

BURUNDIAN LIGUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS "ITEKA"

Approved by Ministerial Order n ° 530/0273 of 10 November 1994 revising Order No. 550 /029 of 6 February 1991

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REPORT OF THE BURUNDIAN HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE "ITEKA" ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BURUNDI DURING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2024



In memory of Madame Marie Claudette Kwizera, treasurer of Ligue Iteka, who went missing on December 10, 2015. From December 2015 to February 28, 2025, at least 719 cases of enforced disappearance were reported to Ligue Iteka.

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ACRONYMS

CNDD-FDD	: <i>National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Defense Forces</i>
CNL	: <i>National Congress for Liberty</i>
DRC	: <i>Democratic Republic of Congo</i>
ESCR	: <i>Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</i>
FRODEBU	: <i>Front for Democracy in Burundi</i>
M23	: <i>March 23 Movement</i>
PNB	: <i>Burundi National Police</i>
REGIDESO	: <i>Water Distribution Authority</i>
SNR	: <i>National Intelligence Service</i>
TAFOC	: <i>Task Force</i>
TGI	: <i>High Court</i>
UNGA	: <i>United Nations General Assembly</i>
UPRONA	: <i>Union for National Progress</i>
VBG	: <i>Gender-Based Violence</i>

0. INTRODUCTION

This monthly report of February 2025 is a summary of the weekly Iteka n'Ijambo bulletins from 459 to 462. This report covers the political, governance, judicial, humanitarian and security context that marked this period. It also reviews civil and political rights and economic and socio-cultural rights, and categorical rights. This report finally closes with a conclusion and recommendations.

Thus, the human rights situation was reported as follows: at least 41 people killed including 21 bodies found, 1 person tortured, 7 victims of SGBV including 1 minor boy as well as 77 people arbitra-

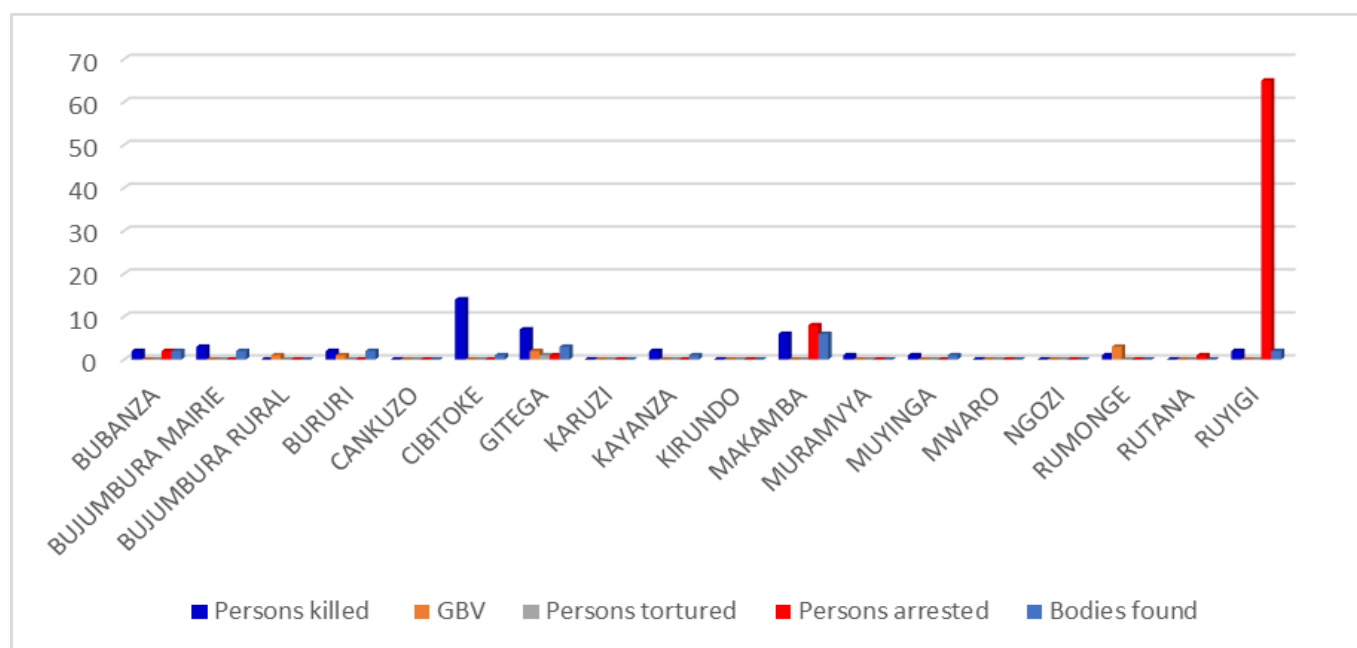
rily arrested including 65 Banyamulenge and 4 Ugandans.

Members of political parties were not spared from these violations. Thus, 2 members of UPRONA party including 1 woman and a member of CNL party found dead, 1 FRODEBU member victim of torture. Twelve people died following landslides.

Imbonerakure, administrators, police officers, soldiers and SNR agents are singled out as alleged perpetrators of most of these human rights violations and murders.

0.1. Mapping of incidents and distribution per alleged perpetrators

Figure 1: Graph illustrating the main cases of the human rights situation observed in Burundi in February 2024



The high numbers of people killed were recorded in Cibitoke province with 14 cases, Gitega with 7 cases, Makamba with 6 cases, Bujumbura Mairie with 3 cases followed by the provinces of Bubanza, Bururi, Kayanza and Ruyigi with 2 cases each.

Among the alleged perpetrators of these killings are unidentified people with 20 cases, soldiers, administrators, Imbonerakure with 1 case each. Twelve cases of people killed following landslides, 1 case of settling scores, 1 case of mob justice, 2 cases of security incidents and 2 cases of infanticide were recorded.

During this reporting period, 7 cases of SGBV were

observed. The province of Rumonge comes first with 3 cases followed by Gitega with 2 cases and the provinces of Bujumbura rural and Bururi with 1 case each.

A case of torture was recorded in Gitega province. The alleged perpetrators of these acts of torture are members of the joint security committee.

During this period, 77 cases of arbitrary arrests were documented in the provinces of Ruyigi with 65 cases followed by Rumonge and Makamba with 4 cases each. The alleged perpetrators are police officers, SNR agents and soldiers.

I.1. POLITICAL CONTEXT

The political context during this reporting period was marked by several events of political and security tensions or among others; the President of Burundi, Evariste Ndayishimiye, expressed his frustration regarding the inaction of the international community in the face of the security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), during a ceremony with the diplomatic corps. He warned that a regional flaring could occur if the crisis is not addressed seriously. Ndayishimiye also raised concerns about Rwanda's activities, accusing it of supporting Burundian refugees by arming them, which would pose a threat to Burundi. He stressed that regional peace requires close collaboration between countries and a strengthening of security mechanisms.

In Burundi, the security situation is tense. Suspicious movements of Imbonerakure, a youth group from the ruling party, CDD-FDD, accompanied by soldiers, have been observed. A large number of Imbonerakure have been recruited to support the Congolese army against the M23, which worries families. A message inciting people to be arm has circulated, and the military authorities have increased surveillance, citing tensions with rebel groups active in some regions. The movements of armed movements and the massive recruitment of soldiers have raised concerns among the population.

During a visit to Kirundo province, Ndayishimiye named Rwanda a "bad neighbor" and said Burundi would respond to any attack. He recalled historical conflicts between the two countries and warned that Burundi would not be defeated by Rwanda. This comes out as Burundi is strongly involved in the TAFOC mission in the DRC. The President also distributed food items during the visit.

The President warned of a possible war due to Rwanda's behavior toward Burundian refugees. Fol-

lowing these statements, the government held information meetings to sensitize the population. However, the government also expelled the World Food Program representative, accused of encouraging the population to get ready for an attack.

Regarding the elections, opposition parties are expressing concerns about possible electoral fraud in Cibitoke province. They accuse the Electoral Commission of favoring the ruling party, CNDD-FDD, by manipulating the electoral lists. Measures are being taken to control voter registration, and worrying behaviors are being observed, including hate speech.

Burundian authorities have also banned the rental of housing to Congolese refugees and are requiring mandatory declarations regarding the accommodation of individuals. This raises concerns about the recognition and treatment of refugees.

Faced with the volatile situation in the DRC, Ndayishimiye has proposed a peace plan aimed at restoring stability by calling for an inter-Congolese dialogue and a ceasefire. He has suggested that the international community get involved to help the DRC regain its territorial integrity. Burundi also appears ready to disengage from the conflict by withdrawing its troops from the DRC.

On 17 February 2025, a census of non-CNDD-FDD households was conducted by Imbonerakure, which may reflect tensions and control of the population. This census has been criticized as an attempt to intimidate opponents. Accusations of political bias raise concerns about the independence of institutions and the ability to ensure fair and transparent elections in Burundi.

1.2. GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

The governance context in Burundi in February 2025 is marked by several recent events. Paramilitary trainings in schools in Rumonge province took place on 29 January 2025, organized by CNDD-FDD party at Lycée Rumonge. This meeting, reserved for students from grade 9 to senior high school, aimed to teach the party's ideology and discuss the 2025 elections. Led by Evariste Ntakarutimana, the students were then split into two groups for paramilitary training, with party teachers supervising the girls and Ntakarutimana supervising the boys. This initiative aims to prepare young people for civic life, but could also serve to recruit members for the party.

Makamba province has been facing a severe fuel shortage since 26 January 2025, affecting public transport. Transport agencies are rare, and only one operates for a minimum service. The fuel shortage has urged transporters to seek solutions on the black market, following the ban of the police to supply from Tanzania to by-pass the crisis. This situation has caused a sharp increase in ticket fares, making transport inaccessible for many passengers. The authorities must resolve this crisis quickly to restore service.

On 27 January 2025, a meeting in Bujumbura addressed concerns linked to fuel shortage, especially in the run-up to elections. Politicians called on the government to address the persistent problem, while the minister indicated that some are hiding the fuel, exacerbating the situation. This fuel problem has significant impacts on the economy and daily life.

1.3. JUDICIAL CONTEXT

In February 2025, the judicial context was marked by several legal cases concerning offenses related to human trafficking and sexual violence, were judged by the courts of Rutana and Kayanza, in particular :

(i) The Conviction of Jérémie Kinyomvyi (January 21, 2025): Jérémie Kinyomvyi was sentenced to 7 years in prison and a fine of 7,000,000 Bif for human trafficking. He was arrested in Birongozi with 7 children aged 13 and 14, from Karusi province, whom he was trying to take to Tanzania.

(ii) Conviction of Ernest Ndayiziga (January 5, 2025). Ernest Ndayiziga was sentenced to 3 years in prison and a fine of 200,000 Bif for each child

The commercial port of Rumonge recently increased its loading and unloading fees, which risks impacting the domestic market. Cost increases for various products, such as cement and fish, are already being seen, as well as for transport to Tanzania and the DRC, which could reduce purchasing power.

Probox vehicle drivers in Makamba province rioted on 3 February 2025 against fines from road controllers. The fines are from accusations that fares were increased due to fuel purchased at high prices in Tanzania. The riot has disrupted transport, affecting passengers and government officials.

Kirundo province is in famine following a severe drought, with crops severely damaged. The authorities have provided little aid so far, but food distributions have taken place through local initiatives. The governor and the presidential advisor have encouraged people to irrigate their fields.

Since 6 February 2025, ex-PMPA demobilized soldiers have received cash, while ex-FAB soldiers have received nothing, raising questions about potential discrimination aimed at manipulating ex-combatants. Finally, sixty Burundians returned from the DRC on 20 February 2025, fleeing the threat of M23 rebels, and were welcomed by the authorities for their identification.

These events highlight the challenges that Burundi faces in terms of governance, particularly with regard to security, the economy and the protection of human rights.

transported. He had 5 minor children with him when he was arrested on the road to Nyabantu, all from Buhiga commune in Karusi province.

(iii) Verdict against five men from Ngozi (January 28, 2025) where five men were sentenced to 2 to 7 years in prison for their role in child trafficking to Tanzania. They admitted to working for a boss in Tanzania and mentioned that 17 children had been returned to their families.

(iv) Appearance of Alain Guillaume Bunyoni (February 14, 2025): The former prime minister requested a review of his life sentence due to health

problems. He was supported by his lawyer but the public prosecutor claimed that his health rights were respected. A decision on his provisional release will be made within 48 hours.

(v) Conviction of Déo Nkurunziza (11 February 2025): Déo Nkurunziza was sentenced to 20 years in prison for the rape of a 12-year-old girl, following the discovery by the victim's mother of com-

promising messages. The victim testified that he had deceived her with a promise of money.

These cases reveal major challenges in child protection and the fight against human trafficking. They also prove the responsiveness of the judiciary to address these serious crimes and the need to strengthen security measures to protect children from exploitation.

1.4. HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

The humanitarian context of February 2025 was marked by displacements of Congolese refugees to Burundi where more than 8,000 Congolese found refuge in Rugombo commune, Cibitoke province, Burundi, fleeing intense fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These refugees are requesting urgent humanitarian assistance, including food, tents, toilets and water. They are fleeing the clashes between the M23 and the Congolese army, supported by Burundian soldiers.

The Burundian authorities are implementing measures to shelter the refugees, while advising them be cautious. However, the presence of these refugees worries the local population, who fear for their safety and are requesting their relocation.

The humanitarian situation has remained critical, with cases of dysentery and malaria reported among the refugees. The efforts of humanitarian organiza-

tions are insufficient compared to the needs. UNHCR has launched a census to organize the relocation of refugees, but faces many challenges.

According to the UNHCR, more than 61,000 Congolese refugees have arrived in Burundi since last January. The province of Cibitoke is in humanitarian crisis, with 32,235 Congolese refugees fleeing rebel violence. Resources are finished and refugees are exposed to serious health risks.

Congolese refugees including people in police uniforms from the DRC have also sought refuge in other provinces of Burundi, such as Rumonge and Muramvya. Local authorities have distributed food aid for the refugees.

This crisis highlights the vulnerability of the Congolese to conflict in their country and features the need for urgent humanitarian assistance for refugees.

1.5. SECURITY CONTEXT

The security situation in Burundi in February 2025 was marked by a significant deterioration, particularly in Cibitoke province. The alarming activities of the Imbonerakure, the militia of the ruling party CNDD-FDD, and the growing tensions between communities are sources of concern.

Suspicious movements of Imbonerakure accompanied by soldiers have been reported, particularly on Ngozi-Gitega national road. Preparations in Makamba to secure the borders are raising concerns among the Burundian population.

The province of Cibitoke has experienced a massive recruitment of young people for the National Defense Force, scaring parents and the whole community in Cibitoke on the fate of their civilian children who are not militarily trained but who are enrolled.

The arming of the Imbonerakure, as well as inci-

dents of violence, are also worrying in February 2025. Conflicts and tensions were reported by Ligue Iteka where the president encouraged the population to prepare for a possible conflict against Rwanda, which increased tensions and security measures.

Meetings were reported within CNDD-FDD that incited the population, particularly the Hutus, to mobilize against alleged threats from the M23, leading to an increase in armed youth, claiming a regional ethnic war.

Weekly reports indicate that many Burundian soldiers have fled the fighting against the M23 in the DRC, which has created a crisis of confidence within the army.

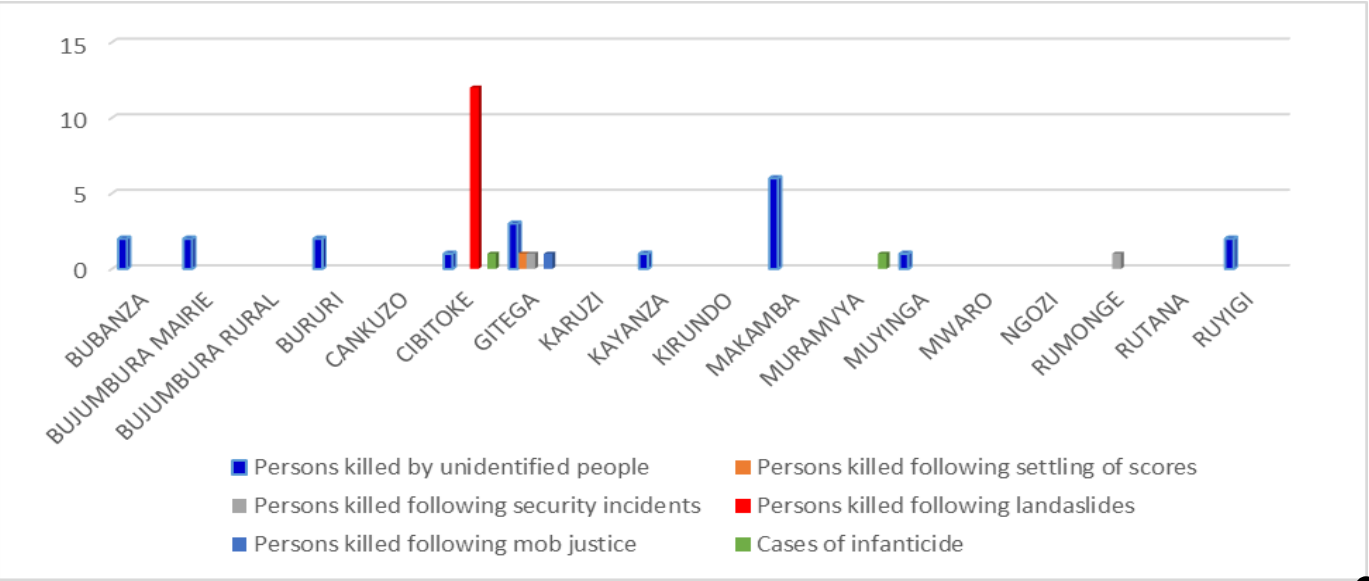
This security tension has had the following humanitarian repercussions: The situation has led to a humanitarian crisis, with thousands of Congolese

refugees fleeing the fighting and crossing the Burundian border. The refugees are exposed to health risks and require urgent humanitarian aid.

In summary, the security situation in Burundi is marked by intercommunity tensions, alarming activities of the Imbonerakure and conflicts with armed groups. The humanitarian consequences are serious, with thousands of refugees exposed to health risks. The authorities must guarantee the safety of all citizens and take measures to resolve the humanitarian

crisis. Also, during this reporting period, as the graph below illustrates, Ligue has documented at least 41 people killed, including 21 bodies found. Among these victims, 12 people died following landslides, 1 person was killed following the settling of scores, 1 person following mob justice, 2 people following security incidents, 2 cases of infanticide and 20 people by unidentified people.

Figure 2: Graph of people killed by unidentified people, following landslides, settling of scores, mob



II. CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Burundi is one of the countries adhering to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1965) and its Optional Protocol (1976) without any reservation on May 9, 1990, which as part of its implementation, Burundi has taken measures in domestic legislation, in particular in its Constitution of June 7, 2018 (Main Law) in its article 19 which guarantees that all the rights proclaimed and guaranteed

by the regularly ratified international texts are an integral part of this constitution, implementing texts are put in place, in particular the penal code of December 29, 2017 and the code of criminal procedure of May 11, 2018 and other institutions for the protection of human rights in Burundi have been created.

II.1. RIGHT TO LIFE

Human dignity is guaranteed by law and must be respected and protected by the State. In case of violation, sanctions must be applied to the alleged perpetrators, as stipulated in Article 21 of the Constitution. However, in practice, political will seems to prevail over observed and convincing facts.

Ligue Iteka has documented at least 3 cases of people killed by State agents during this reporting period, and the perpetrators of this killing are Imbonerakure, soldiers and administrative officials with 1 case each. This situation raises concerns about respect for human dignity and the rule of law in Burundi.

II.2. RIGHT TO PHYSICAL INTEGRITY

II.2.1. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Law on Gender-Based Violence adopted in Burundi in 2016 marked an important step towards the protection of victims. In particular, it broadened the definition of rape to take into account consent and banned harmful traditional practices. However, despite this progress, gender-based violence (GBV) remains a concern.

In February 2025, Ligue Iteka recorded at least 7 people victims of SGBV. Rumonge province was the most affected with 3 cases, followed by Gitega with 2 cases, and Bujumbura rural and Bururi with 1 case each.

II.2.2. TORTURE

During this reporting period, Ligue Iteka recorded at least 1 person tortured in Gitega province. The alleged perpetrators of these acts of torture are members of the joint security committee.

II.3. RIGHT TO FREEDOM

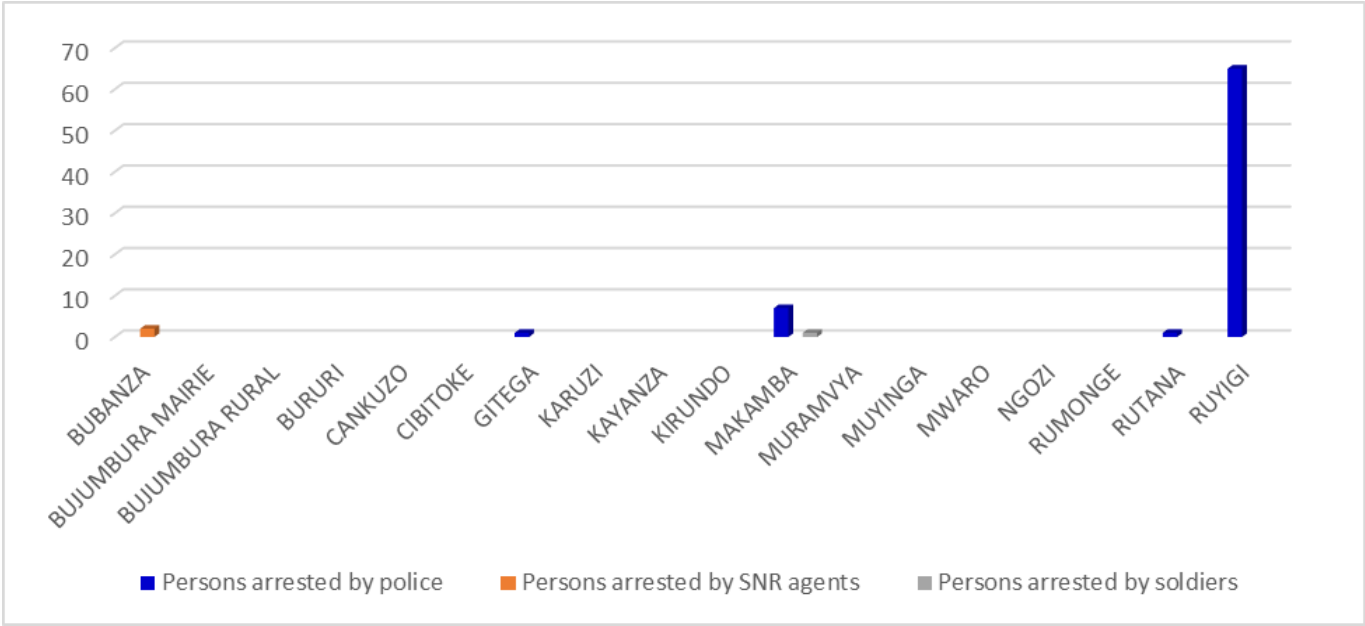
II.3.1. ARBITRARY ARRESTS

In Burundi, international and national texts guarantee the principle of innocence until proven guilty and stipulate that detention should only be an exception.

reporting period. The alleged perpetrators of these arrests are police officers, agents of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) and soldiers. The victims of these arrests were recorded in the provinces of Ruyigi, Rumonge, Makamba, Gitega, Rutana and Bubanza.

However, in this report, Ligue Iteka reports that at least 77 people were arbitrarily arrested during this

Figure 3: Graph illustrating arbitrary arrests



III. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

III. 1. DISRUPTION OF ECONOMIC LIFE

In February 2025, the population of Cankuzo experienced suffering due to the lack of power since January 26, 2025. A REGIDESO transformer burnt at Cankuzo hospital, causing panic among patients, although there were no injuries. The city was plunged into darkness, and the hospital had to face major difficulties, such as the inability to store reagents or accommodate patients. Public and private services were completely paralyzed, with serious consequences on patient care. In addition, the hospital is facing shortages of medical equipment, forcing patients to buy their needs in private pharmacies at increased prices.

At the same time, prices of several food products and services have increased significantly in Cankuzo, with examples of beverages sold quite above

their normal price. The economic situation in the province has been worsened by the increase in the price of fuel in Cibitoke province, which has reached alarming levels after a previous drop. This change has been caused by security tensions and supply problems related to trade.

Police officers in Bujumbura are also involved in the illegal sale of alcoholic beverages, raising concerns among the population. Kayanza province was forced to food collection for a political party. In Ruyigi, there is a lack of chemical fertilizer and speculation on transport prices, creating problems for farmers. Angry residents have even blocked fertilizer trucks that have not been distributed despite deposit payments, leading to confrontations with the police.

III.2. RIGHT TO EDUCATION

During this reporting period, Ligue Iteka reported problems with the distribution of books for 5th grade teachers in Makamba province. Since the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, 5th grade fundamental teachers report that they have not received necessary teachers' manuals, while students' books have been distributed. Teachers are concerned that the absence of these books could affect the progress of programs. Some school principals claim that the teachers' books are kept by the communal directors of education to force students to pay sports fees, which are 1,500 Bif for 7th grades and 1,000 Bid for 5th and 6th grades. The principals do not understand why the books are being blocked, as they plan to pay once they receive funds from the Ministry of Education. They have already used their

money for other expenses, such as photocopies of report forms.

A punishment not included in the school regulations in Ngozi province at Alessandro technical high school in Ngozi was reported where students who leave school without permission must pay a bag of cement as a penalty. Parents denounce this punishment they consider as arbitrary. According to the regulations, leaving the class should result in a withdrawal of 9 scores in education, and not a financial penalty. Parents believe that these decisions resemble ransom, while the director affirms that these decisions were made in agreement with the parents.

III.3. RIGHT TO HEALTH

A resurgence of Mpox epidemic was observed during February at Cibitoke hospital, with three deaths in less than two weeks. Residents are asking for treatment and rigorous monitoring. The head doctor of the health district reassures the population. One patient died on February 14, 2025 and two others early the month, all three admitted in an isolation center. A local source claims that the authorities are trying to prevent the family of the last deceased from talking about the causes of his death in order

to cover up the disease. There is also the matter of not returning the bodies to the families for discreet burials. Almost a dozen people have died since the start of the epidemic, and about a hundred have recovered. The Red Cross is trying to disinfect the premises, but testimonies reveal misuse of food aid and bonuses for staff. The population fears a new spread of the disease. The head doctor acknowledges the cases of Mpox but denies embezzlement.

IV. CATEGORIES OF RIGHTS

IV.1. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Burundi ratified on 19 October 1990, guarantees children the right to be protected from violence, mistreatment and all forms of abuse and exploitation. The Burundian Constitution also, in its article 44, stipulates that “every child has the right to special measures to ensure or improve the care necessary for their well-being, health, physical safety and to be protected against mistreatment, exactions or exploitation”.

Despite these guarantees, during this reporting period, Ligue Iteka recorded at least 2 children killed.

IV.2. WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UNGA on 18 December 1979 and around a hundred countries ratified it in 1990, including Burundi on 8 January 1992.

During this reporting period, Ligue Iteka recorded at least 1 woman killed.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During this reporting period, the deterioration of the human rights situation continued to be observed across the country.

This report notes cases of violations of the right to life; to physical integrity and freedom; economic, social and cultural rights, as well as categorical rights.

This report also lists issues related to security incidents as well as the context prevailing in the country.

In this report, Ligue Iteka also reviews the major events that marked the political, economic, governance, judicial, humanitarian, and security contexts that marked this period. It also reviews civil and political rights and economic and socio-cultural rights and categorical rights. Ligue Iteka protests against the impunity of the crimes observed.

Considering the situation of human rights violations in Burundi that continues, Ligue Iteka recommends the following:

- ◆ **To the Government of Burundi and in particular the Burundian Minister of Justice, the Minister of the Environment, Water, Energy, Hygiene and Sanitation,**
 - ⇒ Strengthen the independence and impartiality of the judiciary to guarantee fair trials and stop impunity;
 - ⇒ To fight against impunity by bringing to justice all the alleged perpetrators of the crimes; to rehabilitate all victims of observed human rights violations in their rights;
 - ⇒ Guarantee equitable access to essential goods and services such as water, health care and education.
- ◆ **To the Minister of Interior, Security and Community Development**
 - ⇒ To guarantee public rights and freedoms for all; to preserve peace and security for all;
 - ⇒ Guarantee freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
 - ⇒ Strengthen democratic institutions and guarantee free and transparent elections.

♦ **To the European Union and countries accredited to Burundi**

- ⇒ Recall the commitment of the Burundian government, political actors, civil society and the international community to improve the human rights situation in Burundi;
- ⇒ To use its influence to force the Burundian government to restore democracy and the rule of law; to strengthen cooperation with international human rights organizations to ensure compliance with Burundi's international commitments;
- ⇒ To support human rights organizations, institutions and mechanisms operating in Burundi.