Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture

(ACAT-BURUNDI)

QUARTERLY REPORT ON MONITORING PRISON CONDITIONS IN BURUNDI

Third Quarter 2026 (July–September 2026)

Mpimba Central Prison, Bujumbura : Detainees gathered in the inner courtyard

October 2026

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

- **ACAT-Burundi:** Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture in Burundi
- **HRC:** United Nations Human Rights Council
- **ICRC:** International Committee of the Red Cross
- **CRMCL:** Centre for the Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with the Law
- **DGAP:** Directorate-General for Prison Affairs
- **Ligue Iteka:** Burundian Human Rights League
- **NGO:** Non-governmental organization
- **REGIDESO:** Burundi Water and Electricity Distribution Authority

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Monitoring carried out by ACAT-Burundi from July to September 2026 highlights a serious deterioration in detention conditions and respect for the rule of law in Burundian prisons.

Key developments during the period

- Intolerable overcrowding: Based on cases documented by ACAT-Burundi and data from Ligue Iteka's July–September 2026 report, overcrowding has worsened nationwide, reaching a critical overall occupancy rate of 292% (12,521 detainees). Occupancy rates have reached inhumane levels in facilities monitored by ACAT-Burundi, including Ngozi men's prison (465.75%, or 1,863 detainees) and Gitega (358.25%, or 1,433 detainees), as well as Mpimba (528%, or 4,226 detainees) and Muramvya (771%, or 771 detainees), documented by Ligue Iteka. This situation results from the excessive use of pre-trial detention: people awaiting trial now account for 49.99% of the national prison population, nearly half of the total at Gitega (701 remand detainees out of 1,433, according to ACAT-Burundi sources for September 2026).

- Severe food insecurity and a health crisis: The quarter was marked by the depletion of food stocks following the State's withdrawal of budgetary support. Monitors recorded complete shortages of beans for ten consecutive days in Bururi and for two full weeks in Gitega and Muramvya, reducing meals to flour mixed with water. Food shortages, combined with poor sanitary conditions and overcrowding, worsened the vulnerability of sick detainees. An outbreak that has not been medically confirmed, suspected to be typhoid, caused 15 deaths in Muramvya (three in August and 12 in September), while two detainees died because timely care was not provided: Apollinaire Ahishakiye at Mpimba and Bwayeye at Ngozi, who died during transfer because the prison dispensary had no medicines.

- Insect infestation and dilapidated sanitation facilities: The end of humanitarian support from the ICRC has left Bururi prison in a state of complete deprivation. Detainees sleep on the bare floor on sacks or cardboard amid a massive proliferation of lice and bedbugs, while soap is rationed to one bar per month. In Muramvya, running water is available only four days a week and sanitary facilities no longer have doors, depriving detainees of all privacy.

- Limited impact of releases: Although action by public prosecutors and commissions led to the release of at least 363 detainees documented in September 2026 in Ngozi, Ruyigi and Muramvya, the impact of these measures remains limited. The continuous flow of new admissions quickly offsets the effect of releases. These 363 releases represent only 2.9% of the national prison population (12,521 detainees according to Ligue Iteka), which

nevertheless increased by 254 people between June and September 2026. Sentence adjustments have also come to a complete standstill in Bururi, where no parole or sentence reduction has been granted to political prisoners since 2020.

- Abusive detention and political targeting: The release process is obstructed by the refusal to implement judges' decisions. In Ngozi, MC's release was cancelled following political orders from 'above', while in Ruyigi three political prisoners remain detained despite having served their full sentences (AE, EB and Second Lieutenant EN). In Matana, the new prosecutor systematically appeals to the Supreme Court to prevent the release of acquitted persons. In Muramvya, R.H. and F.N., whose release was requested in our June 2026 report, also remain imprisoned.
- Suffering of vulnerable people: The presence of 10 infants held with their mothers in overcrowded Gitega prison, alongside detainees with severe mental health conditions who are neglected and should normally be admitted to specialist psychiatric hospitals (such as Eric, a prisoner in Bururi), confirms the lack of protection for the most vulnerable.

Key recommendations

- To the Government: Publish national prison statistics transparently and urgently fund basic food rations to prevent shortages of beans.
- To the Ministry of Justice: Immediately release all citizens who have been acquitted or have completed their sentences, including MC in Ngozi, AE, EB and EN in Ruyigi, and R.H. and F.N. in Muramvya; regularise the status of remand detainees and instruct the Matana prosecutor to stop abusive appeals.
- To the judicial authorities: Open independent and impartial investigations into deaths in custody during the quarter (Mpimba, Ngozi and Muramvya) and make the findings public.
- To prison and health authorities: Plan pest-control campaigns in Bururi, install doors on the showers in Muramvya and facilitate urgent medical transfers to outside hospitals, following the humane approach of Ngozi's new director.

I. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

I.1 Background and overview of the report

This monitoring report, covering July to September 2026, continues our ongoing mission to assess and describe daily life in Burundian prisons. Although State services have a legal duty to protect people deprived of their liberty and respect their rights, findings from these three months reveal an alarming deterioration driven by three major trends.

First, political and judicial management has been characterized by deliberate administrative obstruction and an increase in unlawful detention, including cases in which people who have been acquitted or have served their sentences remain in custody.

Unlike the large waves of administrative releases observed last June, this quarter saw a marked slowdown in clemency measures, with releases in September remaining sporadic. The authority of court decisions is openly being undermined by the unlawful continued detention of people who have been acquitted or have served their full sentences. This is the case for MC in Ngozi, whose release has been blocked by political orders from 'above', and the three political prisoners still held in Ruyigi: AE, EB and Second Lieutenant EN. At the Matana prosecutor's office, the appointment of a new prosecutor has paralyzed case processing and led to repeated abusive appeals to the Supreme Court to block people cleared by the courts, raising concerns that the judicial system is being used for political purposes.

Secondly, prisons are being hit hard by drastic State budget cuts, which prevent the basic needs of a steadily growing prison population from being met and have triggered an unprecedented subsistence crisis.

The administration cites financial difficulties to justify prolonged, complete food-stock shortages. August and September 2026 were marked by acute hunger, with shortages of beans lasting ten consecutive days in Bururi and two full weeks in Gitega and Muramvya. This severe food insecurity considerably weakened detainees physically. Combined with a serious shortage of soap and strict rationing of running water (available only four days a week in Muramvya), it turned cells into breeding grounds for infection. This logistical neglect likely contributed to the spread of a fatal unidentified outbreak in Muramvya, which caused 12 deaths, and to tragic deaths resulting from denial of care in Ngozi (detainee Bwayeye) and Mpimba (Apollinaire Ahishakiye). Finally, the prison system faces intolerable overcrowding amid worrying indifference from the Directorate-General of Prisons.

Our sources confirm that extreme overcrowding remains a structural feature of imprisonment in Burundi. Nationwide, Ligue Iteka's quarterly report highlights extreme, widespread and continuing saturation of facilities, with an overall occupancy rate reaching a critical 292% in September 2026 for a total of 12,521 detainees. Detailed data collected by ACAT-Burundi also

show unsustainable occupancy rates in certain prisons: 358.25% in Gitega (1,433 detainees for 400 places) and 465.75% in Ngozi men's prison (1,863 detainees for 400 places). Ligue Iteka's September 2026 data reveal similarly alarming levels in other prisons, notably Mpimba Central Prison, which holds 4,226 detainees (528% occupancy), and Muramvya, with a staggering occupancy rate of 771% for 771 prisoners.

This constant overcrowding eliminates any personal living space, immediately cancels out the effect of the few local releases and encourages a massive infestation of lice and bedbugs that seriously harms detainees' health. Following the withdrawal of humanitarian support such as that provided by the ICRC in Bururi, detainees are forced to sleep on the bare floor on sacks or pieces of cardboard.

In view of the scale of these abuses, this report rigorously records violations observed in the field. By combining collected data with first-hand accounts, ACAT-Burundi seeks to provide national institutions and international observers with a rigorous, evidence-based overview. Our aim is to highlight the danger facing the prison population so that compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules finally becomes an immediate and tangible obligation.

I.2 Methodological approach

The information in this report comes from our network of anonymous local monitors deployed between July and September 2026 in the country's various remand prisons and juvenile centres. Data are collected through confidential discussions with detainees, their relatives and hospital sources. To ensure reliability in the absence of centralised official data, ACAT-Burundi systematically cross-checks information. Whenever possible, each report is verified against at least two independent and reliable sources, such as prison registers, alerts from families or medical findings, in order to avoid inaccuracies. Information that cannot be sufficiently corroborated is either excluded or presented with the necessary reservations.

Monitoring nevertheless takes place in a particularly restrictive environment. Monitoring human rights in Burundi's prisons requires strict protocols for discreet access to closed facilities. Monitors face a lack of confidentiality caused by overcrowding, administrative procedures governing access to facilities and ACAT-Burundi's lack of official recognition, having been deregistered by the national authorities in 2016. This requires heightened vigilance to protect the safety of sources and field teams.

Monitoring coverage. During the quarter, information was collected from Bururi, Gitega, Muramvya, Ngozi, Ruyigi, Rumonge and Mpimba prisons. It is based on approximately 30 monitoring reports, including first-hand testimonies from detainees collected between 1 July and 30 September 2026.

To place these findings in a national context, the report also draws on monthly statistics for 13 facilities published by Ligue Iteka in its July–September 2026 quarterly report. The source of each figure (ACAT-Burundi or Ligue Iteka) is indicated in the text; slight differences between the two reflect different counting dates. Monitoring also covered the work of the Matana prosecutor's office.

Limitations of the report. The figures presented are based on data collected at specific points in time and do not cover all facilities in the country. Some data remain approximate, and the causes of several deaths could not be medically confirmed.

Monitors also found it difficult to accurately count sick detainees suffering in their cells because of the caution required in the field, the lack of official medical diagnoses for the suspected outbreak in Muramvya and incomplete monthly data for facilities such as Rumonge and Mpimba.

Finally, the exact number of detainees released during the waves of releases at the end of the quarter remains uncertain because the prison administration has not published comprehensive official data.

I.3 Legal framework

The findings in this report are assessed against the national and international standards applicable in Burundi: the Constitution (in particular Articles 25 and 26, which uphold respect for human dignity and the absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment); the Code of Criminal Procedure, which governs the duration of pre-trial detention, sets strict time limits and establishes liberty as the rule, in accordance with Law No. 1/09 of 11 May 2018 amending the Code of Criminal Procedure; the United Nations Convention against Torture, ratified by Burundi; the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules); the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (the Bangkok Rules); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Articles 7, 9 and 10); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Articles 4, 5 and 6); and the Luanda Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pre-Trial Detention in Africa (African Commission, 2014).

II. PRISON POPULATION

II.1 Changes in the number of detainees in monitored prisons

Regular field monitoring by our teams shows that overcrowding in prisons persists and may even be worsening. Data collected by ACAT-Burundi at the facilities documented, particularly Ngozi men's prison, as well as Gitega and Bururi, confirm an alarming local situation.

This local trend forms part of a nationwide pattern documented in Ligue Iteka's quarterly report for July to September 2026. That report records 12,521 detainees at the end of September 2026, an increase from the 12,216 detainees recorded at the end of the previous quarter in June 2026, according to ACAT-Burundi's April–June 2026 quarterly report.

The statistical table below provides an overview of prison populations and occupancy rates nationwide, setting the context for our field data. These figures are taken from Ligue Iteka's quarterly report covering July to September 2026.

Table 1: Prison population from July to September 2026

Prisons	Capacity	July 2026	August 2026	September 2026	Taux d'occupation (septembre 2026, %)
BUBANZA	200	407	412	423	211.50
BURURI	250	258	264	268	107.20
CMRL RUMONGE	72	47	90	86	119.44
CMRL RUYIGI	72	47	44	52	72.22
GITEGA	400	1,365	1,422	1,450	362.50
MPIMBA	800	4,117	4,190	4,226	528.25
MURAMVYA	100	840	835	771	771.00
MUYINGA	300	578	562	578	192.67
NGOZI F	250	228	233	240	96.00
NGOZI M	400	1,826	1,823	1,889	472.25
RUMONGE	800	1,450	1,470	1,489	186.13
RUTANA	350	420	422	437	124.86
RUYIGI	300	684	686	612	204.00
Grand total	**4,294**	**12,267**	**12,453**	**12,521**	**291.59**

Source : Ligue Iteka, https://ligue-iteka.bi/wp-content/uploads/2026/10/RAPPORT-TRIMESTRIEL-JUILLET-SEPTEMBRE-2026.pdf, p. 10.

The field statistics collected by ACAT-Burundi during the quarter provide details of daily conditions in the facilities described below. The slight differences between our observations and the overall table from Ligue Iteka's report reflect variations in the data available during the quarter. These monitored cases make it possible to analyse changes in the populations of the following prisons:

- **Gitega Prison:** This facility has an official capacity of 400 places. On 10 September 2026, monitors counted 1,433 detainees, representing a critical occupancy rate of 358.25% and a marked increase from the 1,177 prisoners reported in June (256 more, an increase of 21.8% in three months). The data highlight the significant weight of pre-trial detention. The prison held 701 people awaiting trial (597 men and 104 women) and 722 convicted people (630 men and 92 women), as well as 10 infants (five boys and five girls) living in cells with their mothers. The total of 1,433 therefore comprises 1,423 detainees and 10 infants; remand detainees account for 49.3% of detainees (701 out of 1,423), close to the national average of 49.99%. Ligue Iteka, for its part, recorded 1,450 detainees in Gitega in September 2026 (362.5%).
- **Ngozi Men's Prison:** The situation is even more extreme in this facility, which also has a capacity of 400 places. Our monitors report continuous and suffocating overcrowding. Physical counts recorded 1,834 detainees in August 2026, rising to 1,863 on 2 September 2026, an alarming occupancy rate of 465.75%. For comparison, the prison already held 1,834 detainees at the end of June 2026, comprising 61.43% convicted prisoners (approximately 1,127 people) and 38.57% remand detainees awaiting trial (approximately 707 people), according to ACAT-Burundi's second-quarter 2026 report. Ligue Iteka recorded 1,889 detainees in September 2026 (472.25%), confirming the increase despite more than 200 releases during the month (see II.3).
- **Bururi Prison:** In contrast, this facility shows relative stability in its population. According to ACAT-Burundi monitors, the number of people detained rose from 258 in July to 265 in August 2026 (247 men, 17 women and one child). Although this puts the prison above its theoretical capacity of 250 places, at an occupancy rate of 106%, it remains the least alarming of our monitoring sites. Ligue Iteka's national data confirm this stabilisation at the end of the quarter, recording 268 detainees in September 2026. This represents a decline from the beginning of the year, when the population was around 286 (ACAT-Burundi's second-quarter 2026 report).

In conclusion, analysis of our field data alongside Ligue Iteka's national figures confirms the severity of the prison crisis. Burundi's prison system remains structurally overwhelmed. The national occupancy rate reached 292% according to Ligue Iteka, up from the 284.49% documented by ACAT-Burundi in June 2026. Small local decreases, such as in Bururi, are overshadowed by extreme overcrowding in Gitega and Ngozi men's prison, as documented by

ACAT-Burundi. This crisis is compounded by the severe overcrowding in other major facilities recorded by Ligue Iteka, notably Mpimba at 528% and Muramvya at 771%. Although Muramvya has improved slightly from the 827% occupancy rate documented by ACAT-Burundi in June 2026, overcrowding there remains particularly worrying.

This nationwide overcrowding demonstrates the urgent need to reform the justice system and exercise better control over committal warrants in order to bring prisons out of this humanitarian crisis.

II.2 Changes in the legal status of detainees (convicted prisoners and remand detainees)

An analysis of changes in the overall prison population cannot be limited to total numbers. The distribution between convicted prisoners and those awaiting trial (remand detainees) must also be examined to assess the extent of congestion in the judicial system. This section draws on Ligue Iteka's overall data for July–September 2026, shown in the chart below.

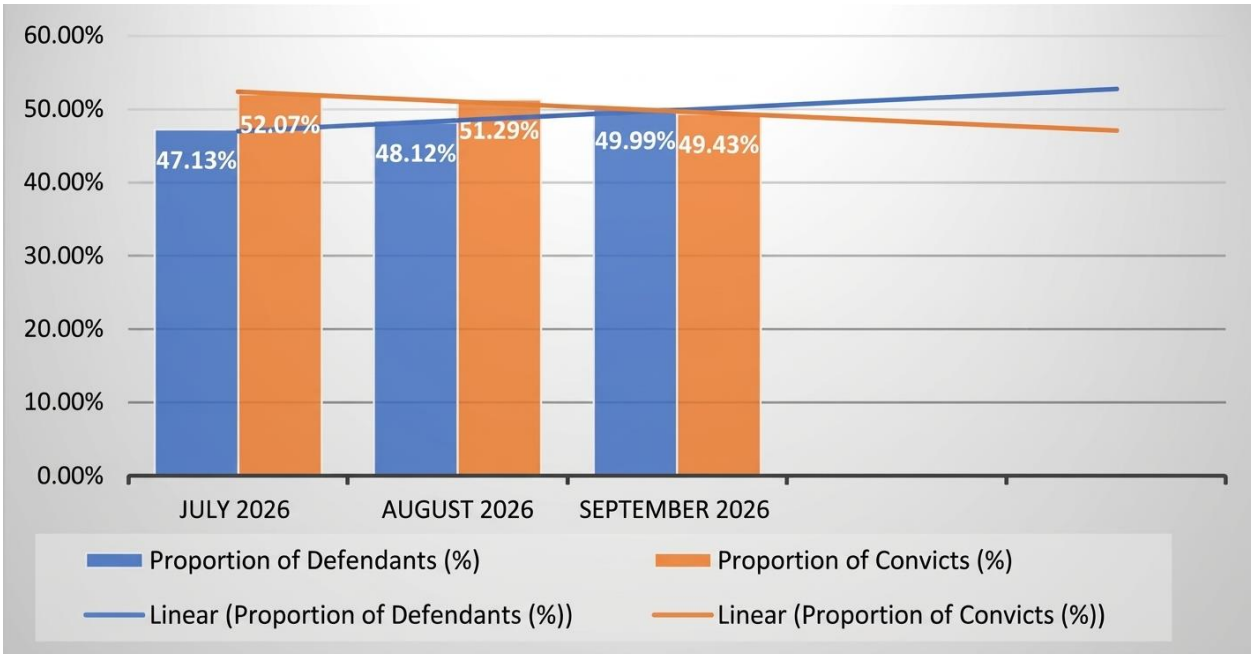

Chart 1: Distribution of remand detainees and convicted prisoners (July–September 2026)

The chart shows the following developments:

- **July 2026:** Of a total of 12,267 detainees, convicted prisoners still slightly outnumbered remand detainees, accounting for 52.07% (6,388 people), compared with 47.13% awaiting trial (5,781 people).
- **August 2026:** The total population rose to 12,453 detainees. The continued increase in pre-trial detention narrowed the gap. Remand detainees accounted for 48.12% (5,992 people), while the proportion of convicted prisoners fell slightly to 51.29% (6,387 people).

- **September 2026:** The turning point became clear as the prison population reached its quarterly peak of 12,521. The trend reversed, and people awaiting trial became the largest group in the country's prisons, accounting for 49.99% (6,259 people), while convicted prisoners fell to 49.43% (6,189 people).

The trend lines on the chart show that the number of convicted prisoners declined from July to September, while the number of remand detainees increased steadily.

This continued rise in pre-trial detention demonstrates numerically that the increase in Burundi's prison population during the quarter was driven entirely by the influx of people who had not yet been tried. This accumulation at the start of the criminal justice process is overwhelming facilities and confirms a major bottleneck caused by excessive use of pre-trial detention and delays in the administration of justice, particularly in investigations and the issuing of committal warrants. The criminal justice system can no longer absorb this backlog.

II.3 Releases recorded in the field

Observation of detainee movements reveals a major structural paradox in Burundi's prison system. Although waves of releases are regularly recorded in the field, their impact on reducing overcrowding is immediately cancelled out by the continuous flow of new admissions. During this quarter, our teams recorded at least 363 releases from Ngozi men's prison, Ruyigi and Muramvya.

The table below summarizes the partial data collected by our monitors on these movements during the monitoring period.

Table 2: Number of releases in the prisons documented

Facility	Approximate number of releases (September 2026)	Categories of detainees concerned	Monitors' observations
Ngozi (Men)	More than 200	Convicted prisoners who have served at least one quarter of their sentence	No visible impact on overcrowding because of the continuous flow of new admissions.
Ruyigi	Approximately 100	Remand detainees released, people convicted of rape who have completed their sentences, and people with mental health conditions	Targeted process, but insufficient to reduce overcrowding.
Muramvya	63	Detainees charged with minor offences	Emergency measure adopted by a commission on 23 September to

			prevent the facility from becoming overwhelmed (occupancy above 800%: 840 detainees in July and 835 in August, according to Ligue Iteka).
Total monitored	**At least 363**	—	—

Judicial authorities have sometimes had to initiate emergency measures to prevent facilities from becoming completely overwhelmed. This was the case at Muramvya Prison, where, faced with more than 800 detainees crowded into a space designed for 100 people (an occupancy rate of 800%), a decongestion commission released 63 people charged with minor offences on 23 September 2026.

Conditional-release or sentence-completion procedures were also documented at other sites. In Ngozi, more than 200 detainees who had served at least one quarter of their sentences were released. At Ruyigi Prison, monitors recorded nearly 100 releases involving various categories, including remand detainees granted release, people convicted of rape who had reached the end of their sentences, and people with mental health conditions.

Analysis of the impact of releases in relation to the overall prison population (September 2026)

Comparing the 363 releases observed by our monitors with the country's total prison population (12,521 detainees in September, according to Ligue Iteka) reveals two points:

- **The statistical impact is minimal:** these 363 releases represent only 2.9% of all prisoners in the country. This is nowhere near enough to resolve the overcrowding affecting most prisons nationwide.
- **New admissions immediately offset releases:** Between June (12,216 detainees, according to ACAT-Burundi's April–June 2026 report) and September (12,521 detainees, according to Ligue Iteka's July–September 2026 report), the total prison population increased by 305 people. This means that people are being sent to prison so rapidly that the positive effect of the 363 releases has been completely wiped out, and the total continues to rise.
- **Facility-by-facility overview (approximate figures):** in Ngozi men's prison, the population rose from 1,823 in August to 1,889 in September (+66), despite more than 200 releases, implying at least 260 new admissions in one month. In Ruyigi, the population fell by 74 (686 to 612) following approximately 100 releases. In Muramvya, the decrease of 64 (835 to 771) almost exactly matches the 63 releases on 23 September and the 12 deaths during

the month. As Ligue Iteka's and our monitors' counting dates may differ, these figures indicate trends rather than exact totals.

These findings show that waves of administrative or conditional releases are no longer sufficient to control prison overcrowding. The main dysfunction lies upstream, in criminal justice policy: as long as judicial officers continue to issue committal warrants and use pre-trial detention systematically before trial, the flow of new admissions will structurally exceed the number of releases. Without a profound change in these judicial practices, the prison system will remain condemned to chronic and potentially irreversible overcrowding.

II.4 Judicial bottlenecks and ways to reduce overcrowding

The continued overcrowding is largely explained by delays and dysfunction within the judicial system. Field analysis shows that inertia in processing cases keeps prisons in a state of constant pressure.

Table 3: Analysis of shortcomings in Burundi's prison system

DOCUMENTED SYSTEM FAILURE	DIRECT IMPACT IN CELLS	SOLUTION PROPOSED BY ACAT-BURUNDI
Suspension of sentence adjustments	In Bururi, no parole or sentence reduction has been granted to political prisoners since 2020. People serving long sentences remain in their cells for years, adding to overcrowding.	**Urgently reactivate review commissions and transparently apply lawful parole provisions.**
Abusive obstruction at prosecutors' offices	At the Matana prosecutor's office, cases are delayed by more than three months. The new prosecutor repeatedly appeals to the Supreme Court to block acquitted people, while the replacement of the conciliating magistrate has brought leniency measures for minor offences to an end.	**Ensure that prosecutors' offices process cases promptly and efficiently, and stop the abusive practice of systematically appealing acquittals.**
Abuse of pre-trial detention	Ligue Iteka's quarterly data show that national overcrowding is now driven by the influx of people who have not been tried. The proportion of remand detainees rose steadily from 47.13% in July to 48.12% in August, reaching a critical turning point of 49.99% in September 2026. By the	**Strictly apply statutory time limits for pre-trial detention and make extensive use of**

	end of the period, pre-trial detention had effectively become the norm, affecting one in every two detainees in Burundi and undermining the legal principle that it should be exceptional.	**alternatives to imprisonment.**

These bottlenecks effectively turn pre-trial detention into a premature punishment imposed before trial or conviction. Unless release rules are applied fairly and transparently, hundreds of people will remain forgotten in their cells, deprived of their most basic rights and human dignity.

II.5 Consequences of overcrowding for living conditions

Such excessive concentration of people causes immediate health and humanitarian crises in prisons. Extreme crowding compromises detainees' access to their most fundamental rights and threatens their dignity every day. The following chapters analyse the specific consequences of overcrowding in greater detail, particularly in relation to access to healthcare, respect for physical integrity and hygiene conditions.

Impact on health and overcrowding in cells

Extreme overcrowding contributes to a deterioration in prisoners' general health. Poor ventilation and the impossibility of maintaining minimum hygienic distances turn cells into centres of infection. According to our teams, the emergence of a fatal illness not yet identified by medical services at Muramvya Prison has been exacerbated by overcrowding. By 17 September 2026, the situation had become untenable: 45 people remained in hospital after three patients died during the week, while another 60 sick detainees were lying ill in their cells. In total, 15 prisoners had died from the outbreak, including three in August and 12 in September.

Food-stock shortages and subsistence logistics

From a logistical perspective, prison overcrowding causes the early and critical depletion of food stocks allocated by the State. The rate at which supplies are consumed illustrates both this pressure and the unequal treatment of different facilities.

At Bururi Prison, where the population of 265 detainees (ACAT-Burundi data for August 2026) remains close to the facility's capacity of 250 places, stock management should theoretically allow the full official ration to be provided. Yet this prison also experiences recurring shortages due to failures by the central administration. The situation is even more dramatic at Rumonge Prison, where the same quantity of supplies is consumed very quickly. Based on the official ration of 350 g per person per day, one tonne of beans lasts approximately 11 days in Bururi but less than two days in Rumonge, owing to severe structural overcrowding: 1,489 prisoners were recorded by Ligue Iteka in September 2026 in a facility designed for only 800 places.

This comparison highlights two crucial realities. First, in overcrowded facilities such as Rumonge, food reserves are depleted rapidly, causing sudden stock-outs and immediate hunger. Secondly, in an attempt to ration these short-lived supplies, the administration is forced to drastically reduce individual portions, depriving detainees of their fundamental right to adequate food.

II.6 Analytical conclusion on the prison population

Our monitors' observations and the data collected during this quarter confirm a deep, lasting and widespread crisis. Overcrowding is no longer a temporary phenomenon; it has become structural. Burundian prisons are overwhelmed by mass incarceration that the judicial system can no longer regulate, leaving detainees in conditions that systematically violate human dignity.

The objective reality of this crisis is reflected in the continued deterioration of national indicators. According to Ligue Iteka's quarterly report, the overall occupancy rate of the country's prisons continued to rise, reaching a critical 292% in September 2026, compared with 284.49% in June, with 12,521 detainees nationwide. This overall pressure is driven by a historic turning point reached this quarter: the proportion of detainees awaiting trial came close to half of the national prison population, peaking at 49.99%.

This alarming national trend fully corroborates the extreme distress observed directly by ACAT-Burundi monitors in the facilities they follow. End-of-quarter counts reveal inhumane local conditions in which saturation levels are beyond comprehension. Mpimba Central Prison held 4,224 detainees, an occupancy rate of 528% according to Ligue Iteka, while Muramvya recorded a staggering 771% occupancy rate for 771 detainees, also according to Ligue Iteka, despite emergency releases during the period. ACAT-Burundi's physical counts in inland facilities confirm the same pressure: 1,433 detainees at Gitega (358.25% occupancy) and 1,863 at Ngozi men's prison (465.75%). In all these facilities, prison density prevents access to even the most basic rights.

ACAT-Burundi remains firmly convinced that the overall situation requires an immediate overhaul of criminal justice practices. The convergence of Ligue Iteka's national statistics and the daily alerts from our monitoring network shows that the health, security and humanitarian risks remain acute. Maintaining the status quo in the face of continuing overcrowding means accepting that prisoners' lives, physical integrity and health are threatened every day in a prison system at breaking point.

III. RESPECT FOR PHYSICAL INTEGRITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY, AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

In previous reports, ACAT-Burundi has consistently denounced serious violations of detainees' rights, often involving internal violence and difficult access to healthcare facilities. This quarter, our monitors' analysis shows that respect for physical integrity and human dignity remains deeply concerning, although there are significant contrasts with previous months. On the one hand, denial of medical care has worsened considerably, causing preventable deaths at Mpimba and a deadly outbreak exacerbated by hunger at Muramvya. On the other hand, a glimmer of hope has emerged at Ngozi Prison, where a change in management has helped end impunity, restore calm and facilitate urgent medical transfers for prisoners.

III.1 Deaths in custody caused by lack of care and administrative obstruction

Lack of medical assistance and arbitrary decisions by prison management caused tragic incidents during the quarter. Our monitors documented specific cases in which access to healthcare facilities was blocked or granted far too late, resulting in detainees' deaths.

The tragedy at Mpimba Prison in Bujumbura

Apollinaire Ahishakiye, a detainee with diabetes, died on Saturday 8 August 2026 after repeated refusals to transfer him for medical treatment.

- Wednesday 5 August, evening: he developed a very high fever and spent the night in the infirmary.
- Thursday 6 August: management refused to transfer him to an outside hospital on the grounds that a malaria test was negative.
- Friday 7 August: despite detainees' insistence, the administration categorically refused the transfer for political reasons. It baselessly accused a group of detainees arrested in 2015 of planning his escape. According to witnesses among the detainees present, prison officials explicitly replied that 'it was rather a group of former detainees linked to the events of 2015 who were trying to have him transferred, and that he might take the opportunity to escape', thereby confirming their refusal to authorise medical evacuation. That day, the prison doctor did not attend to check his blood glucose level.
- Saturday 8 August, morning: his blood glucose was finally checked and found to be at a critical level. He was transferred while unconscious at around 3 pm and died that evening.

Death at Ngozi Prison

On 25 September 2026, a detainee named Bwayeye, whose full identity and grounds for detention could not be recorded because official registers were inaccessible, died before reaching an outside hospital. He died on the way. Our monitors' reports state that the prison dispensary had no essential medicines available to stabilise his critical condition before transfer. This death occurred after medical-exit authorisations had reportedly been granted without obstruction since the new director took office: faster transfers cannot compensate for the absence of emergency medicines in the dispensary.

Outbreak at Muramvya Prison

An unidentified fatal illness, suspected to be typhoid, caused a total of 15 detainees to die at Muramvya Prison during the quarter.

The illness was already spreading in August, with high fever, diarrhoea and general weakness. It is particularly difficult to establish an accurate toll in the field, and the available data probably underestimate the scale of the crisis. In August, our teams preliminarily identified 10 patients hospitalised outside the prison, while at least 36 other sick detainees remained confined within the facility. Many were forced to remain bedridden in their cells without adequate treatment because they could not afford the prescribed medicines, while the prison housed more than 800 detainees despite an official capacity of only 100 places. This extreme overcrowding inevitably increases close contact and critically contributes to the rapid spread of the illness.

Three notable deaths had already occurred at this prison in August 2026 because treatment was unavailable:

- **Franck Mananzigamira (died in August 2026):** a political prisoner unlawfully detained for five years despite having been acquitted by all judicial instances. According to our sources, he was kept in his cell on the pretext of an accusation of complicity with rebel movements. He fell ill during this arbitrary detention and was transferred to hospital, where he spent his final days before dying.
- **Viateur Hatungimana and Égide Icishatse:** two detainees who also succumbed to the illness in August amid the lack of medical care.

In September, our monitors reported that 12 detainees had died from the illness, still suspected to be typhoid, illustrating the continuing severity of the health crisis. At the same time, monitors reported a complete shortage of beans in September, with the prison administration distributing flour as the only ration. The lack of varied food further weakens sick detainees, particularly those without family support, who depend entirely on the inadequate rations provided by the prison.

According to the information collected, hospital doctors did not provide adequate treatment. They merely alleviated the symptoms temporarily and required prisoners to buy their own medicines.

III.2 Medicine shortages and the State's withdrawal of budgetary support

Medical care for detainees is being severely affected by the financial crisis facing public institutions. Our field monitors report an alarming deterioration in access to basic healthcare, mainly caused by chronic shortages of pharmaceutical products. According to hospital and prison sources, this shortage is due to budget allocations for medicines no longer being released regularly. As a result, prison healthcare units are left completely unequipped to deal with daily emergencies.

The lack of appropriate treatment puts detainees with chronic illnesses or specific conditions at risk of death. This is the case at Bururi Prison, where our teams documented on 2 September 2026 the worrying situation of a prisoner named Eric, who has a mental health condition. Due to a severe shortage of appropriate medicines and the absence of qualified psychiatric staff, he receives no adequate medical follow-up. Keeping him in a cell without appropriate therapeutic support worsens his psychological suffering.

The prison dispensary in Ngozi faces similar shortages of medical supplies. However, our monitors report a significant improvement in emergency procedures as of 2 September 2026. Since a new director took office on that date, authorisation for medical transfers has reportedly been granted without obstruction. This has enabled the most seriously ill detainees to reach an outside hospital promptly, preventing their condition from becoming irreversible in their cells.

III.3 Physical violence and impunity within prison facilities

Violations of the physical integrity of people deprived of their liberty remain a constant concern for our field teams. Information collected by our sources shows that prisoners' safety was seriously jeopardised during the quarter because of administrative complicity.

The incident at Ngozi Prison in July 2026 is a striking example. According to our observers, the general representative of detainees was physically assaulted by a prisoner named Désiré Uwamahoro. Witnesses reported that the assailant had been able to consume alcohol inside an administrative office shortly before the attack. After the assault, he continued to threaten to kill the victim with impunity. Despite the seriousness of the incident, the former prison management imposed no administrative or disciplinary sanction; according to several witnesses, the director at the time was close to the assailant. This inaction fostered a dangerous climate of impunity that threatened everyone's safety.

The situation changed the following month. Our monitors report that the atmosphere of terror at Ngozi Prison ended from September 2026 onwards. The return to calm followed directly from the replacement of the prison director. The new management broke the ties of favouritism that had protected assailants and restored fair discipline for everyone's safety.

III.4 Situation of highly vulnerable people

Regular monitoring by our teams highlights the suffering of the most vulnerable categories of detainees, who should not be in prison in the first place. Overcrowded cells worsen their vulnerability every day and undermine their dignity.

Infants held in cells at Gitega

The situation observed at Gitega Prison this quarter is particularly alarming. During physical counts in September 2026, our monitors recorded 10 infants held in cells alongside their mothers. These young children are affected by extreme overcrowding in a facility operating at more than 358% of its theoretical capacity. Living in enclosed, stifling spaces without adequate hygiene poses a direct threat to their physical development and health. ACAT-Burundi stresses that prison is wholly unsuitable for newborns and recommends systematically prioritising alternatives to detention for breastfeeding mothers and pregnant women. The report also notes that medical transfer authorisations have been granted without obstruction since the new director took office; faster transfers, however, cannot compensate for the lack of emergency medicines in the dispensary.

The plight of elderly prisoners and people with mental health conditions

Beyond this quarter's findings, our organisation wishes to emphasise that this vulnerability also affects other forgotten groups within the prison system, for whom ACAT-Burundi regularly advocates. These include people over the age of 60, who continue to die slowly and anonymously in their cells without benefiting from pardons or humanitarian adjustments to their sentences.

The situation is equally dramatic for detainees with severe psychiatric conditions, as illustrated by the prominent case of Christian Butoyi. Deprived of appropriate medical facilities and qualified staff, people with mental health conditions experience imprisonment as a destructive double punishment. ACAT-Burundi firmly reiterates that keeping very elderly people or those with severe mental illness in ordinary detention constitutes inhuman and degrading treatment and requires immediate release measures.

IV. ARBITRARY DETENTION AND JUDICIAL IRREGULARITIES

IV.1 Unlawful continued detention and administrative obstruction

Monitoring judicial proceedings reveals serious violations of individual liberty. These include the deliberate continued detention of people who no longer have any legal basis for being deprived of their liberty. Political prisoners remain in their cells despite having served their full sentences or having received formal acquittal decisions from the courts.

These failures, often resulting from direct political intervention and deliberate obstruction, are particularly evident in several facilities:

- **Ngozi Prison (July 2026):** MC's case illustrates this administrative arbitrariness. Although he had reached the end of his lawful sentence, the director and legal department refused to release him. They claimed that an order had come from 'above' and that a formal release warrant was required.
- **Ruyigi Prison (September 2026):** Three political prisoners remain unlawfully detained despite having completed their sentences: AE, EB and Second Lieutenant EN. No cases of torture were reported at this facility during the month.
- **Gitega Prison (September 2026):** Unlawful detention affects people who have completed their sentences but remain imprisoned. The administration systematically cites the fact that their original charges were linked to the 2015 political crisis or to cases involving possession of firearms.
- **Muramvya Prison:** R.H. and F.N., whose release was recommended in our previous report of June 2026, remain imprisoned. Franck Mananzigamira, who was acquitted by all judicial instances, died in August 2026 after five years of unlawful detention (see III.1).

IV.2 Developments in pre-trial detention and abandonment of complex cases

The handling of proceedings during this quarter varied considerably from one facility to another. The limited progress observed at one site does not reflect the overall situation in the country.

Table 4: Comparative analysis of the application of detention procedures

LOCAL EXCEPTION (Bururi Prison)	*NATIONAL REALITY (Other facilities)*
Fewer arrests	**Unjustified pre-trial detention**
The trend in admissions declined, reducing the number of remand detainees.	Remand detention remains the main driver of overcrowding.
Hearings finally held	**Supreme Court deadlock**

Remand detainees who had been waiting for three months were able to appear before the court.

Complex cases have remained pending for several years.

Severe shortage of lawyers

Many remand detainees are completely deprived of legal representation.

Exclusion of convicted prisoners

People serving long sentences have been entirely excluded from parole or sentence reductions since 2020.

Overall, this disparity shows that the few local efforts to speed up hearings cannot conceal the general abandonment of long-term prisoners. In our organization's view, the shortage of lawyers and the stagnation of cases before the Supreme Court turn pre-trial detention into premature punishment and undermine the safeguards of a fair trial.

V. HYGIENE, SANITATION AND LIVING CONDITIONS

V.1 Accommodation conditions and deterioration of infrastructure

The right to decent accommodation is violated daily in the facilities monitored, where a general lack of maintenance makes living spaces insanitary.

- **Muramvya Prison:** The buildings themselves have deteriorated seriously since the beginning of the quarter. Beds provided to detainees are in an advanced state of disrepair. To continue sleeping on them, prisoners have had to improvise repairs using pieces of wood, ropes and worn mosquito nets. Some roof sheets are also perforated, allowing water to leak in and causing severe flooding in cells when it rains. Basic privacy and dignity are not protected either, as communal sanitary facilities, including showers and toilets, still have no doors, leaving detainees constantly exposed to the view of others. Daily life worsened further in August when a complete power cut lasted several consecutive days, plunging overcrowded cells into total darkness.
- **Bururi Prison:** The dilapidated infrastructure is equally concerning. Renovation work began in some rooms in September 2026, but the administration abruptly halted the work, leaving large holes in the walls. When it rains, neighbouring cells are left entirely unprotected from the weather. As for bedding, there were no mattresses or mats throughout the quarter. Detainees sleep on the bare floor on simple sacks or pieces of recycled cardboard because the mats are completely worn out and need replacing.

V.2 Access to drinking water and personal hygiene

Water cuts and a lack of cleaning equipment contribute to suffocatingly insanitary conditions in cells. At Muramvya Prison, running water is highly irregular and available only four days a week, a problem already established in July. Despite stronger hygiene measures following the outbreak, equipment remains wholly inadequate and cleaning products are in desperately short supply. At Bururi Prison, water and electricity are cut off occasionally, with the problem worsening considerably during the dry season. There are also too few water-storage containers, and the prison's rubbish bins are completely worn out.

This shortage is accompanied by a severe lack of basic cleaning products, including suitable brooms for cleaning floors when they become slippery. Detainees receive almost no soap. Our monitors recall that, when the ICRC was still present, it provided mattresses and soap and regularly disinfected the premises. The administration now distributes soap only once a month, as observed in July and August. As a direct result of this lack of hygiene, cells are infested with large numbers of lice and bedbugs, worsening prisoners' physical suffering.

V.3 Subsistence crises and irregular food rations

Food was a major and distressing problem in almost all monitored prisons during this quarter, exposing detainees to severe hunger. Although the theoretical official ration is 350 grams of beans and 350 grams of flour per person per day, field observations show that stocks have collapsed (Table 5).

Table 5: Food-stock shortages during the quarter

Facility	Situation in July 2026	Situation in August 2026	Situation in September 2026
Bururi Prison	Shortages lasting 2–3 days without beans.	Complete shortage for an entire week.	**Ten consecutive days without beans. Meals reduced to flour mixed with water, prepared in dilapidated utensils.**
Muramvya Prison	Beans were unavailable for two weeks of the month.	Illness worsened by the lack of food.	**Beans were distributed for only one week. Cooking oil and salt were extremely scarce.**
Gitega Prison	—	Beans unavailable for four days at the end of the month.	**Two full weeks without any bean rations.**

Ngozi Prison	No flour at all for three consecutive days.	Beans unavailable for two weeks.	Detainees received beans on only seven days during the entire month.
Rumonge Prison	—	Complete shortage for five consecutive days.	—

In response to the emergency at Bururi Prison in early September, the religious movement Umuhari wa Bikira Mariya made an exceptional donation of beans. To make the donation last as long as possible, detainees had to ration themselves by alternating their meals: beans one day and no beans the next.

In short, this inadequate diet, reduced to flour mixed with water, weakens detainees and directly worsens the health of the many who are already ill in their cells. This subsistence crisis hits hardest those prisoners who are isolated and have no close relatives to bring them food from outside.

VI. ADVOCACY ACTIONS ON BEHALF OF DETAINEES

During the quarter, ACAT-Burundi continued its advocacy to promote respect for the fundamental rights of detainees. The organisation alerted the public, the relevant authorities and international bodies to the deteriorating conditions of detention in Burundian prisons.

Alerts concerning health emergencies and denial of care

The organisation focused its interventions on serious medical failures observed in the facilities:

- **Outbreak at Muramvya Prison:** ACAT-Burundi sounded the alarm over an unidentified illness that had caused three deaths in less than a month and left more than 30 detainees bedridden. Our organisation called for specialist doctors to be sent to identify the illness and provide appropriate care. At the time this report was drafted, the illness appeared to have become less severe, although medicine shortages persisted.
- **The case of retired Major General Célestin Ndayisaba:** The organisation also raised concerns with prison and judicial authorities about his health. Despite his repeated pleas for help, he was refused transfer to a hospital suited to his medical condition.
- **The death of Apollinaire Ahishakiye at Mpimba:** During this quarter, prison authorities denied medical care to sick detainees, leading to some deaths. One such case was a

detainee at Mpimba Prison in Bujumbura who had diabetes. Prison authorities refused to transfer him to hospital for appropriate treatment until he died on 8 August 2026. In response, ACAT-Burundi called for an independent investigation to establish the circumstances of his death and determine any responsibility.

Mobilisation against hunger and the food crisis

Food was another major focus of our organisation's public warnings:

Public alert over shortages: In response to pleas from detainees reporting that no food rations were being provided, the organisation again alerted the public on 31 August 2026, calling for an urgent response so that people in prison would not be exposed to hunger in their cells.

International reach of ACAT-Burundi's advocacy

Our efforts were also brought to the highest levels of human rights protection bodies:

- **Intervention at the United Nations:** During a panel held as part of a side event at the 63rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, ACAT-Burundi had the opportunity to draw attention to the deterioration of prison conditions in Burundi, particularly overcrowding, food shortages and inadequate medical care.
- **Impact of the advocacy:** This intervention brought concerns about detainees' rights before an international audience and strengthened advocacy for urgent measures to ensure detention conditions that respect human dignity.

Through these various interventions, ACAT-Burundi helped make detainees' difficulties visible and urged the authorities to take urgent measures to protect their lives, health and dignity.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

VII.1 Conclusion

Burundi's prisons are becoming places of mass confinement, where detainees' physical integrity and basic rights are violated daily. Monitoring throughout this quarter has revealed severe material deprivation and a major institutional deadlock. The findings show overcrowded prison facilities in which rehabilitation has given way to precarious management of hunger and the continued use of abusive detention.

The objective reality of this crisis is now confirmed nationally by Ligue Iteka's quarterly report, which recorded a critical 12,521 detainees in September 2026, bringing the country's overall occupancy rate to 292%. ACAT-Burundi teams' physical counts in their areas of intervention confirm this overall pressure and reveal unsustainable local occupancy rates. Ngozi men's prison is overcrowded at 465.75%, with 1,863 detainees (ACAT-Burundi data), while Gitega Prison operates at 358.25% occupancy, with 1,433 detainees (ACAT-Burundi data). These local realities add to the inhumane situations documented by Ligue Iteka at Mpimba Central Prison, which holds 4,224 detainees (528% occupancy), and Muramvya, with a staggering occupancy rate of 771% for 771 detainees. The relative stabilisation observed by ACAT-Burundi in Bururi, or by Ligue Iteka in a few prisons (Ngozi women's prison and the juvenile rehabilitation centres), is not visible at national level. This overcrowding stems directly from dysfunction in the justice system: excessive use of pre-trial detention reached a historic turning point in September 2026, when remand detainees accounted for 49.99% of the national total (Ligue Iteka). This systematic practice leaves nearly half the prison population, including the 701 remand detainees identified by ACAT-Burundi in Gitega, waiting for trial.

From a health and logistical perspective, the situation during this period was dramatic. Hygiene collapsed, particularly in Bururi following the withdrawal of ICRC support; water was severely restricted (available only four days a week in Muramvya); and lice and bedbugs proliferated in cells where detainees sleep on sacks or cardboard on the bare floor. August and September were also marked by acute hunger, with bean shortages lasting ten days in Bururi and two weeks in Gitega and Muramvya. Food shortages weakened prisoners physically, contributing to the spread of a suspected typhoid outbreak in Muramvya that caused 15 deaths, as well as tragic deaths following denial of care in Ngozi (Bwayeye) and Mpimba (Apollinaire Ahishakiye).

Finally, a review of judicial cases reveals serious political and administrative abuses. Although commissions enabled approximately 363 detainees to be released in September from facilities monitored by ACAT-Burundi, the impact was immediately offset by the continuous arrival of new prisoners. These releases represent a negligible 2.9% of the 12,521 detainees recorded nationally by Ligue Iteka at the end of September 2026. Sentence adjustments have come to a complete

standstill in Bururi, where no political prisoner has been granted parole since 2020, while in Matana the new prosecutor repeatedly appeals to the Supreme Court against acquitted people. More seriously, the law is being disregarded by the continued unlawful detention of people who have been acquitted or have served their sentences, including MC in Ngozi, whose release is blocked by orders from 'above'; detainees linked to the 2015 crisis in Gitega; and the three political prisoners in Ruyigi: AE, EB and Second Lieutenant EN.

Ultimately, ACAT-Burundi reiterates that deprivation of liberty must never result in physical deterioration or arbitrary detention. Without immediate political action to regulate pre-trial detention, end bottlenecks in the criminal justice process, scrupulously enforce final release orders and guarantee minimum access to water, food and healthcare, Burundi's prison system will sink further into a major humanitarian crisis.

VII.2 Recommendations

VII.2.1 Follow-up on implementation of the previous report's recommendations

This follow-up table objectively assesses whether the Burundian authorities have implemented the urgent recommendations made by ACAT-Burundi at the end of the previous quarter. Field findings from the past three months serve as evidence for assessing implementation.

Table 6: Findings and assessment of the previous report's recommendations

RECOMMENDATION FROM JUNE 2026	FIELD FINDINGS (EVIDENCE FROM THE QUARTER)	CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION STATUS
Ensure a stable food supply (350 g of beans per person)	Bean stocks collapsed in the monitored facilities. Monitors recorded complete shortages lasting 10 days in Bururi, two weeks in Gitega and Muramvya, and five days in Rumonge. Flour mixed with water remained the only meal.	**Not implemented (the problem persists). Food insecurity has become widespread. Survival in Bururi depended on a private donation from the Umuhari wa Bikira Mariya association.**
Restore running water and hygiene following the ICRC's withdrawal	Water remained rationed to only four days a week at Muramvya Prison. In Bururi, soap was rationed to one bar per month. The administration abandoned cell renovation works, leaving walls exposed to rain.	**Not implemented.** Cells are infested with lice and bedbugs. Detainees sleep on sacks on the bare floor.
Immediately implement acquittal orders and release people who have	The two detainees identified in Muramvya (R.H. and F.N.) remain imprisoned. During this quarter, the obstruction also affected MC	**Not implemented. Unlawful detention has worsened as a result of political orders.**

completed their sentences	in Ngozi and three political prisoners in Ruyigi (AE, EB and EN), who had completed their sentences.	
Expedite remand cases and stop abusive committal warrants	Prosecutors' offices remained paralyzed. In Bururi, the conciliating prosecutor was replaced by a female magistrate who halted releases. In Matana, the new prosecutor blocks cases and repeatedly appeals to the Supreme Court to prevent releases.	**Not implemented.** Abusive pre-trial detention remains the national norm and overcrowds facilities.
Urgently reduce overcrowding at the Muramvya epicentre	The State organized no preventive transfers. Inaction turned overcrowded cells into centers of infection, leading to a fatal outbreak (15 deaths). A commission had to urgently release 63 people charged with minor offences on 23 September to prevent the facility from becoming overwhelmed.	**Partially and belatedly implemented** Emergency action was taken only after 15 detainees had died.
Ensure medical transfers without administrative obstruction	Failures in access to healthcare continued to cause deaths during the quarter, including Apollinaire Ahishakiye at Mpimba (8 August) and Bwayeye at Ngozi (25 September). However, the arrival of a new director in Ngozi on 2 September changed the situation.	**Partially implemented (improvement observed only in Ngozi). The new director promptly authorises hospital transfers for sick detainees.**

VII.2.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the continuing prison crisis, ACAT-Burundi makes urgent requests to the authorities to protect detainees' lives and rights.

To the Government of Burundi and the prison administration

- **Publish prison statistics:** Regularly and transparently share official figures on the national prison population. This is an obligation consistent with the principles of good governance and the international commitments ratified by Burundi.
- **Guarantee basic food rations:** Urgently allocate a stable budget to prevent bean shortages, which lasted two weeks in Gitega and Muramvya and ten days in Bururi. This obligation rests with the State and must not depend on the generosity of religious or charitable organizations.
- **Complete infrastructure works:** Immediately resume the abandoned renovation work at Bururi Prison, where cells remain exposed to rain.
- **Restore hygiene:** Distribute soap more than once a month and disinfect the premises to eliminate the lice and bedbugs infesting Bururi.
- **Respect privacy in Muramvya:** Install doors or curtains on communal showers and toilets to protect prisoners' privacy.
- **Maintain a register of deaths in custody:** Record every death, inform families without delay and publish a quarterly account of deaths in prisons.

To the Ministry of Justice, judicial officers and prosecutors' offices

- **Release people held unlawfully:** Implement release orders without delay for detainees who have been acquitted or have served their sentences. Political obstruction affecting MC in Ngozi, the three political prisoners in Ruyigi, and R.H. and F.N. in Muramvya must be removed.
- **Stop abusive appeals:** Instruct the Matana prosecutor to stop systematically appealing to the Supreme Court against acquitted people. This practice freezes cases and unlawfully prolongs detention.
- **Respect pre-trial detention time limits:** Expedite case processing to reduce the abnormal number of remand detainees, who account for half the population in Gitega. Prosecutors' offices should prioritize alternatives to imprisonment for minor offences.
- **Reverse the national trend in pre-trial detention:** With remand detainees accounting for 49.99% in September 2026, instruct prosecutors to give reasons for every remand

warrant, hold regular pre-trial review hearings to check the lawfulness of detention, and make greater use of provisional release and non-custodial sentences, in accordance with the 2018 Code of Criminal Procedure and the Luanda Guidelines.

- **Investigate deaths in custody:** Conduct independent and impartial investigations into deaths during the quarter (Mpimba, Ngozi and Muramvya), publish the findings and, where appropriate, hold those responsible to account.
- **Protect mothers and children:** Prioritize alternatives to detention for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers, in accordance with the Bangkok Rules, starting with mothers detained with their infants in Gitega.

To health officials and prison directors

- **Facilitate emergency medical transfers:** Remove administrative obstacles to transferring sick prisoners to outside hospitals. Prison management should follow the humane example set by Ngozi's new director to prevent further deaths at Mpimba and Ngozi.
- **Treat detainees with mental health conditions:** Ensure appropriate medical follow-up and provide psychiatric treatment to prisoners left untreated in their cells, such as Eric at Bururi Prison.
- **Contain the outbreak in Muramvya:** Send a specialist medical team to identify the illness, provide free treatment to sick detainees and prevent further deaths.

To technical and financial partners and international mechanisms

- **Support the emergency response:** In coordination with the authorities, support the supply of food, medicines and hygiene products to the worst-affected facilities, and monitor implementation of these recommendations.
- **Resume hygiene support in Bururi:** The ICRC and humanitarian partners should consider resuming the distribution of soap and mattresses and organizing disinfection campaigns at Bururi Prison, where the withdrawal of support was followed by a rapid deterioration in hygiene conditions.