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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

# BURUNDI

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17 JUNE 2008

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## Preface

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- i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Burundi has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 17 June 2008.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.
- iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Burundi is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

**UK Border Agency**

Apollo House  
36 Wellesley Road  
Croydon CR9 3RR  
United Kingdom

**Email:** [cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:cois@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

**Website:** [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country\\_reports.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html)

## ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

- vii The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UK Border Agency's country of origin information material. The APCI welcomes all feedback on UKBA's COI Key Documents, COI Reports and other country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at [www.apci.org.uk](http://www.apci.org.uk)
- viii In the course of its work, the APCI reviews the content of selected UKBA COI documents and makes recommendations specific to those documents and of a more general nature. The APCI may or may not have reviewed this

particular document. At the following link is a list of the COI Key Documents, COI Reports and other documents which have, to date, been reviewed by the APCI: [www.apci.org.uk/reviewed-documents.html](http://www.apci.org.uk/reviewed-documents.html)

- ix Please note: It is not the function of the APCI to endorse any UKBA material or procedures. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

**Advisory Panel on Country Information:**

**Email:** [apci@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:apci@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.apci.org.uk](http://www.apci.org.uk)

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## 2. Background information on Burundi

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**Full Country Name:** The Republic of Burundi

**Area:** Total area 27,834sq. km

**Population:** 8,300,000

**Capital City:** Bujumbura (population approx. 800,000)

**People:** Hutu 85%, Tutsi 14%, Twa 1%, European 3,000, South Asian 2,000.

**Languages:** Kirundi (official), French (official), Swahili (along Lake Tanganyika and the Bujumbura area)

**Religion(s):** Catholicism, Islam

**Currency:** Burundi franc = 100 centimes

**Major Political Parties:** National Council for the Defence of Democracy- Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD); Burundi Democratic Front (FRODEBU); Unity for National Progress (UPRONA). Others - National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD); Party for National Redress (PARENA); Movement for the Rehabilitation of the Citizen (MRC).

**Government:**

**Head of State:** President Pierre Nkurunziza

**First Vice President:** Dr Yves Satinguvu

**Second Vice President:** Gabriel Ntisezerana

**Minister for External Relations and Co-operation:** Antoinette Batumubwira

**Membership of International groupings:** African Union (AU), UN, Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC).[3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi country profile, 19 November 2007)

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### GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) country profile on Burundi stated:

“Burundi is a small land-locked mountainous country lying south of the Equator in Central Africa. It shares borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and Rwanda. It has a temperate climate with 2 rainy seasons (March to May; October to December). Official languages are Kirundi, French and Swahili.” [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi country profile, 19 November 2007)

Europa World Online, accessed 29 April 2008 stated that:

“The Republic of Burundi is a land-locked country lying on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, in central Africa, a little south of the Equator. It is bordered by Rwanda to the north, by Tanzania to the south and east, and by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) to the west. The climate is tropical (hot and humid) in the lowlands, and cool in the highlands, with an irregular rainfall. The population is composed of three ethnic groups: the Hutu (85%), the Tutsi (14%) and the Twa (1%). The official languages are French and Kirundi, while Swahili is used, in addition to French, in commercial circles. More than 65% of the inhabitants profess Christianity, with the great majority of the Christians being Roman Catholics. A large minority still adhere to traditional animist beliefs. The national flag (proportions 3 by 5) consists of a white diagonal cross on a background of red (above and below) and green (hoist and fly), with a white circle, containing three green-edged red stars, in the centre. The capital is Bujumbura.” [1a] (Europa World Online) (p1)

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## MAPS



Map courtesy of United Nations

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## RECENT HISTORY

Europa World Online, accessed 29 April 2008 stated that:

“Since Burundi achieved independence from Belgium in 1962 tensions between the Tutsi and the Hutu, the two main ethnic groups, have persistently compromised stability. In 1996, amid widespread inter-ethnic violence, the army seized power. Little substantive progress towards resolving the resultant political crisis was achieved until 2000, when an agreement providing for power-sharing between the Tutsi and the Hutu was endorsed by national institutions, Hutu and Tutsi political associations. Following legislative elections in mid-2005, a government of national unity, headed by President Jean-Pierre Nkurunziza, was installed in August. The capital is Bujumbura. The official languages are French and Kirundi.” [1a] (Europa World Online) (p1)

Europa further noted that in September 2005, the FNL (Forces nationales de libération), refused an offer by the new government to consider reconciliation negotiations. “In following months the Government consequently increased military efforts to suppress rebel activity, particularly in the provinces of Bujumbura Rural and Bubanza where the movement was based, causing large displacement of civilians from these regions. As a result of increasing support within the FNL for reconciliation with the Government, Rwasa was ousted from the leadership in December, and was replaced by Jean-Bosco Sindayigaya, who announced that he was prepared to enter into unconditional negotiations with the authorities. However, Rwasa continued to head a smaller faction of the FNL opposed to negotiations and sporadic hostilities continued in early 2006.” [1a] Europa World Online) (p17)

Europa continued: “In December 2006 the Presidents of Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda signed a Pact of Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which was welcomed by the UN Security Council as a significant measure towards regional stabilization. In the same month the East African Community (EAC) officially accepted the membership applications of Burundi and Rwanda.” [1a] (Europa World Online) (p18)

## RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The FCO Country profile on Burundi updated 19 November 2007 stated that:

“Burundi's first ever election, held in 1993, was won by a Hutu. Elements of the Tutsi-dominated army assassinated the new President a few months later, triggering the start of a long-running conflict between the army and Hutu rebel groups that has cost an estimated 500,000 lives. In 1996 Buyoya again took power but was unable to stop the violence. Under pressure from the region, negotiations between the belligerents began in 1998, and in 2000 a peace agreement was concluded in Arusha, Tanzania. It was signed by all parties except four hard-line rebel groups. Violence between these groups and the army continued, despite the institution of a transitional government in 2002, until separate cease-fire agreements were concluded with three of them during the second half of 2003. The UN deployed a peacekeeping force in Burundi (ONUB) in June 2004, and successful elections between June and September 2005 ended the transition and installed Pierre Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD party in power.” [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi country profile, 19 November 2007)

The USSD 2007 Country Report on Human Rights in Burundi stated: “Burundi is a constitutional republic with an elected government and a population of 8.3 million. In August 2005, following local and parliamentary elections, the country's two houses of

parliament indirectly elected as President, Pierre Nkurunzia, a member of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) political party. International observers reported that the elections, which ended a four-year transitional process under the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, were generally free and fair. Although the CNDD-FDD party dominated parliament and the government, other major parties, notably the Burundian Front for Democracy (FRODEBU) and the Union for National Progress (UPRONA), were also represented.” [2a] (USSD country report 11 March 2008)

The UN Security Council’s report in May 2008 noted that: “Serious difficulties remain with respect to the Forces Nationales de Libération (Palipehutu-FNL) which withdrew last July [2007] from the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM), established to monitor the comprehensive ceasefire agreement that it signed in September 2006 with the government. Clashes continued between Burundian government forces and FNL fighters, culminating in particularly troubling events during the weeks of 14 and 21 April 2008, including an armed confrontation in the hills around Bujumbura in mid-April, when four soldiers and ten rebels were killed.” [60a] (Burundi: UN Security Council report, May 2008)

The report continued: “... The political situation also continues to be very tense, as the stalemate persists between the government and opposition in parliament, and there is a rift within the ruling party, Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD). On 4 April Burundi’s Supreme Court sentenced the former chairman of the CNDD-FDD ruling party, Hussein Radjabu, to 13 years in prison for subversion. (Radjabu’s differences with President Pierre Nkurunziza came to the fore at a special congress of the FDD in February 2007 where delegates ousted him as chairman. He was arrested in April 2007 and charged with plotting an armed insurrection and insulting President Nkurunziza.)” [60a] (Burundi: UN Security Council report, May 2008)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its annual report for 2008 recorded the political events of 2007 as follows: “The political situation in Burundi is marked by efforts of the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) to monopolize power and by continuing impunity for severe human rights abuses. Despite its resounding electoral victory in 2005, the CNDD-FDD struggled with internal divisions and challenges from opposition parties that paralyzed legislative action for most of 2007. In August unidentified assailants threw grenades into the homes of five opposition political leaders, further embittering the political atmosphere. The war between the government and the last active rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (FNL), had been halted by a September 2006 ceasefire, but on July 21, 2007, talks on implementation broke down and rebel leaders returned to the bush.” [11a] (Human Rights Watch, 31 January 2008)

BBC News reported on 26 May 2008 that the government and the last active rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (FNL) had at last signed a ceasefire and it was hoped it would bring an end to the war and peace to the Country. The report stated: “Burundi’s government and last active rebel group, the National Liberation Forces (FNL), have signed a ceasefire. ... The BBC’s Prime Ndikumagenge in the capital, Bujumbura, says it is a significant move and is the first step in implementing a 2006 peace agreement. More than 100 people have been killed and some 40,000 people displaced in renewed fighting since April. Rebel spokesman Pasteur Habimana said the signing of the peace deal meant that “war would stop forever.” [6f] (BBC News, 26 May 2008)

Following the above report, BBC News subsequently reported on 30 May 2008 on the return of Agathon Rwasa, the exiled leader of the FNL. "Agathon Rwasa, the leader of Burundi's last active rebel group - the FNL (National Liberation Forces) - has returned home from exile in Tanzania. His return comes four days after the FNL and government signed a ceasefire." The report added that Mr Rwasa's return was not voluntary but followed pressure from regional leaders and an ultimatum for him to return. [6g] (BBC News, 30 May 2006)

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## ECONOMY

**GDP:** US\$1bn (2007 est.)

**Annual Growth:** 5.5% (2007est.)

**Inflation:** 7.0% (2007 est.)

**Major Exports:** Coffee, tea, manufacture

**Major trading partners:** Exports - Germany (22.8%), Switzerland (10.9%), Belgium (7.0%), Rwanda (6.8%)

Imports – Kenya (13.5%), Italy (10.8%), Tanzania (7.9%), Belgium (6.9%)

**Exchange rate:** Franc Burundais 1,065 = US\$1 (2007 est.). [3a] (FCO Country profile, 19 November 2007)

On the economy of Burundi, the FCO country profile dated 19 November 2007 stated:

"The mainstay of the Burundian economy is agriculture, accounting for some 49% of GDP, and supporting more than 90% of the labour force. Continued insecurity, overpopulation, and soil erosion have contributed to a significant contraction of the subsistence economy in recent years. The main cash crop is coffee with other principal exports including tea and raw cotton. Although potential wealth in petroleum, nickel, copper, and other natural resources is being explored, the uncertain security situation has prevented meaningful investor interest. Industrial development also is hampered by Burundi's distance from the sea and high transport costs. The real economy was expected to grow at 5.5% in 2007 and inflation was expected to be 7%." [3a] (FCO country profile, 19 November 2007)

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The USSD 2007 Country Report on Human Rights in Burundi stated that: "The government's human rights record remained poor; despite improvements in some areas, government security forces continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses. Members of the FDN, the police, and the National Intelligence Service (SNR) were responsible for killings, torture, and beatings of civilians and detainees (including suspected FNL supporters), although there were fewer such reports than in the previous year. There were isolated reports that security forces raped women and young girls. Impunity and harsh, life-threatening prison and detention center conditions remained problems, and reports of arbitrary arrest and detention continued. Prolonged pretrial detention, lack of judicial independence and efficiency, and rampant judicial corruption continued. The government continued to hold some political prisoners and political detainees. The government restricted freedom of assembly and association, although there were fewer such cases than in the previous year. The government did not tolerate direct criticism of the president and journalists continued to exercise self-censorship. Security forces continued to harass members of the opposition. Societal violence and discrimination against women and trafficking in persons remained problems". [2a] (USSD country report 11 March 2008)

Human Rights Watch world report of 2008 noted that: “Accusations of grave violations by security agents and soldiers declined in 2007, but impunity for cases of torture, unlawful killings, and war crimes continued to be the norm. There was no progress toward accountability in the case of the 31 people “disappeared” and presumed dead in July 2006 in Muyinga province, although three different judicial commissions investigated the crimes. An intelligence service agent arrested in September 2006 was released without trial in May 2007, and two soldiers arrested at the same time have not been tried. High-ranking civilian and military authorities admitted that an arrest warrant was issued against the former commander of the Fourth Military Region, Col. Vital Bangirinama, but was never executed. Colonel Bangirinama was removed from his post in Muyinga, but remains on active duty.” [11a] (Human Rights Watch, 31 January 2008)

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## FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Freedom House reported in its Freedom of the Press 2008 report that: “While the constitution provides for freedom of expression, this is rarely respected in practice; the government dominates the media and often persecutes those in the private sector who dare to criticize it. Much of the current media legislation is vague about which offenses a journalist may be charged for, a fact that is often taken advantage of by [sic] government officials.” [8a] (Freedom House, draft country report, 29 April 2008)

The USSD 2007 Country Report on Human Rights in Burundi stated that: “The constitution and the law provide for freedom of speech and the press; however, the government continued to restrict these freedoms, although there were fewer such cases than in the previous year. Unlike in 2006 there were no reports that journalists were arrested or detained, and the government did not force media outlets to suspend operations. However, journalists continued to exercise self-censorship, and direct criticism of the president was not tolerated. The government controlled many of the major media outlets. The government owned *Le Renouveau*, the only daily newspaper, as well as the country's only television station. The government exercised strong editorial control of these media.” [2a] (USSD country report 11 March 2008) (Section 2) (p8)

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Afrol News, in its gender profiles reported that violence against women in Burundi does exist but the extent is undocumented: “Wives have the right to charge their husbands with physical abuse, but they rarely do so. Police normally do not intervene in domestic disputes, and the media rarely report incidents of violence against women. No known court cases deal with the abuse of women. Several cases of abuse of displaced Burundian women in Tanzanian refugee camps have been reported in 2000. The Tanzanian Government does not seem to give sufficient protection in these camps. Refugees and internally displaced women live in great danger of abuse, rape, murder, abduction and falling into slavery.” [40a] (Afrol News, Gender Profile, accessed 12 May 2008)

Amnesty International (AI) reported the following: “Sexual violence, including rape, remained prevalent throughout Burundi. Military and police personnel were responsible for a number of rapes. The majority of reported rape victims were girls under the age of 18. Perpetrators regularly escaped prosecution and punishment by the state. The rate of successful prosecutions for sexual crimes remained extremely low. Most victims remained silent – often out of fear of social stigmatization. Victims and their families resorted to traditional and informal dispute resolution systems, often negotiating and

agreeing to payment from the perpetrator or the family of the perpetrator, as recompense.” [7d] (**Amnesty Internal report 2008**)

The USSD 2007 Country Report on Human Rights in Burundi stated that: “The law prohibits rape, which is punishable by up to 20 years’ imprisonment, but does not specifically prohibit spousal rape. ... Many women were reluctant to report rape for cultural reasons, fear of reprisals and unavailability of medical care”.

The report added: “Domestic violence against women was common, although no credible statistics were available. Police occasionally arrested persons accused of domestic violence but released suspects within a few days, with no further investigation. Wives have the right to charge their husbands with physical abuse but rarely did so, although police intervened on occasion and upon request. The law does not specifically prohibit domestic violence; however, persons accused of domestic violence can be tried under assault provisions. According to MSF, (Médecins San Frontières), the police investigated 154 cases of domestic abuse through August; of that number, investigations were continuing in 67 cases; 87 awaited judgment by the courts.” [2a] (**USSD country report 11 March 2008**) (**Section 5**) (p13)

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### 3. Index to key source documents

|                                |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY</b> | <b>[1a]</b>  | Europa World Online: Burundi, accessed 29 April 2008<br><a href="http://www.europaworld.com/">http://www.europaworld.com/</a>                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                | <b>[2a]</b>  | USSD, Country report on human rights practices 2007, 11 March 2008<br><a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100469.htm">www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100469.htm</a>                                                                                                          |
|                                | <b>[2b]</b>  | United States Department of State (USSD)<br>Background Note: Burundi, February 2008<br><a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm#political">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm#political</a>                                                                                    |
|                                | <b>[3a]</b>  | Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), UK<br>Country profile: Burundi, last updated 19 November 2007<br><a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/burundi">http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/country-profiles/sub-saharan-africa/burundi</a>     |
|                                | <b>[4a]</b>  | Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),<br>The World Factbook, Burundi, last updated 15 May 2008<br><a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/by.html</a>                                  |
|                                | <b>[4b]</b>  | Chiefs of state and cabinet members of foreign governments, Burundi. Last updated 19 November 2007<br><a href="https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/world-leaders-b/burundi.html">https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/world-leaders-b/burundi.html</a> |
|                                | <b>[5b]</b>  | Women in parliament and government, 29 February 2008<br><a href="http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/notes/snsg-01250.pdf">http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/notes/snsg-01250.pdf</a>                                                                                     |
|                                | <b>[6a]</b>  | British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)<br>Country profile: Burundi, last updated 18 April 2008<br><a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1068873.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1068873.stm</a>                                       |
|                                | <b>[6b]</b>  | Timeline: Burundi, last updated 22 April 2008<br><a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1068991.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1068991.stm</a>                                                                                        |
|                                | <b>[7b]</b>  | 2007 annual report for Burundi<br><a href="http://www.amnestyusa.org/annualreport.php?id=ar&amp;yr=2007&amp;c=BDI">http://www.amnestyusa.org/annualreport.php?id=ar&amp;yr=2007&amp;c=BDI</a>                                                                                                   |
|                                | <b>[7d]</b>  | Amnesty International Report, 2008<br><a href="http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/regions/africa/burundi">http://thereport.amnesty.org/eng/regions/africa/burundi</a>                                                                                                                             |
|                                | <b>[10a]</b> | Department for International Development (DfID)<br>Burundi: Country profile, last updated 7 January 2008<br><a href="http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/africa/burundi.asp">http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/africa/burundi.asp</a>                                                               |
|                                | <b>[15a]</b> | IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks) Humanitarian country profile, last updated February 2007<br><a href="http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=BI&amp;RegionCode=GL">http://www.irinnews.org/country.aspx?CountryCode=BI&amp;RegionCode=GL</a>                           |
|                                | <b>[26a]</b> | USAID's strategy in Burundi, last updated 12 February 2008<br><a href="http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/burundi/">http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/burundi/</a>                                                                           |

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|----------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY, CONT'D</b> | <b>[26b]</b> | Burundi: Country profile, accessed 13 May 2008<br><a href="http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/burundi/burundi_profile.pdf">http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/burundi/burundi_profile.pdf</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                        | <b>[33c]</b> | Reuters Alert Net, Burundi: Country profile, 13 July 2007<br><a href="http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/countryprofiles/152653.htm">http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/countryprofiles/152653.htm</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                        | <b>[40a]</b> | Afrol News, Gender profile: Burundi, accessed 12 May 2008<br><a href="http://www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/burundi_women.htm">http://www.afrol.com/Categories/Women/profiles/burundi_women.htm</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                        | <b>[42a]</b> | The United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB)<br>ONUB – Chronology<br><a href="http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/onub/chronology.pdf">http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/onub/chronology.pdf</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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