

BURUNDI

MONITORING REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DURING THE ELECTORAL PERIOD

For the period from May to July 2025

October 7, 2025

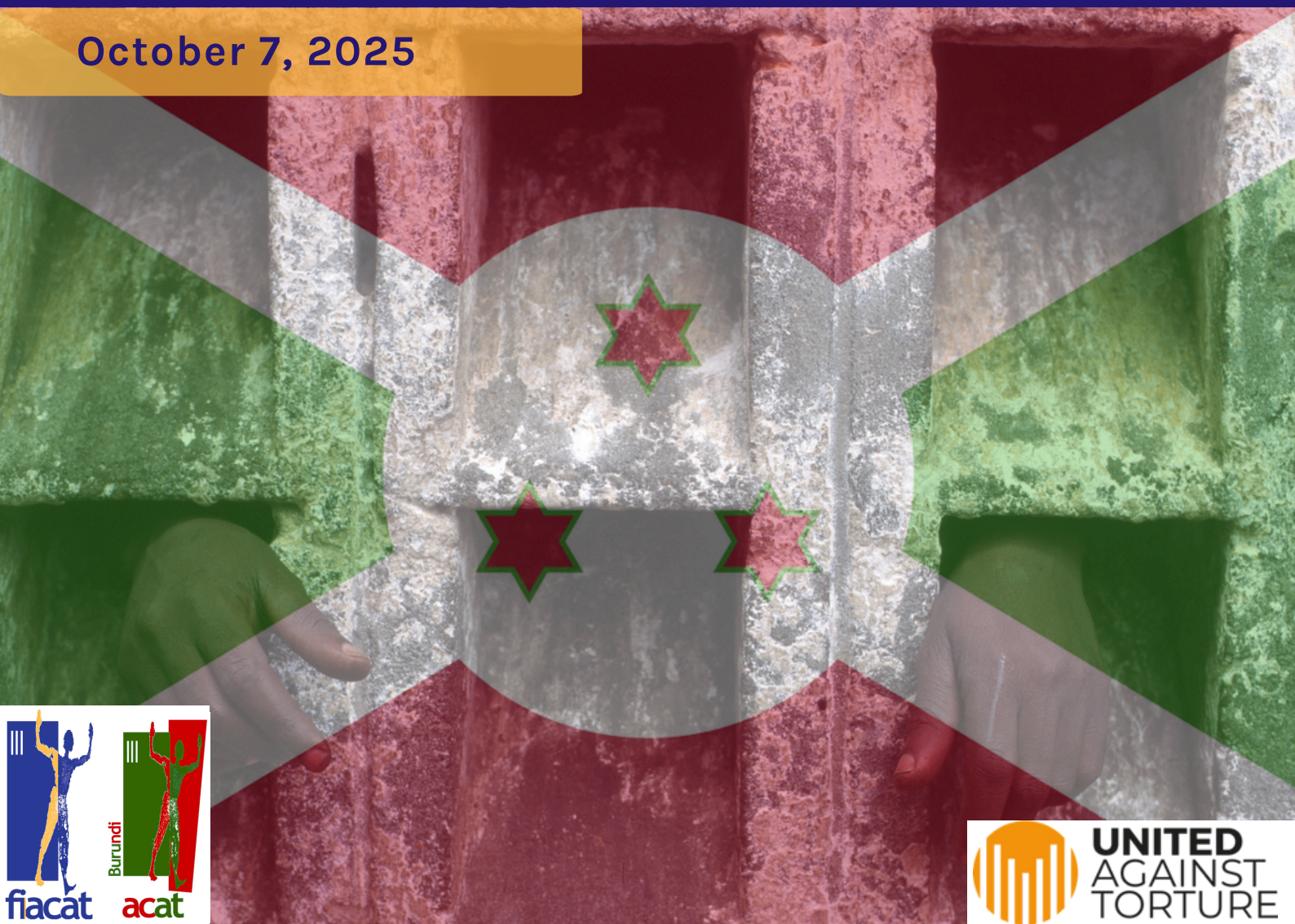


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I. ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- **BBB:** Burundi Bwa Bose (*one Burundi for all*) Coalition
- **CENI:** National Independent Electoral Commission
- **CNIDH:** National Independent Human Rights Commission
- **CNDD-FDD:** National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy
- **CNL:** National Congress for Liberty
- **CPD:** Council of Patriots
- **PNB:** National Police of Burundi
- **RANAC:** National Rally for Change
- **SNR:** National Intelligence Service
- **UPRONA:** Union for National Progress
- **ECOFO:** primary school

II. INTRODUCTION

1. Since 2015, elections in Burundi have been a period of tensions and clashes, in which terror becomes the mode of governance to silence all real or supposed dissenting voices. 2025 has been no exception: there was widespread repression before the vote and on voting day itself in the parliamentary and local elections of 5 June 2025. Despite a historic score of 96.51% for the governing party, the CNDD FDD, which thus won 108 of the 111 seats in Parliament, violations continued after the elections. Since most human rights defenders are in exile, state agents and their allies concentrated on targeting actual or presumed members and activists of the opposition.
2. The 2025 pre-electoral period was characterised by a lack of real political competition in a tense climate marked by “*intimidation*”, a “*severe restriction of civic space*” and “*serious irregularities*”, in the words of the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burundi¹. After publication of the results by the CENI, increasing from 71.7% in 2020 to 96.51% in 2025 and thus described by some analysts² as an artificial suppression of political pluralism compromising the electoral process, the opposition contested this score before the Constitutional Court, which rejected the submissions as “unfounded”³.
3. In this context, many human rights violations were committed against actual or presumed members and activists of the opposition, with total impunity. The judicial authorities, which are subservient to the executive, made no serious attempt to identify the perpetrators of these violations, determine responsibilities and allow redress for the victims.
4. As an actor committed to furthering democracy and human rights in Burundi, ACAT Burundi received funding from the European Union through the United Against Torture Consortium, in order to document human rights violations, in particular acts of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment carried out in the context of the elections. The United Against Torture Consortium (UATC) is an EU-funded project that brings together the strengths and expertise of six international anti-torture organizations, in partnership with over 200 civil society organizations and other partners in more than 100 countries, with the aim of strengthening and expanding torture

¹ FOCODE, Burundi : Dix ans après la crise, l’ONU dresse un réquisitoire inquiétant à Genève (*Ten years on from the crisis, the UN has levied a disturbing indictment in Geneva*), 27.06.2025 <https://focode.org/focodemag270625>

² Les Carnets d'Antoine Kaburahe, Élections 2025 : "96,51% ? Un score statistiquement impossible" (*96.51% ? A statistically imposssible score*), a shock analysis by Jean Ndenzako, <https://kaburahe.substack.com/p/elections-2025-9651-un-score-statistiquement>

³ Iwacu, La Cour constitutionnelle confirme la victoire du CNDD-FDD aux élections du 5 juin (*The constitutional court confirms the CNDD-FDD victory in the elections of 5 June*), 20.06.2025 <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/la-cour-constitutionnelle-confirme-la-victoire-du-cndd-fdd-aux-elections-du-5-juin/>

prevention, protection, rehabilitation, and strategic litigation. ACAT Burundi compiled this documentation and gathered the evidence between May and July 2025.

5. This report on violations related to the 5 June 2025 elections was drafted by ACAT Burundi and FIACAT, drawing on the data collected by ACAT Burundi as part of this project.

III. GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

6. In order to obtain a better picture of the general context of the 2025 electoral process in Burundi, it is useful to look back over the key stages in this process: revision of the electoral code, elimination of the main opposition leader and the election campaign in the run-up to the parliamentary and local elections of 5 June 2025.
7. The process of excluding the opposition started as early as 5 June 2024 with the promulgation of the revised electoral code⁴. One of the main changes in the code was the increase in the deposit to be posted by candidates, which was raised to 200 000 Burundian francs (about 57 euros) for local councillors⁵, 2 million francs (about 574 euros, representing the monthly salary for the most senior positions⁶) for senators and members of parliament⁷ and a hundred million francs (about 28 700 euros) for candidates for the presidency⁸.
8. The revision of the electoral code also greatly limited the scope for participation by independent candidates. According to Article 128(1) “Independent candidates stand as individuals and no coalition of independents is permitted”. The Article stipulates: “Candidates are regarded as independent if they have been unaffiliated with any political party for at least one year. A member of an executive body of a political party may not stand for election as an independent until two years after his expulsion or resignation from his political party of origin.” These changes made it possible to discriminate between candidates on the basis of their economic and financial circumstances and also to exclude the main figure opposing the existing government, who had been expelled from his party in March 2024 and was thus unable to stand as an independent.

⁴ For a detailed analysis, see : Tournons la page, Burundi : Analyse critique de la loi organique n°/12 du 5 juin portant code électoral (*Critical analysis of Institutional Act No 1/12 establishing the electoral code*), 14.12.2024 <https://tournonslapage.bi/burundi-analyse-critique-de-la-loi-organique-n-12-du-5-juin-portant-code-electoral/>

⁵ Article 188 of Institutional Act No 112 of 5 June 2024 amending Institutional Act No 1/11 of 30 May 2019 establishing the electoral code.

⁶ Paylab, Salary by Countries: Burundi <https://www.paylab.com/global/countries?lang=en>; Bdex, Salaries in Burundi, 2025 <https://bdeex.com/burundi/>

⁷ Articles 135 and 166 of Institutional Act No 112 of 5 June 2024 amending Institutional Act No 1/11 of 30 May 2019 establishing the electoral code.

⁸ Article 104 of Institutional Act No 112 of 5 June 2024 amending Institutional Act No 1/11 of 30 May 2019 establishing the electoral code.

9. Unlike the elections of 2020, when the opposition was still active and represented, in particular by Agathon Rwasa, the former leader of the CNL and main opponent of the ruling party, he was excluded from the 2025 parliamentary contest in December 2024. The CENI cited various grounds for this decision:
- Under the terms of Article 112 of the electoral code, as a former member of parliament of the CNL, from which he had been expelled in March 2024, he could not stand under the banner of a coalition to which the CNL did not belong.
 - Under Article 128 of the electoral code, he could not stand as an independent candidate since less than two years had elapsed since his exclusion from the party.
10. The change in the electoral code, less than a year before the elections, was perceived as a legal device to eliminate opponents of the current government, reflecting a clear intention to return to a one-party system⁹.
11. In view of the final results confirmed by the Constitutional Court, awarding 108 of the 111 seats in Parliament to the ruling party, it is clear that the hypothesis of a return to a one-party system has become reality¹⁰.
12. The electoral campaign and the preceding period were marked by many human rights violations against actual or presumed members and activists of the opposition, journalists and election observers¹¹. These violations, which will be detailed later in this report, comprise acts of intimidation and hate speech, restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly and gathering, acts of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, arbitrary arrest and detention and forced disappearances involving the Imbonerakure, a militia linked to the CNDD-FDD, the security forces, in particular the PNB and the SNR, the local administrative authorities and finally radical supporters of the CNDD-FDD, who colluded with these actors to impede the opposition's activity and intimidate, harass, threaten and attack members and activists of the opposition and any citizen perceived as potentially dissident.

⁹ Iwacu, Pr Julien Nimubona : “On ne tend pas vers le monopartisme, on y est déjà” (*We are not moving towards a one-party system, we are already there*), 24.05.2025 <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/pr-julien-nimubona-on-ne-tend-pas-vers-le-monopartisme-on-y-est-deja/>

¹⁰ ACAT-Burundi, Déclaration publique de la société civile burundaise concernant les élections législatives et communales du 5 juin 2025 (*Public statement by Burundian civil society on the parliamentary and local elections of 5 June 2025*), 16.06.2025 <https://www.acatburundi.org/declaration-publique-de-la-societe-civile-burundaise-concernant-les-elections-legislatives-et-communales-du-5-juin-2025/>

¹¹ ACAT-Burundi, Rapport de monitoring des violations et atteintes aux droits humains recensées par ACAT-Burundi pour mai 2025 (*Monitoring Report on Human Rights Violations and Abuses Documented by ACAT-Burundi for May 2025*), 31.05.2025 <https://www.acatburundi.org/rapport-de-monitoring-des-violations-et-atteintes-aux-droits-humains-recensees-par-acat-burundi-pour-mai-2025/> ; Burundi: RSF warns of escalating violence against journalists ahead of elections, 8.05.2025 <https://rsf.org/en/burundi-rsf-warns-escalating-violence-against-journalists-ahead-elections>

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT

13. Throughout the project, ACAT Burundi pursued an approach of rigorous documentation complying with ethical principles. Information was gathered mainly by individual and confidential interviews with the victims, their family members and direct witnesses to the facts. Other sources such as prison staff, police officers, administrators and some members of the Imbonerakure were also interviewed. In all, 95 interviews were conducted in various localities, yielding detailed information on the violations documented below.
14. In order to ensure data reliability, the team adopted a method of cross-checking. Each item of information obtained was checked against other independent sources such as witness accounts, reports by partner organisations, articles in the press and analyses to triangulate the information and corroborate the incidents documented. When incidents could not be confirmed by other independent sources, the violations were not taken into account or used in the data analysis.
15. A basic principle of ACAT Burundi's methodology is "do no harm". Interviews were conducted with strict regard for the physical and psychological safety of the interviewees to avoid risks of further traumatising. Anonymity of victims and witnesses was preserved whenever necessary and sensitive information used only with the informed consent of the sources.
16. In addition to first-hand accounts, ACAT Burundi collected and analysed pertinent documentary sources, in particular the reports of other civil society organisations such as those of the Iteka league, FOCODE publications, the reports of Human Rights Watch, journalists' accounts and analyses such as those of the Burundian newspaper Iwacu, the statements of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Union following their missions to Burundi in March¹² and June 2025¹³ and the official statements of the Burundian institutions.
17. Finally, the data compiled were systematically filed and classified by type of violation (such as attacks on physical integrity, arbitrary arrest, forced disappearances) with a view to their use in drafting this report and for advocacy at regional and international levels. This approach, combining rigour, prudence and ethics, is the basis on which ACAT Burundi founds its quarterly reports and its public campaigning for the protection and promotion of human rights¹⁴.

¹² ACHPR, Press release on the promotion mission to the Republic of Burundi, 25.03.2025 <https://achpr.au.int/en/news/press-releases/2025-03-25/press-release-promotion-mission-republic-burundi>

¹³ African Union, DÉCLARATION PRÉLIMINAIRE: Mission d'Observation Électorale de l'Union Africaine pour les Élections Législatives et Communales du 05 Juin 2025 en République du Burundi (*PRELIMINARY STATEMENT: Election Observation Mission of the African Union for the Parliamentary and Local Elections of 5 June 2025 in the Republic of Burundi*), 9.06.2025 <https://www.peaceau.org/fr/article/declaration-preliminaire-mission-d-observation-electorale-de-l-union-africaine-pour-les-elections-legislatives-et-communales-du-05-juin-2025-en-republique-du-burundi>

¹⁴ Website of ACAT-Burundi. <https://www.acatburundi.org/7-2/>

V. MAIN VIOLATIONS DOCUMENTED DURING THE PERIOD IN QUESTION

18. Human rights violations in Burundi, widely documented by civil society over the last decade, intensified during the summer of 2025 when there was a particularly crowded series of elections. In three months, the country organised the parliamentary and communal councillors' election on 5 June, the election for the senate on 23 July, and the election for neighbourhood ("colline") councillors on 25 August. All these elections can already be seen as the run-up to the next presidential election scheduled for 2027.

1. Violations documented during the pre-electoral period

19. In Burundi, the civic space, already seriously curtailed, became even more restricted during the pre-electoral period. The police, the SNR and the Imbonerakure militia were responsible for a great many violations. According to information gathered, at least 14 human rights violations were recorded between 15 May and 5 June 2025, i.e. the three weeks before the first election. With one exception, all these violations were directed at persons accused of being opponents of the CNDD-FDD regime. In 86 % of cases (12 out of 14), members of the Imbonerakure militia were among the perpetrators. When not operating alone, they were working alongside police officers or with the support of locally elected CNDD-FDD members. Generally in groups, often on patrol, they targeted people individually.

20. There are three main categories of violation: acts of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary arrest – whether or not followed by arbitrary detention – and forced disappearances. These violations were accompanied by hate speech and incitement to violence from the ruling party and its activists.

a. Hate speeches and incitement to violence

21. During the pre-electoral period, the congresses organised by the ruling party were regularly used as a platform for hate speech inciting violence, in particular against members of the opposition. These calls for violence, far from being isolated cases, were part of a strategy aiming to intimidate, stigmatise and eliminate all political dissent.

22. One particularly worrying example was reported at a congress held on 27 May 2025 in the Kibimba neighbourhood (Butezi zone, former commune of Giharo, now the commune of Musongati,

province of Burunga). The neighbourhood councillor and a local representative of the CNDD-FDD (identities known) explicitly urged the militants to take all possible steps to eliminate physically members of the UPRONA party, naming:

- Usuel Ntarutimana, UPRONA representative of Giharo commune;
- Théoneste Juma, party representative in the Butezi zone;
- Vénant Nyobewe, activist member of the UPRONA party¹⁵.

23. These calls for violence were publicly endorsed by several candidates for the parliamentary elections (identities known), who presented them as a way of guaranteeing the “stability” of Giharo commune. Such words have come to be seen as the norm in a climate of general impunity.

24. At the same time, in several areas of the commune of Makamba (Burunga province), official vehicles – which witnesses recognised as belonging to public institutions such as health services or communal administrations – travelled around the streets with loudspeakers playing CNDD-FDD campaign songs at full volume, together with inflammatory speeches by the Secretary-General of the party, Révérien Ndikuriyo, in which he openly appealed to young people to take up arms against the opposition, stating:

“Let us build but with caution: the enemy is furious. Let one hand take the microphone, the other a weapon. Young people, while you eat, sleep and study, do not think that the country is a cake that can just be given to the child who cries – it has to be fought for!”¹⁶

25. These practices testify to the deliberate instrumentalisation of public institutions and political gatherings for the purpose of violent propaganda. In this context, incitement to hatred and political violence have become a tool for controlling society and discouraging any form of opposition.

b. Ban on meetings and other gatherings

26. Following changes to the electoral code and building on its calls to eliminate opponents physically, the ruling party reinforced its control strategy by banning or systematically disrupting opposition meetings and other gatherings, using threats, aggression and increased surveillance aimed at militants who attempt to take part in political activities.

¹⁵ SOS media Burundi, Giharo: death threats and political pressure targeting members of the UPRONA party, 30.05.2025 <https://www.sosmediasburundi.org/2025/05/31/giharo-menaces-de-mort-et-pressions-politiques-ciblent-les-membres-du-parti-uprona/>

¹⁶ SOS media Burundi, Makamba: the CNDD-FDD accused of intimidation, forced mobilisation and aggressive propaganda as the elections approach, 27.05.2025 <https://www.sosmediasburundi.org/2025/05/27/makamba-le-cndd-fdd-accuse-dintimidation-de-mobilisation-forceee-et-de-propagande-agressive-a-lapproche-des-elections/>

27. In May 2025, several gatherings organised by UPRONA, RANAC and CNL in the neighbourhoods of Buhumuza (Ruyigi commune, Buhumuza province) were the target of attacks and intimidation. According to corroborating testimonies, UPRONA militants were also barred access to meetings in the Muriza zone (Butaganzwa commune, Buhumuza province) supposedly on safety grounds.
28. Information gathered shows that the communes of Musinga, Gasorwe, Butihinda and Giteranyi (province of Buhumuza), along with that of Nyabitsinda (province of Buhumuza) were particularly affected by these restrictions on the freedom of assembly. In these localities, the local authorities, frequently supported by the Imbonerakure, exerted constant pressure on the opposition parties, going so far as to physically block access to venues.
29. RANAC activists have reported being watched continually, especially in the province of Ruyigi and in Cankuzo (province of Buhumuza). Their meetings were systematically interrupted by either gatecrashing or direct intimidation, which created a climate of fear and dissuaded people from taking an active part.
30. Such practices show a desire to annihilate the civic space and to deprive the opposition of any possibility of collective expression. They constitute a direct violation of Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Burundi in 1990, which guarantees the right to peaceful assembly and authorises restrictions only if they are imposed in conformity with the law and necessary and proportionate in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, and of Article 11 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which explicitly recognises the right to free and peaceful assembly.
31. With arbitrary bans on meetings of the opposition and a climate of fear instilled by intimidation and violence, the Burundian authorities are in flagrant violation of their international and regional human rights obligations.

c. Torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment

32. The pre-electoral period was marked by systematic targeting of political opponents and citizens seen as sympathising with the opposition. Identified in advance by agents of the State, they were tortured by those same agents, often with the complicity of the Imbonerakure militia. The perpetrators, whether members of the security forces or of militias affiliated to those in power, have political and institutional protection. Investigations are rare and, when they are initiated, they hardly ever lead to convictions.
33. In some cases, even when the perpetrator had been identified and the police attempted to intervene, the Imbonerakure prevented them. For example, on 2 May 2025, an activist of the FRODEBU party and an active member of the BBB Coalition (identity known) was attacked by some

Imbonerakure when he was returning home in the Kabonga neighbourhood (Nyanza-Lac commune, province of Makamba). Accused of supporting an opposition coalition, he was violently bludgeoned and stoned before being taken to the emergency centre in a critical condition. Three days later, when the police attempted to arrest the main perpetrator (identity known), the local Imbonerakure violently resisted his arrest and even tried to disarm the police. At the time of drafting this report, the suspect had not yet been apprehended.

34. Activists of the ruling party have also directly taken part in acts of torture coordinated by local officials of the Imbonerakure militia. For example, on 15 May 2025, a provincial representative of the BBB Coalition (province of Ngozi) and three members of the Coalition who were with him were ambushed in the Caga neighbourhood (Mihigo zone, former province of Ngozi and present province of Butanyerera). Activists of the ruling party and members of the Imbonerakure militia (identities known) lay in wait for them, brutally attacked them with a knife and sticks and seriously wounded them. The attackers also stole a motorbike and 1 087 000 Burundian francs (around 312 euros).
35. A few days before the elections, on 2 June 2025, a man (identity known) was interrogated and physically attacked by four Imbonerakure (identities known) when he was going to the Banga zone (commune of Matongo, province of Butanyerera) to collect the voting card of his wife, a member of the CNL.

d. Forced disappearances

36. The phenomenon of forced disappearances has become one of the most noticeable symbols of repression by the Burundian authorities. Even in its first reports, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry pointed out that the “context, characterized by numerous cases of disappearance and, frequently, the existence of one or more particular elements, such as the profile of the persons targeted — political opponents, members of civil society or “ex-FAB” — and threats made against the victims prior to their disappearance or subsequently received by their relatives in connection with their disappearance, affords reasonable grounds to fear enforced disappearances”¹⁷. The election of Évariste Ndayishimiye in June 2020 has not reversed this trend. The Commission then noted that murders, arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances were continuing, including after the voting¹⁸.

¹⁷ Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, 11 August 2017 2017, A/HRC/36/54, para.38

¹⁸ United Nations, Human rights violations continue in Burundi under new Government: UN report, 17.09.2020 “In recent weeks there have continued to be killings, there have continued to be arbitrary detentions and there have continued to be disappearances [...] So it’s slightly surprising that it is continuing as it was even though elections have finished. And that is a matter of very grave concern”, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1072642>

37. Ten years after the start of the crisis, the strategy of systematic repression continues as before. The authorities still target anyone suspected of not supporting the ruling party, using a tried and tested *modus operandi*: arbitrary arrests, then illegal detentions followed by forced disappearances. Law enforcement officers, frequently backed by the Imbonerakure militia, systematically apply this policy, aiming mainly at political opponents but including human rights defenders, journalists and, in some cases, ordinary citizens regarded as critical of the government.
38. During the six months before the elections of 5 June 2025, our organisations documented 26 cases of forced disappearance. Almost one-third of the victims (31%) were political opponents, the vast majority CNL activists.
39. One of these cases dates from 6 May 2025, when a CNL militant (identity known) was arrested in a bar in the hamlet of “Ku Kasoko”, in the Buterere zone (commune of Ntahangwa, province of Bujumbura). The arrest was made by policemen accompanied by an Imbonerakure (identity known). According to information received, the agents entered the bar, went directly over to the victim, assaulted him and then took him on a motorbike to a service station in Buterere (Ntahangwa commune, Bujumbura province), before transferring him to an unknown destination. The operation took place in the presence of neighbourhood and local councillors.
40. Two days before the elections, on 3 June 2025, a high school director and former CNL deputy (identity known) was abducted inside the school where he taught, in the commune of Mabayi (Bujumbura province). Subsequent information indicates that the abductors were travelling in a jeep-type vehicle with no number plates. His family has since stated that the victim had recently joined the ruling party.

e. Arrests and arbitrary detentions

41. In the six months leading up to the 5 June vote, our organisations documented almost 50 arbitrary arrests, over half of them (56 %, i.e. 28 cases) of political opponents, members of civil society and journalists. They were carried out by government agents, often in collaboration with the Imbonerakure militia. In most cases, the victims were not given the reasons for their arrest.
42. On 7 May 2025, a representative of the BBB coalition (identity known), candidate for the parliamentary elections in the Gasange neighbourhood (Makamba commune, Burunga province), was arrested by agents of the commune with the support of the Imbonerakure. Detained at the commune’s police station without being informed of the grounds for his arrest, he was released after eight days. A few days later, on 14 May 2025, another representative of the BBB Coalition (identity known) was arrested in the Kazirabageni neighbourhood (Nyanza Lac commune, province of Burunga) by a local elected official (identity known) and some Imbonerakure. The incident followed a dispute in a bar with a female activist of the ruling party regarding the right of

opposition members to display their membership cards publicly. The victim was transferred to the Nyanza police station (Nyanza-Lac commune, Burunga province) for unspecified reasons and released after two weeks of illegal detention.

43. In other cases, opposition party members were arrested simply for collecting voting cards in the name of other members even though this practice is officially authorised by the CENI on production of the required documents. For example, on 19 May 2025, police in the Bukemba zone (Rutana commune, Burunga province) arrested a Council of Patriots (CDP) official (identity known). He was detained at the local police station for three weeks and subsequently released.
44. Government officials have also been targeted after being seen in the company of members of the opposition. On 3 June 2025, a teacher was arrested in the Mabayi zone (Bukinanyana commune, Bujumbura province) by police and the Imbonerakure because he had been seen with a member of the FRODEBU party and accused of campaigning for the BBB Coalition. He was released only after the 5 June vote, at which time his voting card was returned to him with the note “has voted”.
45. On 4 June 2025, the day before the elections, a representative of the CDP (identity known) was arrested in the Kanazi neighbourhood (Mpanda commune, Bujumbura province) by three members of the Imbonerakure militia, who assaulted him in front of his family. Accused of attempting to recruit new members for his party, he was detained for several days at the local police station before being released.

2. Violations observed during the vote of 5 June 2025

a. Arrests and arbitrary detention

46. On election day, 5 June, ACAT Burundi documented seven cases of arrest and arbitrary detention. On fabricated grounds such as use of forged documents, dissemination of propaganda, or destruction of ballot papers, State agents, assisted by the Imbonerakure militia, interrogated opposition members and activists, thereby preventing them from exercising their right to vote. While most of those arrested were released after a few days, these practices represented serious human rights violations and undermined the credibility of the electoral process.
47. One such case was that of a representative of the BBB coalition (identity known) at the ECOFO polling centre in Nyarubanga (Nyarubanga neighbourhood, Kayogoro commune, province of Burunga). Accused of having produced false representation documents, he was held at the Makamba prosecutor’s office and then transferred to Rutana prison (commune of Rutana, province of Burunga). According to information gathered by ACAT Burundi, this arrest came after the

representative had denounced voting irregularities. Another representative of the BBB coalition, aged 27, (identity known), was arrested on the same day at the Kiyange 1 polling station in Makamba (Makamba commune, Burunga province). The police accused him of producing false documents in order to vote in place of his brother. He was first taken to the Makamba prosecutor's office and then transferred to a prison in Bururi (commune of Bururi, province of Burunga), where he is still detained.

48. Family members and associates of opposition figures have also been targeted. The wife of the President of RANAC (identity known) was arrested at polling station no. 3 of polling centre 2 in Bubanza (Bubanza commune, Bujumbura province). While at the polling station, she was questioned by the Imbonerakure and instructed to vote for the ruling party. She refused and was accused of disseminating pro-RANAC propaganda. She was then transferred to Bubanza police station, where she was detained for several days before being released.
49. State agents and their allies have also targeted actors traditionally involved in monitoring elections, in particular members of the Catholic church who had criticised the conduct of the vote. A pastor of the Pentecostal church (identity known) was arrested by the police, backed by the Imbonerakure, at the Kibara polling centre (Kibara neighbourhood, Kayogoro zone, Makamba commune, Burunga province). Officially accused of destroying voting slips, he had, shortly before his arrest, criticised the electoral process. He was taken to the Makamba police station, where he was held for a few days and then released.
50. State agents and their allies have also targeted actors traditionally involved in election monitoring, particularly members of the Catholic Church who had criticized the conduct of the vote. A pastor of the Pentecostal Church (identity known) was arrested by police, supported by the Imbonerakure, at the Kibara polling centre (Kibara neighbourhood, Kayogoro zone, Makamba commune, Burunga province). Officially accused of destroying ballot papers, he had previously criticized the electoral process. He was transferred and detained at Makamba police station for several days before being released.

b. Acts of intimidation and violations of civil and political rights

51. Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Burundi has been a party since 1990, states that “Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions [...] To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors”.

52. In practice, the 5 June ballot was marked by acts of intimidation and instructions aiming to silence any vote for the opposition. It was the last stranglehold of repression, intended to neutralise those opposition forces which had not already been swept aside during the pre-electoral period, going so far as to prevent certain categories of citizen from voting.
53. On voting day, members of the Imbonerakure militia were posted outside polling stations, ordering voters to vote for the ruling party and preventing journalists from reporting the irregularities observed¹⁹.
54. In several neighbourhoods in Buhumuza province, alarming instructions were issued at CNDD-FDD meetings, urging activists to prevent certain groups of the population—particularly schoolchildren, domestic workers, and household staff—from voting directly, and to compel them to submit a proxy vote in favor of the CNDD-FDD. A source questioned by ACAT Burundi reported the words of a local party official who, during a meeting, stated:
- “No pupil, no domestic worker, no household staff will vote. Make them sign proxy votes. On polling day, we will all be behind our head of cell (inama nshingiro in the national language). If an opponent arrives, we’ll get rid of him before he votes, so that we can identify those who hide among us whilst militating for the opposition”²⁰.

Violations observed after the vote of 5 June 2025

55. Despite a historically high score of over 96 %, the ruling party continued its campaign of repression, targeting people who had reported irregularities or who had not voted for the CNDD-FDD. This policy led to acts of physical violence, arbitrary arrests and targeted intimidation.
56. On 7 June 2025, two Imbonerakure (identities known) questioned an 18-year-old woman (identity known) in the Rugazi locality (commune of Bubanza, province of Bujumbura) and assaulted her with truncheons for having voted for the UPRONA party. She was subsequently taken to the Rugazi health centre for medical care.
57. On 9 June 2025, a man aged around 70 (identity known) was assaulted in his home by three Imbonerakure (identities known), as ordered by the Gitwe neighbourhood chief (commune of Muhutam, province of Burunga). According to information gathered, he had refused to hand over

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, Burundi Elections Without Opposition, 12.06.2025 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/12/burundi-elections-without-opposition>

²⁰ SOS médias Burundi, Burunga – « Le droit de vote confisqué » : stratégies de manipulation et d’intimidation des opposants à l’approche des élections au Burundi, 30.05.2025 (*The right to vote confiscated : strategies for manipulating and intimidating opponents at the approach to elections in Burundi, 30.05.2025*). <https://www.sosmediasburundi.org/2025/05/31/burunga-le-droit-de-vote-confisque-strategies-de-manipulation-et-dintimidation-des-opposants-a-lapproche-des-elections-au-burundi/>

his voting card so that the activists of the ruling party could vote in his name. The victim filed a complaint, but no action was taken.

58. ACAT Burundi has also documented several cases of arrest and arbitrary detention of people who had reported irregularities in the voting. For example:

- On 6 June 2025, a representative of the BBB coalition (identity known), living in the Gikungu area of town (Gihosha zone, commune of Ntahangwa, province of Bujumbura) was arrested near the Maroda hall polling station (commune of Ntahangwa, Province of Bujumbura) and accused of denouncing irregularities noted on voting day.
- On 15 June 2025, a priest (identity known) was arrested by SNR agents in Gitaza (commune of Muhuta, province of Burunga) for speaking up about voting irregularities. He was taken to the SNR, near the Regina Mundi Cathedral, where he was detained until being released a few days later.

59. These incidents show that post-electoral repression was not aimed solely at political opponents but was also targeted at anyone in the social sphere who openly criticised the handling of the voting. Physical violence, intimidation and arbitrary arrest have combined to instil a climate of fear and restrict freedom of expression and political involvement, in flagrant violation of civil and political rights enshrined in international law.

VI. THE AUTHORITIES' RESPONSE AND THE REACTIONS OF THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

60. In response to the criticism over the conduct of the parliamentary and local elections, the President of the Republic took up a defensive stance, challenging the opposition to produce concrete evidence of the alleged irregularities²¹. The Minister of the Interior went further, warning the political actors against any challenge to the validity of the vote²².

61. On 18 June 2025, the Constitutional Court validated the results of the vote, and this decision was made public on 20 June. The Court rejected the submissions made by certain opposition parties, holding that they were “unfounded, for lack of evidence”²³. However, even before this decision, the CENI had published a final list of members of parliament, which raised questions about respect

²¹ SOS médias Burundi, Burundi: Ndayishimiye defends the CNDD-FDD victory and calls for a formal denunciation of electoral fraud, 16.06.2025 <https://www.sosmediasburundi.org/en/2025/06/16/burundi-ndayishimiye-defends-the-cndd-fdd-victory-and-calls-for-a-formal-denunciation-of-electoral-fraud/>

²² FOCODE, Burundi: after the elections, the Minister of the Interior locks up the protest, 13.06.2025 <https://focode.org/focodemag130625mininter>

²³ Iwacu, La Cour constitutionnelle confirme la victoire du CNDD-FDD aux élections du 5 juin (*The Constitutional Court confirms the CNDD-FDD victory in the elections of 5 June*), 20.06.2025 <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/la-cour-constitutionnelle-confirme-la-victoire-du-cndd-fdd-aux-elections-du-5-juin/>

for the principles of transparency and the appropriateness of announcing these results before the electoral dispute had been resolved.

62. Contrary to the official narrative, several stakeholders have denounced serious irregularities. The Bishops' Conference of Burundi noted, for example:

- early opening of some polling stations with no observers present;
- denial of access for some politicians;
- stuffing of ballot boxes before the start of the vote;
- multiple votes cast by the same person;
- pressurising of electors by polling station staff;
- exclusion of observers during the count²⁴.

63. The Burundian civil society organisations also reported disquieting practices:

- ballot box stuffing ;
- violation of voting secrecy;
- falsification of the results;
- arbitrary exclusion of independent observers;
- registration of fictitious electors (minors or deceased persons);
- pressure and intimidation in rural areas;
- detention and harassment of members of the opposition;
- multiple voting and abuse of proxy votes by the Imbonerakure youth league of the ruling party;
- restriction of media coverage, with unequal access for public and private media²⁵.

64. Our organisations regret the preliminary statement issued by the African Union electoral observation mission deployed in Burundi from 30 May to 9 June, in which the elections were described as “having taken place in a generally stable sociopolitical environment, a peaceful security climate, and with strong mobilisation of the candidates, political parties and coalitions, as well as voters. This allowed orderly electoral and citizen participation, contributing to enhanced popular legitimacy of the electoral process, which is consubstantial with any democratic consolidation of the country”. The mission also noted that all the political parties “showed maturity by rejecting hate speech and violence during these votes”.

65. These observations appear in total contradiction with the reality on the ground as described above and with the numerous violations documented by civil society and relayed by the international

²⁴ FOCODE, Burundi: the Catholic bishops question the integrity of the elections on June 5, 13.06.2025 <https://focode.org/focodemag130625eveques>

²⁵Public declaration by the Burundian civil society organisations, "Urnes sous contrôle, voix muselées : alerte de la société civile burundaise" (*Ballot boxes controlled, voices muzzled : Burundian civil society sounds the alarm*, 16.06.2025 <https://www.acatburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Declaration-publique-des-organisations-de-la-societe-civile-burundaise-pour-les-elections-legislatives-et-communales-du-5-juin-2025.pdf>)

community²⁶, which are the very opposite of a “stable sociopolitical environment”. In practice, the election campaign was marked by the repeated dissemination of hate speech by the ruling party, creating a climate of intimidation and fear. In parallel, arbitrary arrest and detention, acts of torture and forced disappearances greatly reduced the ability of the opposition parties and their activists to exercise their political rights freely.

66. The so-called “strong mobilisation” of candidates and the electorate is thus not the result of spontaneous democratic commitment, but rather of a context of constraint and coercion. The security forces and the Imbonerakure militia played a decisive part in this forced mobilisation, which led to a massive vote for the CNDD-FDD, sometimes even by opposition candidates²⁷. This situation is thus not the expression of an inclusive, legitimate electoral process but rather the instrumentalisation of the electoral institutions and mechanisms in order to maintain the existing regime in power.

VII. CONCLUSION

67. The 2025 electoral cycle in Burundi follows the same pattern as previous votes, with political competition leading to increased repression and instrumentalisation of the institutions. The general context, marked by the revision of the electoral code, the exclusion of the main opposition leader and a drastic restriction of the civic space, opened the way to elections with no real pluralism, endorsing de facto a return to a one-party system, confirmed by the unprecedented score of 96.51 % and the virtually clean sweep of seats in Parliament for the ruling party.
68. Validation of these results by the Constitutional Court, despite the irregularities reported by the opposition, civil society and the Bishops’ Conference of Burundi, confirms that there is no independent judicial framework capable of guaranteeing the integrity of the electoral process. The contrast between these realities and the assessment of the African Union electoral

²⁶ OHCHR, Burundi: UN experts alarmed by increase in serious human rights violations during election period, 01.01.2025 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

²⁷ In the communes which belonged to the former province of Ngozi, in particular Ngozi, Gashikanwa and Mwumba, residents reported that members of the Imbonerakure, sometimes accompanied by police, went door-to-door in order to compel the families to attend CNDD-FDD meetings. Those who displayed unwillingness were threatened with being placed on a “list of opponents”. On election day these same youths supervised the queues and reminded the electors of their “duty to support the ruling party”. This climate of intimidation drove even some opposition sympathisers to vote for the CNDD-FDD, for fear of reprisals. In the communes of Giheta, Mutaho, Bugendana and Makebuko (Gitega province), several candidates who initially stood as “independents” said they had been forced to join the CNDD-FDD to maintain their candidatures. Refusal would place them at risk of exclusion for administrative reasons or of prosecution for “breach of the peace”. Local figures who could have represented a political alternative were thus absorbed by the ruling party, creating an illusion of pluralism when in fact the outcome of the vote was rigged in favour of the CNDD-FDD.

observation mission reinforced the impression of conflicting rhetoric, the ostensible electoral legitimacy masking a climate of violence and impunity.

69. In this climate, it is essential for civil society and regional and international partners to remain vigilant. Rigorous documentation of violations, as conducted by ACAT Burundi, is a vital tool for breaking the cycle of impunity, making the victims' voices heard and drawing attention to Burundi's international obligations as regards human rights and democracy. This is not merely a statement of fact, but also a call to action to ensure that respect for basic rights, freedom of expression and political participation are restored as a tangible reality for everyone in Burundi.



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