, establishing the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure:**

2. Obligation to initiate an investigation ex officio (Public Prosecution): The discovery of a body at home, of a person living alone, whose death went unnoticed to the point of reaching a state of

decomposition, constitutes by definition a suspicious death. The Judicial Police Officer (OPJ) of Gitega and the village chief had a legal obligation to immediately inform the Public Prosecutor.

3. Prohibition on burial without a legal report: Articles 49 and following of the Code of Criminal Procedure require the crime scene to be preserved. No body may be moved or buried without an official police report and the involvement of a physician to issue a death certificate confirming the absence of signs of violence. By burying the body on the same day, local authorities destroyed essential physical evidence (hair samples, signs of a struggle, bodily fluids).

4. The administrative and criminal liability of local authorities

The hasty burial without the approval of the Gitega prosecutor's office places the blame on administrative and police officials in Mugutu:

5. Obstruction of the search for the truth: Authorizing or carrying out the rapid burial of a decomposed body without a medical examination may be considered concealment of evidence or passive complicity aimed at covering up a crime.

6. International obligations of the Burundian State

By failing to investigate the death of Anitha Ndayishimiye, the State of Burundi is violating its international obligations:

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 6): The right to life imposes a procedural obligation on the State. When a citizen dies under suspicious circumstances, the State *must* conduct a prompt, effective, and independent investigation. The inaction of the Gitega authorities here amounts to total impunity in the face of the loss of a human life.

Urgent legal measures to be taken

To rectify this unlawful situation, the Public Prosecutor in Gitega must order:

The exhumation of Anitha Ndayishimiye's body for an autopsy by a medical examiner, even if the body is decomposed, to look for fractures or traces of toxic substances.

The opening of a judicial investigation, including interviews with immediate neighbors and family members to reconstruct her daily routine.

The questioning of local authorities who ordered the burial to determine the reasons for this haste.

CASE № 04

1. Victim Profile

- Identity: unidentified
- Age:
- Location: Muzenga neighborhood, Kanyosha area, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province, in the Kanyosha River
- Date of discovery: May 10

2. Facts and modus operandi

An unidentified body was discovered in the Muzenga neighborhood, Kanyosha zone, Mugere commune, Bujumbura province, in the Kanyosha River. According to Eric Uwitonze, the neighborhood chief of Muzenga, the victim reportedly fell into a drainage ditch located on 12th Avenue near Kinanira-Musaga following the rain on May 10, 2026. He also indicated that the victim had consumed alcoholic beverages. The body was transported to the morgue at Prince Louis Rwagasore Clinical Hospital to await the funeral.

3 Legal Analysis.

The discovery of the body of an unidentified person in the Kanyosha River requires a strict legal classification. Although the local authority (the neighborhood chief) favors the hypothesis of an accident linked to intoxication and inclement weather, Burundian law and international law require that this situation be treated as a suspicious death until a medical and judicial investigation has formally validated this version.

1. Under Burundian positive law

The Burundian legal framework imposes specific obligations regarding the handling of unidentified bodies and the investigation of causes of death.

- **The Judicial Police’s obligation to investigate:** The statements made by the neighborhood chief, Éric Uwitonze, do not constitute legal truth. The Judicial Police Officer (OPJ) of the municipality of Mugere is required to open an **investigation file to determine the cause of death** (Code of Criminal Procedure).
- **The forensic request from Prince Louis Rwagasore Hospital:** The transfer of the body to the morgue must not serve solely to “await the funeral.” The public prosecutor must appoint a medical examiner to perform an **external examination of the body** or an **autopsy**. This examination must confirm that the death was caused by drowning or trauma resulting from the fall, and rule out any signs of prior violence (strangulation, blows).
- **The procedure for identifying the deceased:** Burundian civil law and criminal procedure prohibit hasty anonymous burial. The State has an obligation to implement identification measures: fingerprinting, examination of clothing, facial photography, and the issuance of a missing persons alert for those missing in the Musaga and Kanyosha areas.

2. Under international law

International human rights law governs the handling of human remains and the right to dignity, even after death.

- **The procedural aspect of the Right to Life:** The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Article 6) requires the Burundian State to conduct a prompt investigation as soon as a body is discovered in a public space. The argument of intoxication does not exempt the authorities from verifying the absence of third-party involvement.
- **Respect for dignity and the right to identity:** The **African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)** protects the inviolability of the human person and their dignity (Article 5). This implies a prohibition on burying an individual as an unidentified person without having exhausted all possible means for identification. The victim’s relatives have the internationally recognized right to be informed of their loved one’s fate (Right to the Truth).
- **The standards of the Minnesota Protocol:** This UN guide on the prevention of suspicious deaths recommends thoroughly documenting the site of discovery (Kanyosha River) and the presumed site of the incident (12th Avenue in Musaga) to ensure the chronological and physical consistency of the facts reported by witnesses.

1. Victim Profile

Identity: Petronie Nzeyimana,

Age: 60

Occupation:

Location: on Maza Hill in the commune of Gishubi, in Gitega Province

2. The Facts

On May 12, 2026, the lifeless body of Pétronie Nzeyimana, aged 60 and mother of nine children, was discovered by the side of the road, near a bridge, on Maza Hill in the commune of Gishubi, in Gitega Province. According to local sources, the victim's body bore several facial injuries indicating that Pétronie Nzeyimana was likely murdered with clubs while returning home.

3. Legal Analysis by ACAT-Burundi.

The discovery of **Petronie Nzeyimana's** lifeless body, bearing severe facial injuries caused by blunt objects (clubs), constitutes a major violent crime under the law.

Here is the legal analysis of this situation under the criminal law and criminal procedure law in force in Burundi.

The discovery of a body on a public road immediately triggers an ex officio proceeding (public prosecution) led by local judicial authorities:

Documentation and preservation of evidence: The judicial police (OPJ) of the Gishubi commune, under the direction of the Public Prosecutor in Gitega, are required to secure the crime scene, document the injuries, and search for any clues (abandoned clubs, signs of a struggle).

Forensic examination: Although resources are sometimes limited, an examination of the body by a medical examiner or local medical personnel is required to officially record the direct causes of death and the approximate time of the crime.

3. Obligations of the Burundian State under international law

Beyond domestic law, this homicide engages the State's responsibility at the international level:

The obligation to protect life (Article 6 of the ICCPR): Burundi has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This treaty requires the State not only to refrain from killing but also to take positive measures to protect the lives of its citizens against criminal acts by third parties.

The right to an effective remedy: The State has an international obligation to conduct a prompt, independent, and impartial investigation to ensure that this crime does not go unpunished, thereby guaranteeing the right to justice for the nine children and relatives of the victim.

CASE No 06

1. Victim Profile

- **Identity:** Eric NIYONGABO
- **Location:** Samwe Hill, Rugombo area, Cibitoke commune
- **Date of discovery:** May 14, 2026

2. Facts and Modus Operandi

On May 14, 2026, Eric Niyongabo was shot and killed by police officers from a post in the Rugombo area. They seriously wounded three others on Samwe Hill, Rugombo area, Cibitoke commune, in Bujumbura province. According to local sources, two men, a certain Janvier and Jean Gasore, a former CNDD-FDD combatant, met at the home of a woman living on Samwe Hill. Each claimed to be the woman's partner, which led to an argument between them.

After some time, the argument finally ended, and each man returned home. However, around 11 p.m., Jean Gasore reportedly called on two police officers to arrest Janvier at his home.

Janvier's family members and other residents of the town categorically refused to allow his arbitrary arrest without a warrant. Faced with this resistance, the police called for backup from three other officers in order to arrest Janvier. Despite the reinforcements, the crowd continued to oppose the intervention.

Suddenly, in a fit of rage, the officers opened fire, firing several shots into the crowd. Amid widespread panic, three people were seriously injured on the spot. It was in this context that a local resident known as Éric Niyongabo reportedly came upon the police officers as he was returning home. The officers ordered him to raise his hands, with his back turned to them. Suddenly, a police officer fired a bullet at his pelvis, which ultimately passed through his navel. At that moment, the officers rushed back to their positions before the station chief arrived on the scene to assess the incident. The injured were transported to a local health facility, the AGAPE Clinic, where Éric Niyongabo died that same night.

Legal Analysis of the Case

The killing of Éric Niyongabo and the serious injuries inflicted on three other citizens by officers of the Burundi National Police (PNB) constitute a flagrant violation of the right to life, an illegal use of public force, and a clear abuse of authority.

The following is a legal analysis of this situation under Burundian criminal law and international instruments.

1. Analysis under Burundian criminal law (Law No. 1/27 of December 29, 2017)

The police officers' intervention, motivated by a private dispute and carried out outside any legal framework, engages the individual criminal liability of the officers for several serious offenses:

- **Murder (Article 211):** The act of shooting Éric Niyongabo at point-blank range while he was obeying orders (hands raised, with his back turned) constitutes a clear intent to kill or, at the very least, a deliberate acceptance of the fatal outcome.
- **The offenses of intentional assault and battery (Articles 223 et seq.):** The police's indiscriminate firing into the angry crowd, which seriously injured three people, constitutes intentional violence resulting in serious injury.
- **Abuse of office (Article 435):** The police officers misused law enforcement and state weapons for private purposes, to settle a domestic dispute on behalf of a third party (Jean Gasore).

2. Analysis under criminal procedure (Law No. 1/09 of May 11, 2018)

The attempted nighttime arrest that led to the tragedy violates all procedural rules in force in Burundi:

- **Illegality of nighttime arrests:** Except in cases of a major crime committed in flagrante delicto or with special authorization from a magistrate, home arrests during the night are expressly prohibited by Burundian law to preserve the inviolability of the home.
- **Absence of a warrant:** The public was legally justified in challenging Janvier's arrest, as the absence of a written warrant outside of a flagrant offense renders the police officers' action entirely arbitrary.
- **Illegal use of firearms:** PNB regulations and the Code of Criminal Procedure restrict the use of firearms to strict cases of self-defense or absolute necessity. Anger or peaceful protest by a crowd against an illegal arrest in no way justifies the use of live ammunition.

3. Analysis under international law

Burundi is responsible for the safety of its citizens on its territory and must answer for the acts committed by its law enforcement officers:

- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR – Article 6):** This article stipulates that the right to life is inherent to the human person and that no one may be arbitrarily deprived of life. The execution of Éric Niyongabo by a state agent is a direct violation of this treaty.
- **The UN Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms:** These universal principles require law enforcement to use non-violent means before resorting to force, and to restrict the use of firearms to the strict minimum necessary to save lives.

CASE № 07

1. Victim Profile

Identity: Jean Claude

Location: Mugerera, Gisagara commune, Buhumuza province

Date of discovery: May 21, 2026

2. Facts and physical findings.

On the morning of Thursday, May 21, 2026, the lifeless body of a retired soldier named Jean-Claude, aged around 50, was discovered near the Mugerera market in the commune of Gisagara, in the province of Buhumuza. The circumstances and cause of death have not yet been determined.

3. Legal Analysis

The discovery of the body of Jean-Claude, a retired soldier, requires **the immediate opening of a judicial investigation** by the competent prosecutor's office in Buhumuza Province to determine the legal nature of the death (natural causes, accident, suicide, or homicide)

Initiation of the procedure for the discovery of a body: In accordance with the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure, local Judicial Police Officers (OPJ) and the Public Prosecutor's Office must immediately proceed to the scene (Mugerera market, Gisagara commune). They are required to secure the scene, search for evidence, and draw up an official report.

The legal obligation to perform a forensic autopsy: Since the cause of death has not been determined, the Public Prosecutor must request a medical examiner or a qualified medical expert to perform an autopsy. This step is crucial under Burundian law to determine whether the death was of criminal origin.

The procedural obligation arising from the Right to Life: The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (Article 6) and the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)** (Article 4) guarantee the right to life. International case law establishes that when a body is found under unexplained circumstances, the State has a **treaty obligation to conduct a prompt, independent, and thorough official investigation**. A lack of diligence or inaction on the part of the authorities would in itself constitute a violation of international law by Burundi.

Implementation of the Minnesota Protocol: In cases of suspicious death, international standards recommend following the *UN's Minnesota Protocol, which aims to prevent extrajudicial, arbitrary, or summary executions*. This document serves as a guide for conducting autopsies and criminal investigations to prevent the concealment of evidence by third parties or state officials.

Appendix 2: Cases of Abductions

CASE № 01

1. Victim Profile

- **Identity:** Samuel Nshimirmana
- **Location:** Gisyo neighborhood in the Kanyosha area, Bujumbura municipality
- **Date of discovery:** May 5, 2026

2. Facts and Physical Findings

On May 5, 2026, Samuel Nshimirmana, who was working in the Cibitoke commune, was abducted by as-yet-unidentified individuals from his home located in the Gisyo neighborhood of the Kanyosha zone, in the municipality of Bujumbura, and taken to an unknown destination in their tinted-window Toyota Probox with license plate JA7135. According to witnesses, Samuel Nshimirmana received a call from a fake friend who has not yet been identified, and as soon as he left his house, unidentified individuals violently attacked him before forcibly dragging him into their vehicle and driving him to an unknown destination.

• **Legal Analysis**

Under Burundian law (Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure)

- **Kidnapping and unlawful detention (Art. 493 et seq. of the Penal Code):** The use of violence, deception (the fake friend), and a vehicle to transport the victim to an unknown location constitutes the crime of kidnapping.
- **Evidence of flagrante delicto and obligation to investigate:** The presence of a license plate (JA7135) constitutes major material evidence. According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, the public prosecutor has an obligation to identify the vehicle's owner and trace the phone call ("the false friend") to identify the accomplices.
- **Violation of the inviolability of the home:** Although the abduction took place outside the house, the operation targeting his home in Kanyosha violates the constitutional principle of security and protection of privacy.

3. Under International Law

- **Enforced disappearance (2006 UN Convention):** Although the perpetrators have not yet been identified, if the investigation reveals the participation, support, or acquiescence of state agents (or if the state refuses to acknowledge the detention), this act constitutes **enforced disappearance**. It is a crime that continues as long as the victim's fate remains unknown.
- **Arbitrary detention (Art. 9 of the ICCPR):** Since the arrest was made without a warrant, by unidentified individuals, and outside of any legal procedure, it is strictly arbitrary and illegal.
- **The Minnesota Protocol:** Although often applied to deaths, its principles require States to conduct a thorough investigation into abductions where the victim's life is at risk.

4. Aggravating factors and legal considerations

1. **Modus operandi:** The use of vehicles with tinted windows (often associated with security services in the region) and the specific license plate number implicate the State's responsibility under its obligation to monitor the territory.
2. **The obligation of "Habeas Corpus":** Under international law, the State has an obligation to bring any person deprived of liberty before a judge. The detention of Samuel Nshimirmana in a secret location constitutes a violation of his right to the protection of the law.
3. **Right to Know:** The family has an inalienable right to know the truth about the fate of their loved one. The authorities' silence regarding an identified license plate could be interpreted as obstruction of justice.

CASE № 02

1. Victim's Profile

- **Identity:** Jean Marie Vianney Manirakiza

Occupation:

- **Location:** Cibitoke Market, in the Cibitoke commune of Bujumbura province
- **Date of discovery:** May 11, 2026

2. The facts and modus operandi

On May 11, 2026, Jean Marie Vianney Manirakiza, 41, a former CNL activist and geologist employed by the BUCECO (Burundi Cement Company) plant, originally from the commune of Muremera in the former commune of Giheta, Gitega Province, but residing in the Gihosha area of Bujumbura, was abducted at 11:16 a.m. by agents of the National Intelligence Service near the Cibitoke market in the Cibitoke commune of Bujumbura province, as he was returning to work after a field assignment. In fact, Jean Marie Vianney Manirakiza had been sent that same day on a field assignment to the village of Binyange in the same Cibitoke commune. Upon returning to his office, he was arrested by SNR agents who took him in their vehicle to an unknown destination.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

The arrest and transfer of **Jean Marie Vianney Manirakiza** to an unknown destination by the National Intelligence Service (SNR) constitute a clear violation of the rules of criminal procedure and of instruments protecting human rights

Absence of a warrant and absence of flagrante delicto: According to the Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure, any deprivation of liberty requires a written warrant from a judicial authority, except in cases of flagrante delicto. Jean Marie Vianney Manirakiza was returning from a legitimate geological mission for his employer, BUCECO, ruling out any notion of flagrante delicto.

Exceeding the legal framework of police custody: Articles 32 and 34 of the 2018 law stipulate that police custody must be carried out in an official and known location, for a strictly limited duration (seven calendar days, extendable once by decision of the Public Prosecutor’s Office). Taking a citizen to an “unknown destination” automatically removes the legal framework for administrative or judicial detention

Burundi is legally bound by several international treaties it has ratified, which take precedence over domestic laws under the constitutional hierarchy.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

- **Article 9 (Right to liberty and security):** This provision expressly prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention. It requires that any person arrested be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for the measure and be brought before a judge as soon as possible

The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)

- **Article 6:** It guarantees the right to liberty and security of the person. Secret detention or detention not recognized by the State constitutes a flagrant violation of this regional commitment.

CASE N° 03

1. Victim Profile

- **Identity:** Vincent Nsengiyumva, alias Master (33 years old, residing in the Kinama area) and Anicet Nsengiyumva (44 years old, residing in the Nyabugete neighborhood).
- **Status:** Informants for the National Intelligence Service (SNR).

2. Chronology of events

On May 22, 2026, Vincent Nsengiyumva, alias Master, and Anicet Nsengiyumva were sharing a glass of beer with their friend Franck, another informant for military intelligence (G2), at a bar-restaurant called Mina Resto Bar located in District I of Nyabugete, Ruziba area, Mugere commune, in Bujumbura province.

Anicet Nsengiyumva received a phone call asking him to go downstairs. He then asked his friend Vincent Nsengiyumva to accompany him to meet the people who had just called him, while their companion Franck remained where he was. Since that moment, Anicet Nsengiyumva and Vincent Nsengiyumva have suddenly disappeared.

Later, Anicet's VOXY vehicle, with license plate FA9379, was found abandoned at Nyabugete Beach, very close to Lake Tanganyika, with the ignition key and their cell phones inside. The vehicle was recovered by police officers from the Kanyosha station. Sources in Nyabugete claim to have seen individuals in a white double-cab pickup truck who abducted Vincent Nsengiyumva and Anicet Nsengiyumva and drove them to an unknown destination.

3. Modus operandi

Evidence at the scene and witness accounts describe a specific modus operandi:

- The use of a bait phone call to lure Anicet Nsengiyumva down to the ground floor of the bar-restaurant.
- The two victims were intercepted by a group of individuals in a white double-cab pickup truck.
- The victims' vehicle (VOXY, FA9379) was abandoned at Nyabugete Beach, very close to Lake Tanganyika, with the cell phones and ignition key still inside.

4. LEGAL ANALYSIS

The legal analysis of the facts surrounding the disappearance of **Vincent Nsengiyumva** and **Anicet Nsengiyumva**, which occurred on May 22, 2026, in Nyabugete, reveals consistent evidence of serious human rights violations, against a backdrop of potential internal conflicts within the security services. Under the Burundian Penal Code and international law, the facts constitute several major offenses:

- **Abduction and unlawful detention:** The interception of the two victims by a group of unidentified individuals, followed by their transfer to an unknown destination, constitutes the crime of abduction.
- **Presumption of enforced disappearance:** Although the perpetrators are "unidentified," the use of a specific modus operandi (a trap phone call, a double-cab vehicle often associated with the security services) and the victims' status (SNR informants) legally point to an enforced disappearance potentially involving state agents or parallel structures.

The discovery of the abandoned vehicle (VOXY, FA9379) at Nyabugete Beach is of crucial legal significance to the investigation:

- **The crime scene and preservation of evidence:** The presence of cell phones and the ignition key inside the vehicle demonstrates the absence of a classic criminal motive (such as car theft). The phones constitute **vital pieces of evidence**. They contain incoming call data that can be used to identify the caller who lured Anicet Nsengiyumva into a trap.
- **The role of the Kanyosha police:** The local police's recovery of the vehicle immediately triggers the obligation to call in the forensic team to collect fingerprints and secure digital data (phones).

3. The specific context: The status of informants (SNR / G2)

The fact that the victims were SNR informants and were with a military intelligence (G2) informant at the time of the incident introduces a particular legal dimension:

4. Obligations of the authorities and avenues of recourse

To move this case forward legally, the following actions are required:

1. **Immediate questioning of the key witness:** The Prosecutor's Office must summon and question the individual named "Franck" in order to reconstruct the final minutes before the call and obtain descriptions of the kidnappers.

Request for telecommunications data: The investigating judge must issue a subpoena to mobile phone companies to obtain call records and the geolocation of the victims' phone numbers at the time of the incident.

CASE № 04

1. Victim Profile

- **Identity:** NDAYIKEZA Vianney (born in 1997).
- **Status:** Police officer assigned to the Rumonge police station.
- **Location:** Resident of Nyagasaka Hill, Buruhukiro area, Rumonge commune and province.

2. Chronology of Events

On May 15, 2026, NDAYIKEZA Vianney had gone to his home to mourn the death of his child. Around 3:00 p.m., he reportedly received a phone call before leaving his home. He has not been seen since. He was abducted by unidentified individuals traveling in a van belonging to the National Intelligence Service (SNR).

His family members went to the Rumonge police station to inquire about his situation. According to information provided to them by police authorities, Vianney NDAYIKEZA was reportedly transferred to another province. However, his family has not heard from him.

3. Modus operandi

The testimonies and evidence gathered describe the following modus operandi:

- The use of a prior phone call to persuade the victim to leave his family home.
- The victim is intercepted and abducted by individuals traveling in an official vehicle, specifically a van belonging to the National Intelligence Service (SNR).
- The victim was targeted at a moment of vulnerability, while she was mourning the loss of her own child.

Legal Analysis

The legal analysis of the facts concerning the alleged abduction of police officer **Vianney NDAYIKEZA**, which occurred on May 15, 2026, in Rumonge, highlights serious violations of Burundian domestic law and international human rights instruments

The factual elements described (arrest by unidentified individuals in a vehicle belonging to the National Intelligence Service [SNR], followed by the authorities' refusal to acknowledge the detention or reveal the victim's whereabouts) constitute an **enforced disappearance**.

- **International law:** According to the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance* (although Burundi has not ratified it, this practice is prohibited under customary international law), enforced disappearance requires arrest by state agents followed by a denial of the deprivation of liberty.

- **Burundian Criminal Law:** The Burundian Penal Code severely punishes arbitrary arrests and detentions as well as abductions committed by private individuals or public officials outside of legal procedures.

2. Contradiction and Concealment by the Administration

The official response from the Rumonge police station stating that the victim was “transferred to another province” presents a major legal contradiction:

- **Transfer procedure:** A transfer within the Burundi National Police (PNB) is subject to strict administrative rules. It is notified by a formal, official written document, not by a sudden physical disappearance following an anonymous call.
- **Obligation to provide information:** Police authorities have a legal obligation to provide clear, verifiable, and written information regarding the administrative and geographical status of their personnel. The absence of formal evidence regarding this alleged transfer amounts to an attempt to **conceal evidence** and obstruct justice.

3. Violation of Fundamental Rights

Vianney NDAYIKEZA’s situation violates several fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Burundi:

- The right to liberty and security of person.
- The right not to be subjected to arbitrary detention (any arrest must be notified and recorded in official registers).
- The right to protection of the family, particularly violated here since the victim was targeted while mourning his own child.

Appendix 3: Cases of Torture

CASE № 01

1. Victim Profile

- Identity: Jean Bosco
- Age: unknown
- Location: Mugoboka neighborhood, Nyakabiga area (Mukaza commune)
- Date of discovery: May 2, 2026

2. The Facts

On the night of Saturday, May 2, 2026, tensions escalated in the Mugoboka neighborhood, in the Nyakabiga area (Mukaza commune). Jean Bosco, a local resident, was the victim of a brutal attack while returning home.

According to eyewitnesses, two members of the Imbonerakure youth league intercepted him and subjected him to severe torture, striking him violently on the head. Alerted by the victim’s cries for help, neighborhood residents quickly intervened to come to his aid. The crowd managed to subdue the two attackers on the spot. The attackers were handed over to law enforcement and are currently being held in the Nyankabiga detention center. As for Jean Bosco, his condition required emergency hospitalization to treat his injuries. The incident, however, took a political turn when the local Imbonerakure leader, named Karenzo, attempted to oppose the arrest of his men. He claimed they had committed no

wrongdoing, despite the testimonies and the victim's condition, sparking outrage among Mugoboka residents.

Legal Analysis

The Issue of Impunity and Obstruction of Justice

The behavior of Imbonerakure leader Karenzo raises two major legal issues:

- **Obstruction of Justice:** By attempting to prevent the arrest of suspects caught in the act, Karenzo could be prosecuted for resisting a public official or obstructing justice.
- **Aiding and Abetting or Harboring Criminals:** If he helped the perpetrators attempt to evade prosecution by using his political influence, he could be held criminally liable as an accomplice through instigation or protection.

3. Analysis under International Law

Burundi is bound by several major treaties, notably the Convention Against Torture and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

- **Right to physical integrity:** The Burundian state has an obligation to protect every citizen from torture. The fact that the perpetrators are members of an organization affiliated with the ruling party engages the state's responsibility if there is tolerance or a failure to prosecute.
- **Obligation to investigate:** Under international law, as soon as an allegation of torture is brought to the attention of the authorities (in this case, the handing over of the suspects to the police), an immediate, impartial, and effective investigation must be conducted.
- **Right to an effective remedy:** Jean Bosco is entitled to full compensation for the harm suffered (medical care, damages).

4. The "Flagrant Delicto" Procedure

Since the perpetrators were apprehended by the public at the time of the incident and immediately handed over to the police (Nyankabiga detention center), the flagrante delicto procedure must apply. This means that the case should be processed swiftly by the prosecutor's office to prevent any arbitrary release under political pressure.

Legal Conclusion

The case presents a conflict between criminal law (arrest for violence) and an attempt at political interference (Karenzo's intervention). The legal viability of this case depends on the ability of the police and the Bujumbura City Prosecutor's Office to resist pressure and keep the defendants in custody until trial.

CASE No 02

1. Victim Profile

- **Identity:** kibaju
- **Age:** unknown
- **Location:** Kabezi displacement site in the commune of Mugere, Bujumbura province
- **Date of discovery:** May 10, 2026

2. The facts

On May 10, 2026, a young man named Kibaju was tortured around 11 p.m. at the Kabezi displacement site in the commune of Mugere, Bujumbura province, by police officers who were guarding the residence of the Mugere commune administrator. According to on-site sources, the young man was having a drink when a man named Claver kicked him. Kibaju tried to defend himself by pushing Claver away; it was at that moment that the police intervened. Instead of calming the altercation, they jumped

on Kibaju, beat him, and left him in critical condition. The young man was taken to Kanyosha Hospital, injured and unconscious.

3. Legal Analysis

The violent assault on the young man Kibaju by law enforcement officers at the Kabezi displacement site constitutes a serious violation of physical integrity, classified under Burundian law as torture and gross abuse of authority, while flouting the international treaties ratified by Burundi.

1. Perspective under Burundian positive law

The acts committed by the police officers on duty engage their individual criminal liability as well as the civil liability of the Burundian state.

- **Torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment:** The Burundian Penal Code severely punishes acts of torture committed by public officials. Beating a citizen on the ground until he is left in a “critical and unconscious” state goes beyond the scope of legitimate use of force and constitutes a state crime.
- **Abuse of power and breach of official duty:** The legal obligation of the Burundian National Police is to intervene to calm disputes and maintain public order. By deliberately siding with the initial aggressor (Claver) and lynching the victim, who was merely defending himself, the police officers committed an abuse of power and a violation of their constitutional oath.
- **Claver’s criminal liability:** Citizen Claver initiated the altercation by kicking Kibaju. He must be prosecuted as a co-perpetrator or instigator for **assault** and battery, distinct from the police violence that followed.
- **The State’s civil liability:** Since the police officers were acting in the course of their duties (guarding the residence of the municipal administrator), the Burundian State is **civily liable** for the bodily harm caused. Kibaju’s family may claim damages from the State to cover the full cost of medical expenses at Kanyosha Hospital.

2. Analysis under international law

The conduct of law enforcement officers in the commune of Mugere directly contravenes Burundi’s international human rights obligations.

- **Violation of the Convention Against Torture (CAT):** As a State Party to the UN *Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, Burundi has a strict obligation to ensure that its police officers do not commit any acts of gratuitous violence. Inaction or the protection of these police officers by their superiors would engage the country’s international responsibility.

Violation of physical integrity and security: Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 6 of the **African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR)** guarantee every individual’s right to security. Law enforcement agencies have turned their duty to protect into a major source of insecurity for citizens.

CASE No 3

1. Victim Profile

- Identity: Jean de Dieu HAKIZIMANA
- Age: 28
- Location: Zege Hill, Gitega commune and province
- Date of discovery: May 20, 2026

2. The Facts

On May 20, 2026, Jean de Dieu Hakizimana, aged 28, was arrested and violently tortured on Zege Hill in the commune and province of Gitega, the political capital of Burundi, by two Imbonerakure members:

Onesphore Nduwuarugira, deputy chief of Zege Hill, and Fulgence Bimenyimana, local leader of the CNDD-FDD party. They accused him of stealing a goat. According to local sources, they transferred him in critical condition around 8 p.m. to the detention cell at the Gitega provincial police station, where he later succumbed to his injuries on May 21, two days after his arbitrary and violent arrest. The same sources state that after his death was confirmed, Jean de Dieu Hakizimana's body was first transferred to the morgue at the Gitega Regional Hospital, before being buried the following day, May 22.

3. Legal Analysis

The arrest, torture, and subsequent death of Jean de Dieu Hakizimana in Gitega constitute a series of flagrant criminal offenses under Burundian domestic law as well as a clear violation of international treaties ratified by Burundi.

The acts committed by Onesphore Nduwuarugira and Fulgence Bimenyimana directly engage their criminal liability on several counts, while the liability of state agents is also engaged.

Arbitrary arrest and usurpation of authority: As deputy hill chiefs and local leaders of a political party (CNDD-FDD), the two alleged perpetrators have no legal authority as judicial police officers (OPJ) to carry out an arrest or conduct a detention. The Burundian Code of Criminal Procedure reserves the power to use coercive measures for authorized judicial authorities. The arrest of a citizen by third parties, outside the context of a flagrant offense immediately reported to the competent authority, constitutes unlawful detention and arbitrary arrest.

Torture and acts of barbarity: The Burundian Penal Code severely criminalizes torture. By inflicting extreme physical violence under the pretext of a goat theft, the perpetrators fall under the provisions punishing torture committed by persons vested with de facto public authority.

Burundi is bound by several international legal instruments that expressly prohibit such acts:

Violation of the Right to Life: Enshrined in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Jean de Dieu Hakizimana's right to life was arbitrarily violated by actors affiliated with the government.

- **The Absolute Prohibition of Torture:** As a State Party to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), Burundi has an obligation to prevent, prosecute, and punish any act of torture. The involvement of *the Imbonerakure* (the ruling party's youth league) and local CNDD-FDD officials gives this act an institutional dimension that engages the Burundian state's international responsibility if impunity persists.
- **Denial of the Presumption of Innocence:** Accusing a citizen of theft and imposing a de facto death sentence through the use of force violates the fundamental principle of the right to a fair trial. Only an independent and impartial court is empowered to rule on a criminal offense

Complicity and Liability of the Police Station: The transfer of the victim in a "critical condition" at 8:00 p.m. to the holding cell of the Gitega Provincial Police Station engages the liability of the officers on duty. By agreeing to imprison a dying citizen without providing immediate emergency care and without documenting the illegality of his arrest by civilians, the police officers may be prosecuted for failure to assist a person in danger and complicity in arbitrary detention.

The hasty burial: The burial the very next day, on May 22, without a thorough forensic autopsy having been formally ordered by the public prosecutor's office to determine the exact causes of death, amounts to an attempt to obstruct justice and conceal material evidence.