

Burundi: UN experts alarmed by increase in serious human rights violations during election period

GENEVA – UN experts* today expressed deep concern about the increase in serious human rights violations in Burundi, that has included attacks against civil society and political opponents and election violence.

Between January 2024 and May 2025, Burundian civil society organisations documented at least 200 cases of sexual violence—including child rape—58 enforced disappearances, 62 acts of torture, 892 arbitrary detentions, and 605 extrajudicial executions. These violations were allegedly committed by state agents or by individuals acting with their complicity, including members of the National Intelligence Service of the police, the youth militia of the ruling party still known as Imbonerakure or "mob justice", in a climate of widespread impunity.

"We deplore the fact that these serious human rights violations are being used to intimidate the population during election periods, for the benefit of the ruling party," the experts warned, denouncing an alarming upsurge in cases of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions, torture and sexual violence. Experts stressed the urgent need to ensure that victims of torture, and women and girls who are survivors of sexual violence, have access to appropriate care, including free comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and psychological support.

On 5 June 2025, the ruling political party, the CNDD-FDD, won 100% of the seats in the National Assembly with 96% of the votes, and almost all communal seats.

In the months leading up to the elections, beginning in early 2025, the electoral process reportedly included forced voter registration on electoral lists and forced collective payment of funds, making access to public services conditional on prior validation by state agents. In the event of refusal, threats or arbitrary seizures would have been committed by State agents or by individuals benefiting from State support.

"We regret that the Government of Burundi has not responded to our [concerns*](#) and that it persists in refusing to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi and that Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country continues to be closed," the experts said.

"Without respect for rights and freedoms, and without protection for human rights defenders, activists, civil society and journalists before, during and after elections, these cannot be considered free and fair," the experts argued.

Since the end of December 2023, an increase in cases of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and summary executions of journalists, human rights defenders and political opponents had already been referenced by Burundian civil society organisations. "The Government has an obligation to prevent, punish, investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of these acts and repair the damage caused by non-State actors," they said.

The experts were concerned by reports of the abduction and arbitrary detention of journalist Aline Sandra Muhoza.

"This incident is part of a wider context marked by an alarming upsurge in serious human rights violations against journalists, human rights defenders, as well as anyone perceived to be affiliated – in real or perceived – with the political opposition, including their relatives," the experts said.

“These acts, on the eve of legislative, communal and local elections scheduled for 2025, raise serious concerns about the restriction of civic space, the growing intimidation of critical voices and a climate of fear in Burundi's electoral process.”

The experts recalled the [findings*](#) of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi in its final report of 12 April 2021 which warned that "when these violations are perpetrated in a widespread and systematic manner against the population or the context of electoral violence, they constitute crimes against humanity under international law."

***The experts:**

- Fortuné Gaetan Zongo, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi](#);
- Gabriella Citroni (Chairperson-Rapporteur), Grażyna Baranowska (Vice-Chairperson), Ana Lorena Delgado Pérez, Aua Baldé and Mohammed Al-Obaidi [Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances](#);
- Ms. Ganna Yudkivska (Chair-Rapporteur), Mr. Matthew Gillett (Vice-Chair), Ms. Miriam Estrada Castillo (Vice-Chair), Mumba Malila, and Mr. Ethan Hee-Seok Shin, [Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#);
- Claudia Flores (Chair), Ivana Krstić (Vice-Chair), Dorothy Estrada Tanck, Haina Lu and Laura Nyirinkindi [Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls](#);
- Morris Tidball-Binz, [Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#);
- Irene Khan, [Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#);
- Gina Romero, [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#);
- Mary Lawlor, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#).

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UN Human Rights, country page – [Burundi](#)

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