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Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Burundi - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 20 May 2011

Information on the current situation between Hutus and Tutsis

Reviewing events of 2010, a report issued in 2011 by *Freedom House* points out that:

“There are more than two dozen active political parties in the country, ranging from those that champion radical Tutsi positions to those that hold extremist Hutu views. Most are small in terms of membership” (Freedom House (2011) *Freedom in the World - Burundi* (2011)).

A document released by the *United States Department of State* in April 2011 commenting on events of the preceding year notes:

“The constitution requires ethnic quotas for representation within the government and in the security forces. Hutus, who constitute an estimated 85 percent of the population, significantly increased their presence and power in the government following the 2005 and 2010 elections; however, the minority Tutsis have historically held political and economic advantages” (United States Department of State (8 April 2011) *2010 Human Rights Report: Burundi*, Section 6 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons/National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities).

In February 2011 a report by the *International Crisis Group* states:

“Burundi made considerable advances towards peace consolidation thanks to the arrival in government of CNDDFDD, a majority Hutu movement, in 2005 following elections perceived to be free and fair; the integration of all the former armed parties and political movements into the defence and security agencies; and FNL’s integration into the political arena in 2009. These advances have also noticeably contributed to reducing the ethnic divide in Burundian society which today is shaken by tensions based on what are essentially political cleavages within the Hutu majority” (International Crisis Group (7 February 2011) *Burundi: From Electoral Boycott to Political Impasse*, p.1).

Agence France Presse in May 2011 notes:

“The tiny central African country is still recovering five years after the end of the civil war that claimed some 300,000 lives. The government is to establish a truth and reconciliation commission and a special tribunal by the end of this year to prosecute war crimes” (Agence France Presse (16 May 2011) *Burundi: At least 13,000 Hutu rebels killed in Burundi war: president*).

A paper issued in April 2011 by the *United States Institute of Peace* notes:

“This does not mean that the Tutsi and Hutu camps today are either cohesive or united, or that ethnicity is the only significant cleavage in Burundian

political life...both Tutsi and Hutu have remained deeply fragmented by salient clan and regional divisions and personal leadership rivalries. In recent decades, the Hima-Tutsi from Bururi Province have emerged as the dominant force, within both the army and the government. This powerful southern "Bururi lobby" not infrequently draws the wrath not only of Hutus but also of Tutsis from northern Burundi. Indeed, clan and regional divisions within the Tutsi and Hutu camps, at times, were a more formidable obstacle to a sustainable peace agreement than the Tutsi-Hutu cleavage. However, until recently intragroup competition often had the perverse effect of exacerbating the Tutsi-Hutu divide, rivals for power each accusing the other of having gone soft on their ethnic adversary or of not being aggressive enough in advocating their own ethnic group interests" (United States Institute of Peace (April 2011) *Making peace after genocide, Anatomy of the Burundi Process*, P.8).

In April 2011 the *Agence France Presse* states:

"Gunmen dressed as police killed three members of the ruling party in what one rights group said Thursday was retaliation for the killing of several members of Burundi's former-rebel FNL. The latest killing, on Wednesday, happened in the western rural province of Nyakibanda, a stronghold of the Hutu former rebels of the National Forces of Liberation (FLN). Four "armed, unidentified bandits in police uniform" carried out the attack at around 4:00 pm (1400 GMT) in a bar in Nyakibanda, senior local official Onesime Bandyatuyaga told AFP. "We don't know the reason for these killings," he added, but the victims were all members of the mainly Tutsi ruling CNDD-FDD party" (Agence France Presse (7 April 2011) *Political tensions blamed for wave of killings in Burundi*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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