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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

BURUNDI

14 MARCH 2007

Contents

	Page
1. PREFACE	3
2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT BURUNDI.....	5
Geography	5
Maps	6
Recent history	6
Recent events and political developments.....	7
Economy	7
Human rights.....	8
3. INDEX TO KEY SOURCE DOCUMENTS.....	9
KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	9
MAPS.....	9
HISTORY	10
POLITICS AND RECENT EVENTS.....	10
HUMAN RIGHTS – GENERAL	11
Human Rights Treaties.....	12
HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES	12
Children	12
Citizenship and Nationality	13
Corruption	13
Crime	14
Disability	14
Death Penalty	15
Employment Rights	15
Ethnic Groups	15
Exit – Entry Procedures.....	15
Foreign Refugees.....	15
Freedom of Movement	16
Freedom of Religion.....	16
Freedom of Speech and the Media	16
Humanitarian issues	17
Human Rights Institutions, Organisations and Activists	17
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	17
Judiciary.....	18
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons	19
Medical issues	19
Military	20
Prison conditions.....	20
Political activists	20
Security Forces	21
Non-state armed groups.....	22
Trafficking	22
Women	22
4. REFERENCES TO SOURCE MATERIAL.....	24

1. Preface

- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, 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 14 March 2007.
- 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 Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office 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 key 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 documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

Country of Origin Information Service

Home Office
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Website: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html

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The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information was established under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the Home Office's country of origin information material. The Advisory Panel welcomes all feedback on the Home Office's country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at www.apci.org.uk.

It is not the function of the Advisory Panel to endorse any Home Office material or procedures. In the course of its work, the Advisory Panel directly

reviews the content of selected Home Office COI documents, but neither the fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. 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.

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[Return to Contents](#)

2. Background Information about Burundi

Full Country Name: The Republic of Burundi.

Area: 27,834 sq km [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile)

Population: 8,090,068 [5a] (CIA World Factbook – Burundi, 8 February 2007)

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

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

Language(s): Kirundi (official), French (official), Swahili (along Lake Tanganyika and the Bujumbura area)

Religion(s): Christianity

Indigenous beliefs: 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); Burundi African Alliance for the Salvation (ABASA); Rally for Democracy and Economic and Social Development (RADDES); Party for National Redress (PARENA); People's Reconciliation Party (PRP) and the Movement for the Rehabilitation of the Citizen (MRC).

Head of State: President Pierre Nkurunziza

Vice President: Dr Martin Nduwimana

Minister for External Relations and Co-operation: Antoinette Batumbwira

Membership of International groupings: African Union (AU), UN, Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA) [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile)

[Return to Contents](#)

GEOGRAPHY

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 two rainy seasons (March to May; October to December). Official languages are Kirundi, French and Swahili. [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile)

MAPS



Map courtesy of United Nations

[Return to Contents](#)

RECENT HISTORY

Burundi gained independence from Belgium in 1962. With six million people [The CIA World Factbook reported on 8 February 2007 that there were over 8 million people living in Burundi] living in an area of only 27,830 square kilometres, Burundi is Africa's most densely populated country. Since independence, Burundi's political life has been characterised by rivalry, conflict and violence between the larger ethnic groups, the Hutu and Tutsi. Over half a million people have been killed; more than 281,000 people have been internally displaced; and there are more than 800,000 refugees living in neighbouring countries, mainly in Tanzania. [3b] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office - Human Rights Annual Report 2004, p146)

The FCO country profile for Burundi 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]

RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The new government, led by President Pierre Nkurunziza, signed a South African brokered ceasefire with the country's last rebel group, the Forces Nationales de Liberation (FNL) in September of 2006. [5a] (CIA World Factbook – Burundi, 8 February 2007) While the FNL entered the peace process in September 2006, its fighters remained in the field. [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile) Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment for Burundi (updated 19 January 2007) noted that the FNL, led by Agathon Rwaswa, remained an active insurgent faction. [11e]

The United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) completed its peacekeeping mandate on 31 December 2006. On 1 January 2007 the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) started its mandate for an initial period of one year. [39a] (United Nations Operation in Burundi: Chronology) "The BINUB proposed responsibilities include support for demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and reform of the security sector in the wake of the 7 September Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement. They also include the promotion and protection of human rights and measures to end impunity through a truth and reconciliation commission and special tribunal, as well as support for poverty-reduction efforts." [19b] (United Nations Press Release PKO/157, 20 December 2006)

Despite many positive developments in the country, the overall political situation remained tense. "Seven individuals, including the former transitional President, Domitien Ndayizeye, and Vice-President, Alphonse-Marie Kadege, arrested in connection with the alleged coup plot, were still in detention. On 26 October, the Supreme Court reversed its own ruling of 6 October ordering the release of the seven detainees before their trials, and their detention was extended until 26 November." [20b] (United Nations Security Council - p3, 18 December 2006) On 15 January 2007, Reuters reported that former president Ndayizeye and four others accused of plotting a coup were acquitted of all charges. Former rebel leader, Alain Mugabarabona and co-defendant Tharcisse Ndayishimiye were sentenced to 20 and 15 years in prison respectively. [40] (Independent Online, 15 January 2007)

[Return to Contents](#)

ECONOMY

GDP: US\$800m (2005 est.)

Real GDP Growth: 4% (2006)

Inflation: 11% (2006 est.)

Major Exports: Coffee, tea

Major Trading Partners: Exports – Germany (19.6%), Belgium (8.2%), Pakistan (6.7%), US (5.6%), Rwanda (5.6%) Imports – Kenya (13.6%), Tanzania (11.1%), US (8.8%), Belgium (8.5%), France (8.3%).

Exchange Rate: Franc Burundais 1081 = US\$1 (2005 est.) [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile)

“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.” [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile) “Burundi grew about 5 per cent in 2006. Delayed disbursements of funds from the World Bank may add to budget pressures in 2007. Burundi will continue to remain heavily dependent on aid from bilateral and multilateral donors.” [5a] (CIA World Factbook – Burundi, 8 February 2007) The FCO noted that inflation is expected to be 11%. [3a] (Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Burundi Country Profile)

[Return to Contents](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS

The FCO country profile for Burundi stated, “The human rights situation in Burundi remains poor, with widespread abuses committed by all parties, particularly in the rural areas surrounding the capital. Tens of thousands of people remain internally displaced. Killing of civilians, reprisal killings, torture, rape, theft, illegal and arbitrary detention, and forced labour have been reported. Rape and gang rape against women, girls and boys is on the increase. The judicial system has little capacity to act in timely and impartial manner, and impunity is pervasive. The indigenous Twa (Pygmy) people remain marginalised economically, socially, and politically.” [3a]

The USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2005, 8 March 2006, noted that “Widespread poverty, food shortages in some parts of the country, lack of basic infrastructure, and a high level of foreign debt contributed to the overall poor human rights situation. ... The PALIPEHUTU-FNL [Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People/National Liberation Front] continued to commit numerous serious human rights abuses against civilians, including killings, indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, kidnappings, rapes, theft, extortion, the forcible recruitment and employment of children as soldiers, and the use of forced labor.” [2e] (Introduction)

[Return to Contents](#)

3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY	[1a] House of Commons Library Research Paper 06/51 The African Great Lakes Region: An End to Conflict? 25 October 2006 http://www.parliament.uk/commons/lib/research/rp2006/rp06-051.pdf [2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, 6 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78722.htm [2b] USSD, Background Note: Burundi, last updated January 2007 http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm [3a] FCO, Country Profile: Burundi (last updated on 6 October 2006) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1020337957293 [4a] BBC, Country Profile: Burundi, last updated 12 December 2006 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1068873.stm [5a] CIA, The World Factbook, Burundi, last updated 8 February 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/by.html [5b] CIA, Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments, Burundi, last updated 9 February 2007 https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/chiefs/chiefs30.html [8a] Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report: Burundi, February 2007 <u>Hard saved copy only</u> [8b] Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Profile: Burundi, 20 September 2006, <u>Hard saved copy only</u> [9a] Department for International Development, Burundi Fact Sheet, January 2007 http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/burundi-factsheet.pdf
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HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL: CONT'D	2006) http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1020337957293 [3b] FCO, Annual Report on Human Rights 2006, published 12 October 2006 http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1159199103169 [6a] Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Burundi (accessed 21 January 2006) http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&year=2006&country=6933 [10a] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2007: Burundi, (accessed 21 January 2007) http://hrw.org/englishwr2k7/docs/2007/01/11/burund14781.htm [13a] Amnesty International, Annual Report (accessed on 21 January 2007) http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/bdi-summary-eng [13c] Amnesty International, Briefing to the Committee against Torture, October 2006 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=45388c3e4 [14a] IRIN, Government under pressure to curb continued rights violations, 27 November 2006 http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=61660 Office of the United Nations High commissioner for Human Rights, Burundi country page, accessed 27 February 2007 http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/bi/
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CHILDREN CONT'D	[2c] USSD, Trafficking in Persons Report 2006, 5 June 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65987.htm [10b] Human Rights Watch, A Long Way from Home FNL Child Soldiers in Burundi – June 2006 http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rsd/rsddocview.pdf?tbl=RSDCOI&id=44c75b0a4 [17a] Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Global Report 2004: Burundi http://www.child-soldiers.org/regions/country.html?id=35 [18a] UNICEF, Info by Country: Burundi http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/burundi_28197.html [18b] UNICEF, Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality - The State of the World's Children 2007 http://www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org/docs/unicef_state_world_children_07.pdf [18c] UNICEF, What Children and Youth Think Burundi, A Statistical Presentation of Opinions and Perceptions of Children and Youth in Burundi, 2006 http://www.africanchildforum.org/Documents/Burundi.pdf [19a] United Nations, UN commissioned independent report on the situation of human rights in Burundi (written by Akich Okola), 14 September 2005 http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/511/09/PDF/N0551109.pdf?OpenElement [20a] United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Burundi, 27 October 2006 http://www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org/docs/UNSG_Report_Children_Burundi_2006_Eng.pdf [20b] Ninth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Burundi, 18 December 2006 http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/661/19/PDF/N0666119.pdf?OpenElement [23a] The Protection Project, Trafficking: Burundi, accessed 28 February 2007 http://www.protectionproject.org/burundi.doc
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EXIT – ENTRY PROCEDURES	[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, 6 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78722.htm
FOREIGN REFUGEES	[2a] USSD, Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006, 6 March 2006 http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78722.htm

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[Return to Contents](#)