

BURUNDIAN LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS 'ITEKA'

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HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON BURUNDI: SIX YEARS OF PRESIDENT ÉVARISTE NDAYISHIMIYE'S GOVERNANCE

JULY 2020 - JUNE 2026



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THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE MAP OF BURUNDI

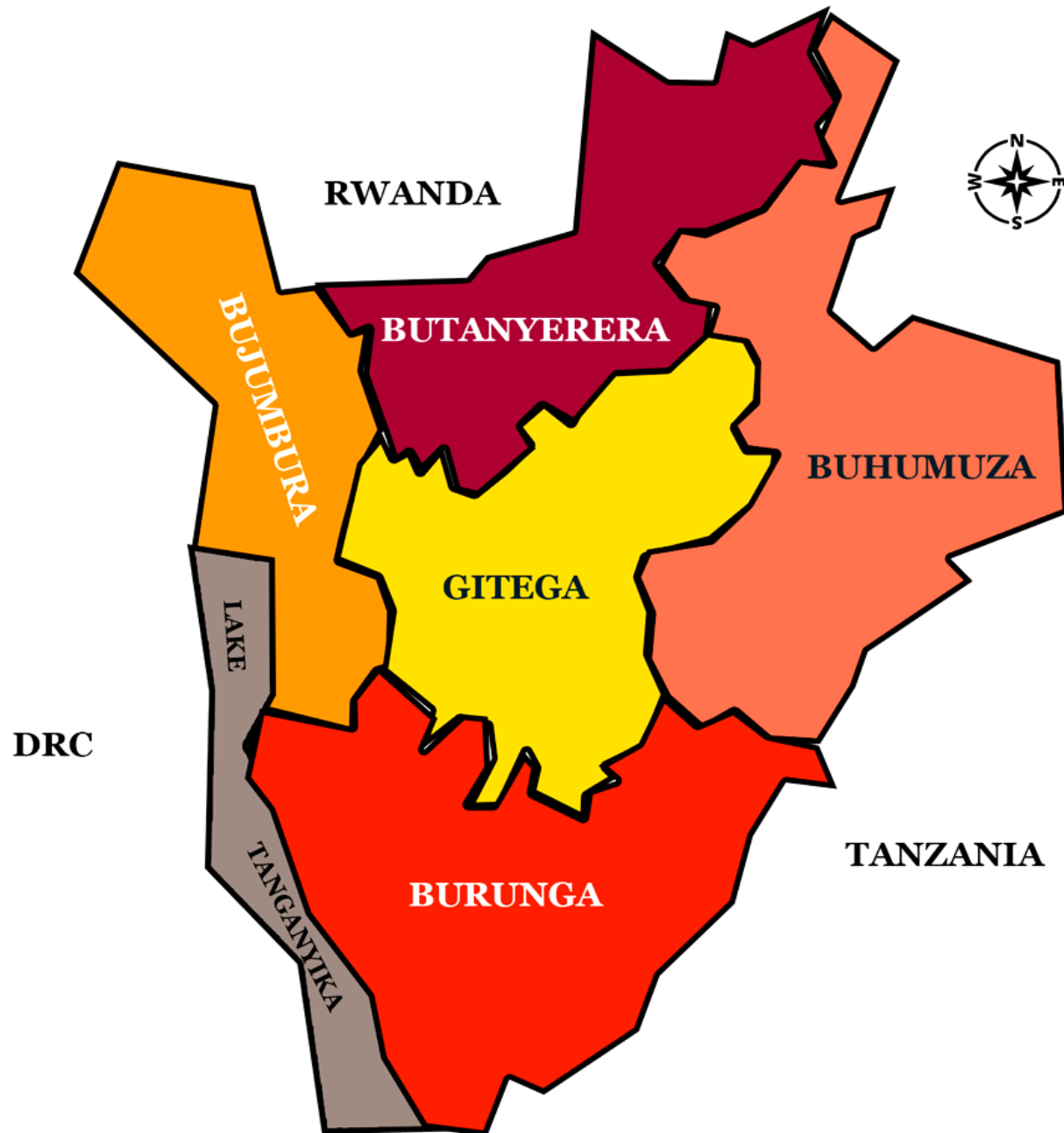


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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

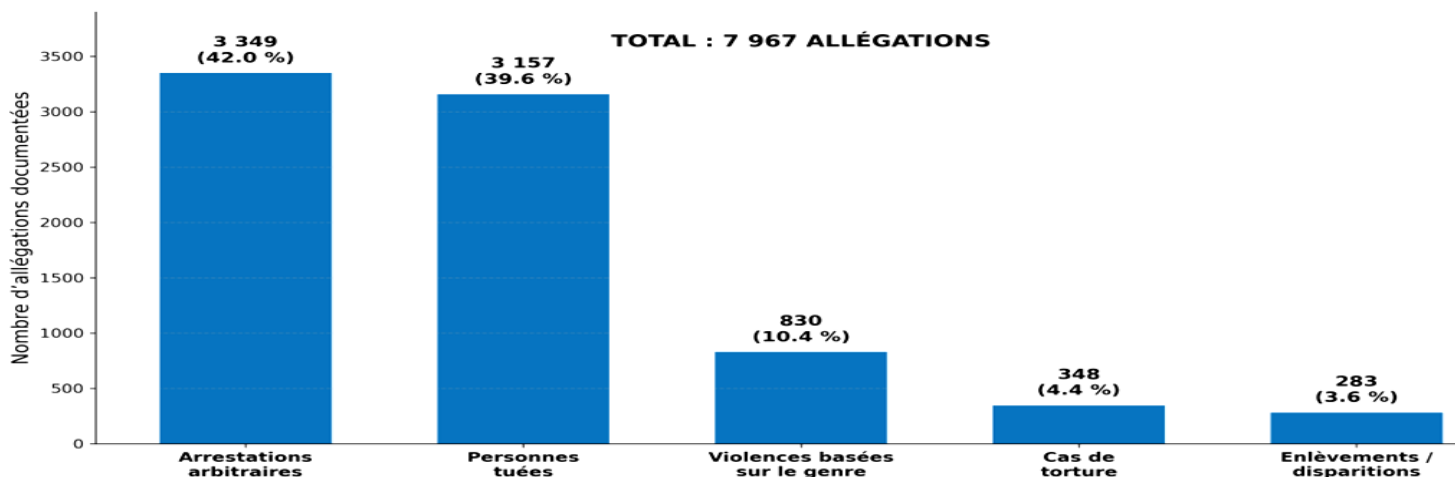
BBC	: British Broadcasting Corporation
CNDD-FDD	: National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy
CNIDH	: National Independent Human Rights Commission
CNL	: National Congress for Freedom
CPJ	: Committee to Protect Journalists
ECOSOC	: United Nations Economic and Social Council
FIDH	: International Federation for Human Rights
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
HRW	: Human Rights Watch
M23	: March 23 Movement
OHCHR	: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN	: United Nations
CSOs	: Civil society organizations
GDP	: Gross domestic product
DRC	: Democratic Republic of the Congo
SNR	: National Intelligence Service
UIDH	: Inter-African Union for Human and Peoples' Rights
GBV	: Gender-based violence

I.1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Six years of governance: between the promise of change and worrying continuities**

On June 18, 2020, Évariste Ndayishimiye assumed the presidency of the Republic of Burundi with a strong pledge: to turn the page on past crises, restore trust, strengthen good governance, and place citizens back at the heart of public action. Six years later, the record presents a mixed picture. Burundi has experienced relative institutional stability; certain economic and social initiatives have been launched, and several positive developments can be noted. Notably, economic growth has resumed, and efforts have been made to combat corruption and improve governance.

However, these advances coexist with a worrying reality regarding human rights and civil liberties. Consolidated data from the Ligue Iteka for the period from July 2020 to June 2026 records 7,967 allegations of human rights violations, including: 3,157 people killed (with 1,739 bodies recovered); 283 people abducted and reported missing; 348 cases of torture; 830 victims of gender-based violence over 80% of which involved sexual violence and 3,349 arbitrary arrests. These figures constitute neither an exhaustive tally of all violations committed in the country nor a judicial verdict. In a climate marked by fear, limited access to information, and the risk of reprisals, the actual number of violations could be far higher than the documented cases.

VIOLATIONS DES DROITS HUMAINS DOCUMENTÉES
juillet 2020 - juin 2026



Les arrestations arbitraires et les personnes tuées représentent ensemble 81,6 % des allégations documentées.

A central paradox: political stability, but civic space under pressure

One of the main takeaways from these six years is the gap between political stability and democratic consolidation. The country has not fallen back into widespread civil war, and institutions have continued to function. This stabilization is a positive point in the record. But it has come with a strong concentration of power around the CNDD-FDD, ongoing restrictions on political and civic space, and concerns about the independence of institutions.

The 2025 elections were a particularly revealing moment. The CNDD-FDD won all the seats in the National Assembly, while the main opposition party, the CNL, did not take part in the vote under competitive conditions.

1.1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (the following of page 1)

The report therefore calls for a distinction to be made between the stability of those in power and the vitality of political pluralism. A democracy is not measured solely by the holding of elections; it is also measured by the ability to peacefully challenge authority, organize, speak freely, access independent information, and anticipate a transfer of power without fearing for one's safety. **The right to life and security remains a primary concern.**

With 3,157 people killed including 1,739 whose bodies were recovered the right to life is one of the key issues highlighted in the report. The 283 people abducted and reported missing add a particularly tragic dimension to this toll. For families, a disappearance often means years of uncertainty, waiting, and searching for the truth.

Torture, gender-based violence, and arbitrary arrests complete this picture. The persistence of these violations raises a fundamental question: are the mechanisms for prevention, investigation, and sanction sufficiently independent and effective to prevent their recurrence?

A justice system and checks on power that remain fragile.

The report highlights ongoing concerns regarding judicial independence, impunity, and the ability of oversight institutions to fully carry out their mandates. The issue extends beyond the functioning of the courts; it concerns the entire institutional architecture: the judiciary, national human rights institutions, the media, civil society, Parliament, and mechanisms for overseeing public action.

The challenge, therefore, lies less in multiplying institutions than in guaranteeing their independence, effectiveness, and genuine capacity to hold those in power accountable. Indeed, the report notes that several structural mechanisms that facilitated past violations remain a cause for concern.

An alarming prison situation and a sluggish return of refugees: persistent vulnerabilities

Between July 2020 and June 2026, the prison situation remained characterized by significant overcrowding, despite efforts to improve accommodation capacity. Total prison capacity rose from 4,194 places in 2020 to 4,294 in 2026, largely due to a 100-place increase at Bubanza Prison, which expanded from 100 to 200 places. However, this improvement remains insufficient given the size of the prison population, which grew from 11,911 to 12,216 inmates plus 71 infants as of June 2026. The overall occupancy rate thus reached 284.49%, confirming the continued heavy strain on prison infrastructure. A total of 5,755 individuals were held in pre-trial detention. This prison reality exists against a backdrop of ongoing concerns regarding individuals detained for political reasons, particularly in the wake of the 2015 crisis. Underlying these figures is a reality that extends far beyond the mere question of prison capacity: it encompasses conditions of detention, access to justice, the duration of legal proceedings, and the fundamental safeguards associated with any deprivation of liberty.

This concern is heightened by reports of arbitrary detentions of people seen as critical of those in power. The political crisis of 2015 left a judicial backlog that hasn't been fully resolved, particularly through convictions of people accused of participating in the coup, including defenders and journalists in exile.

The issue of refugees also highlights the limits of a reconciliation that's still unfinished: as returns to Burundi continue, whether voluntary or forced, the report documents cases of people who came back but left again quickly, fearing for their safety after returning. In some cases, the time

1.1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (the following of page 2)

between return and new flight was only a few days. These journeys of returning and then going into exile again are especially worrying: they show that physically coming back isn't enough to restore trust. Reconciliation cannot be considered fully achieved until those who return can remain in their country without fearing for their safety, freedom, or dignity.

An economy making progress, yet social improvements remain insufficient

From an economic standpoint, the picture cannot be painted in purely negative terms. Over the past year, Burundi has seen a return to growth and a significant drop in inflation. These developments must be acknowledged. However, daily challenges remain substantial: poverty, food insecurity, shortages, low purchasing power, climate vulnerability, and continued difficulty in accessing certain essential services.

The true indicator of development is therefore not merely GDP growth. It is whether that growth translates into tangible results: more jobs, accessible food, affordable healthcare, quality education, and lasting improvements in living conditions. The report thus poses a simple question: "Have Burundians experienced a better quality of life?"

Relative security, yet a still fragile peace

Over the six years under review, Burundi has not relapsed into widespread civil war. This stabilization must be recognized. Yet the security situation remains fragile. Activities by armed groups, regional tensions particularly in the eastern DRC and tensions between Burundi and Rwanda continue to weigh on the national climate. Above all, state security cannot be divorced from the security of the individual. Combating armed threats cannot justify violations of fundamental rights.

The main finding: the heralded break with the past has not yet become into an institutional shift

After six years, the report reveals a complex reality. It would be unfair to deny the progress made. Yet it would be equally unwise to view political stability, the reforms undertaken, or the economic recovery as proof of a complete transformation in governance. The primary challenge remains transforming practices into enduring institutions.

A genuine break with the past cannot depend solely on the will of a leader. It must be anchored in institutions capable of protecting citizens even when they criticize those in power; in a justice system capable of prosecuting officials once wrongdoing is established; in free media and civil society; and in oversight mechanisms capable of holding authorities accountable.

Thus, the record of these six years can be summarized in a single phrase: stability has been consolidated more than freedoms, growth has been restored more than social prosperity, and the promise of a new beginning has yet to be translated into institutional reality.

This report is, therefore, neither an indictment nor a self-congratulatory pat on the back. It serves as an assessment, a warning, and a call to action. Its central message is simple: development is meaningful only if it protects the individual; stability has value only if it guarantees freedom; and peace can be lasting only when justice, truth, and dignity become lived realities for every citizen.

Six years after the promise of change, Burundi still has the chance to turn the lessons from that time into a new phase: less impunity, more justice; less fear, more freedom; less concentration of power, more accountability; and growth that finally leads to a tangible improvement in people's lives.

1.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

A. To the President of the Republic and the Government

1. Effectively protect the right to life and guarantee independent investigations into violent deaths, disappearances, abductions, and acts of torture.
2. Put an end to arbitrary arrests and detentions and guarantee respect for the rights of all persons deprived of their liberty.
3. Combat impunity by prosecuting perpetrators of serious violations, regardless of their status or position.
4. Guarantee the independence of the judiciary and strengthen national human rights protection mechanisms.
5. Improve prison conditions and take urgent measures to address prison overcrowding.
6. Strengthen the protection of women and girls against gender-based violence and guarantee victims' access to justice and reparation.
7. Protect civic space, freedom of expression, and the work of human rights organizations.
8. Guarantee political pluralism and transparency in governance, particularly regarding electoral processes.

B. To the Ministry of Justice

1. Guarantee prompt judicial review of all arrests and effective access to a lawyer.
2. Accelerate the processing of cases involving persons detained without trial.
3. Investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of torture, enforced disappearance, extrajudicial execution, and sexual violence.
4. Guarantee victims and their families access to justice, information, and reparation.

C. To the Ministry of the Interior, Community Development, and Public Security

1. Ensure that all arrests and detentions strictly comply with the law.
2. Ensure the traceability of all arrested and detained persons.
3. Prevent and punish abuses committed by security personnel.

I.2 RECOMMENDATIONS(the following of page 4)

4. Strengthen training for security forces on human rights and the proportionate use of force.

D. To Parliament

1. Strengthen parliamentary oversight of government action.
2. Demand accountability for serious human rights violations. Strengthen the transparency and accountability of public institutions.
3. Ensure the effective expression of political pluralism and minority voices.

E. To the National Independent Human Rights Commission (CNIDH)

1. Ensure its effective independence.
2. Strengthen its capacity to conduct investigations and protect victims.
3. Regularly publish its findings and ensure follow-up on its recommendations.

F. To civil society organizations

1. Strengthen the documentation and verification of human rights violations.
2. Increase legal, psychosocial, and social assistance for victims.
3. Strengthen advocacy based on reliable and verifiable data.

G. To Burundi's international partners

1. Encourage the effective implementation of international and regional recommendations.
2. Support victims and human rights organizations.
3. Maintain regular and independent monitoring of the human rights situation in Burundi.



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1.3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This report provides a retrospective assessment of the human rights situation in Burundi during President Évariste Ndayishimiye's six-year term, from July 2020 to June 2026. It builds upon the ongoing documentation work of Ligue Iteka, drawing on its local network, monitoring mechanisms, reports, and interviews with various stakeholders.

The analysis is grounded in four key principles: continuity, documentation, cross-referencing of sources, and analytical caution. Data from the sixth year are thus viewed in the context of the preceding five years to identify trends, shifts, escalations, or potential improvements.

In total, 7,967 allegations of human rights violations were documented over the six-year period, compared to 7,250 recorded during the first five years. These figures represent cases documented by Ligue Iteka and do not claim to reflect the full extent of violations actually committed. In a climate characterized by fear, the risk of reprisals, and barriers to accessing justice, some violations may remain unseen or unreported.

The report combines quantitative and qualitative approaches: statistics help measure the scale and evolution of violations, while testimonies and contextual details shed light on their human impact, the mechanisms involved, and the factors contributing to impunity. This report does not claim to cover every aspect of the situation. Its aim is to document what has been established, preserve the record of what has been observed, and give a voice to those whose suffering risks fading into silence.



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II.1. POLITICAL CONTEXT: FROM THE HOPE OF A NEW ERA TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF POWER

When Évariste Ndayishimiye assumed the presidency on June 18, 2020, Burundi aspired to turn the page on years of political crisis. His arrival sparked genuine hope for lasting calm, more tangible national reconciliation, and a reopening of the political space. The new administration declared ambitious goals: restoring trust, strengthening good governance, fighting corruption, and placing development at the heart of public policy.

Six years later, however, the political record is mixed. While the country has regained a degree of institutional stability, this has been accompanied by the progressive consolidation of CNDD-FDD power and a political space that has remained narrow or even shrunk further. Restrictions targeting the opposition, the media, civil society, and certain human rights defenders have continued to characterize this period.

A political opening that gradually closed

One of the main expectations in 2020 was the rebuilding of genuine political pluralism. Yet, over the course of the five-year term, the opposition's room for maneuver has diminished. The crisis surrounding the National Congress for Freedom (CNL) particularly as the 2025 elections approach is a prime example of this. The recognition of a contested party leadership and the marginalization of Agathon Rwaswa have profoundly undermined the opposition's ability to compete in elections on a level playing field.

This trend raises a fundamental question: can one speak of pluralism when major opposition forces lack the same opportunities to organize, mobilize their voters, and freely vie for power? The 2025 elections: revealing a political imbalance

The legislative and local elections of June 2025 marked a decisive moment. The CNDD-FDD won all 100 seats in the National Assembly, while the CNL did not participate in the vote. For its part, [Human Rights Watch noted that the CNDD-FDD has got 96.5% of the vote and described a political environment characterized by severe restrictions on civic space](#)¹.

The authorities may present these results as an expression of public confidence. However, a democracy is not measured solely by the ruling party's victory. It is also measured by the freedom of choice available to voters, equality among candidates, freedom to campaign, and the opposition's ability to challenge the government without fear of reprisal. Thus, the 2025 elections appear less like a mere renewal of institutions and more like an indicator of a growing imbalance between the ruling power and the checks and balances meant to counter it.

Stability is not enough to define a democracy.

Over the past six years, restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly, and association have remained worrisome. [Amnesty International, in particular, has documented ongoing](#)

¹: <https://www.hrw.org/fr/world-report/2026/country-chapters/burundi>

II.1. POLITICAL CONTEXT (the following of page 7)

intimidation, harassment, arrests, and detention targeting human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and opposition members ². This reality calls for distinguishing between two often-confused notions: political stability and political pluralism. The absence of visible dissent does not necessarily mean there is a consensus. When spaces for criticism shrink, silence can also result from fear, resignation, or exclusion.

Between Party and State: A Boundary Still Needing Clarification

The concentration of power also raises the question of the relationship between the CNDD-FDD and public institutions. The close proximity between the party apparatus and state structures remains a major governance issue. In a state governed by the rule of law, the civil service, the judiciary, security forces, and electoral institutions must be able to carry out their duties impartially. The real issue, therefore, is not the head of state's political affiliation, but the institutions' capacity to guarantee equal rights and protections to all citizens, regardless of their political allegiance.

Security: A New Central Argument for the Ruling Power

The regional context has also influenced domestic politics. The war in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, tensions with Rwanda, and Burundi's military involvement in the DRC have gradually elevated the role of security-related rhetoric in national governance. In such a context, security is a legitimate state responsibility. However, it should not become a pretext for conflating political criticism or civic dissent with threats to national security. State protection cannot be sustained at the expense of fundamental freedoms.

A Paradox at the Heart of the Six-Year Period

At the end of this period, Burundi presents a major paradox: greater institutional stability, yet not necessarily greater political pluralism. The ruling power has consolidated its position, while the space for challenging it has progressively shrunk. The true political legacy of these six years lies not merely in who governs, but in how power is exercised, held accountable, and challenged. For a democracy is not measured solely by the stability of those in power; it is also measured by the freedom of those not in power to speak, criticize, organize, and one day attain power without fearing for their liberty or safety. It is within this tension between stability and freedom, electoral legitimacy and pluralism, and governance and checks on power that one of the key lessons of President Évariste Ndayishimiye's six years in office lies.



²: <https://www.amnesty.fr/pays/rwanda/>

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II.2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

Growth that is progressing, but a population that is still struggling to make ends meet

Evaluating six years of governance cannot be limited to observing institutions, elections or the security situation. The true measure of public policy is also found in the daily lives of citizens: what they can buy, eat, produce, learn, care for and hope for. However, in this area, the socio-economic results of the last six years appear particularly mixed.

Burundi has recorded encouraging signs of macroeconomic improvement over the last period. In 2025, real GDP growth reached 4.2%, driven in particular by exports of coffee and gold. At the same time, inflation, which had reached around 45.5% in April 2025, fell to 8.6% in April 2026. The IMF also forecasts growth of 3.9% in 2026³. These developments demonstrate a certain stabilization and must be recognized as positive progress. But an improvement in macroeconomic indicators does not automatically mean a proportional improvement in living conditions. It is precisely in this gap between the displayed performance of the economy and the daily reality of households that we find one of the major questions in the assessment of the six years.

An improving economy, but still deeply vulnerable

Despite recent progress, the Burundian economy remains fragile and exposed to external shocks, climatic hazards, exchange rate constraints and low productive capacities. The World Bank notes that average inflation remained very high in 2025, around 34%, after its peak in April.

The IMF also emphasizes that external vulnerabilities remain significant. In 2026, foreign exchange reserves only covered around 1.6 months of imports, while the country remained exposed to a high risk of debt distress⁴. Thus, behind the recent improvement in indicators, a structural reality remains: Burundi is progressing, but it is progressing from a particularly fragile base. Growth remains necessary, but it alone cannot constitute a sufficient measure of social progress.

Inflation: when the numbers become a family reality

For an economist, inflation is an indicator. For a family, it translates into a much simpler question: “What else can I buy with my income?” » During the six years, the rise in prices weighed heavily on households. Supply difficulties, fuel shortages, constraints on access to foreign currency and the increase in the price of essential products have considerably reduced purchasing power.

The spectacular decline in inflation between April 2025 and April 2026 constitutes a positive development. But it is important to measure its scope correctly: a drop in inflation means that prices increase less quickly; it does not mean that they have returned to their previous level. A family that has seen its food budget increase significantly does not automatically regain its purchasing power because the rate of price increases slows down. This is why macroeconomic

^{3,4}: <https://www.imf.org/fr/news/articles/2026/06/17/imf-pr-26210-burundi-imf-executive-board-concludes-2026-article-iv-consultation-with-burundi>

II.2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT (the following of page 9)

indicators must be analyzed in light of household reality.

Poverty and food insecurity: the major blind spot

Economic performance must be weighed against a more fundamental reality: poverty remains widespread. [The World Food Programme estimates that over 70% of the Burundian population struggles to make ends meet, while more than 1.9 million people face crisis levels of food insecurity](#)⁵. The issue, therefore, is not merely whether GDP is rising, but who actually benefits from this growth. When growth relies primarily on a few export sectors, its impact on households may remain limited unless accompanied by a profound transformation of agriculture, the creation of productive jobs, infrastructure development, and the strengthening of social services.

In this regard, malnutrition is a particularly alarming indicator. In children, it can have lasting effects on growth, learning abilities, and future prospects. Hunger thus becomes an economic and social issue and, above all, a human rights issue.

New humanitarian pressure: the arrival of Congolese refugees

On top of these internal vulnerabilities, there's been a lot of humanitarian pressure due to the worsening security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. By December 2025, more than 100,000 people had crossed the border into Burundi seeking protection. As of January 31, 2026, 65,129 refugees had been settled at the Busuma site alone, including nearly 40,000 children. Burundi has demonstrated a capacity to host and a spirit of solidarity that deserve recognition. Yet, this solidarity also comes at a cost for a country already grappling with poverty, food insecurity, shortages, and the effects of climate shocks. Needs regarding shelter, protection, health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene are immense, while humanitarian resources remain limited.

This situation therefore tests not only national capacities but also international solidarity. Burundi cannot, on its own, sustainably shoulder the humanitarian consequences of a regional crisis beyond its control.

Thus, the socio-economic record of the past six years reflects a country that has shown encouraging signs of stabilization, yet where progress remains insufficient to address the daily hardships faced by a large segment of the population. An economy is truly successful when growth figures cease to be mere statistics and become a lived reality: an extra meal on the table, a child staying in school, a sick person able to receive treatment, a young person finding a job, and a family able to look to the future with less uncertainty.

⁵<https://www.wfp.org/countries/burundi>

⁶<https://www.sosmediasburundi.org/2026/01/29/buhumuza-le-camp-de-busuma-sous-le-choc-des-centaines-de-refugies-congolais-meurent-dans-des-conditions-indignes/>

II.3. GOVERNANCE CONTEXT.

Between the promise of a state serving its citizens and the persistence of entrenched power dynamics

When Évariste Ndayishimiye assumed the presidency on June 18, 2020, Burundi was emerging from a political crisis that had severely undermined trust between citizens and institutions. Against this backdrop, the new administration held out the promise of a break with the past: restoring the rule of law, fighting corruption, holding leaders accountable, and bringing the administration closer to the people. Six years later, the record presents a mixed picture. The government claims progress in governance, citizen participation, and accountability. [In June 2026, President Ndayishimiye notably asserted that his government had strengthened citizen participation, the fight against injustice, and trust with Burundi's partners.](#)⁷

However, six years in power now make it possible to move beyond mere intentions. The real question is whether promises of good governance have translated into institutions that are more transparent, more accountable, and better able to protect citizens.

A declared commitment to fighting corruption, yet reforms remain unfinished

The fight against corruption has been a hallmark of the presidential discourse. Public denunciations of certain abuses, the strengthening of oversight mechanisms, and steps taken to develop a new national anti-corruption strategy demonstrate a political will that deserves recognition.

However, the fight against corruption cannot be measured solely by the number of officials denounced or sanctioned. It is measured by the transparency of public procurement, the traceability of state resources, the independence of oversight bodies, access to financial information, and the judicial system's capacity to prosecute perpetrators of abuse, regardless of their rank.

In this regard, the IMF's 2026 assessment remains particularly significant. [The institution continues to recommend that Burundi strengthen the rule of law, the anti-corruption framework, and transparency particularly in public procurement noting that the governance agenda has been only partially implemented.](#)⁸

The true test is therefore simple: has the state become transparent enough for citizens to know how their money is collected, allocated, and spent? As long as this question remains without a satisfactory answer, governance reform remains incomplete.

From grassroots governance to the challenge of political pluralism

The government has also placed closeness to the population at the heart of its actions. This ambition is relevant in a country where the quality of governance is determined less by official speeches than by daily reality: ...at the administrative counter, at school, at the health center, at land registry offices, at the market, or in the hills. However, citizen participation cannot be limited to the mere ability to report an abuse; it entails that complaints be heard, examined, and acted upon. Accountability requires oversight institutions capable of acting without pressure, an independent judiciary, and mechanisms enabling citizens to challenge administrative decisions.

⁷: <https://presidence.gov.bi/2026/06/19/le-president-ndayishimiye-appelle-a-preserver-lunite-nationale-et-a-accelerer-le-developpement-du-burundi/>

⁸: <https://www.imf.org/fr/countries/bdi/burundi-qandas>

II.3. GOVERNANCE CONTEXT (the following of page 11)

This requirement is particularly pressing in the political context following the 2025 elections. According to Human Rights Watch, the CNDD-FDD secured 96.5% of the vote in the legislative elections and won every contested parliamentary seat, in a context where the opposition was unable to participate under truly competitive conditions⁹.

The issue, therefore, is not merely the election result itself. It concerns the conditions under which that result was achieved: freedom to stand for election, media access, the ability to campaign, the exercise of political freedoms, and the opposition's genuine capacity to fulfill its role. A democracy is measured not only by the number of parties permitted to exist but also by their effective ability to exercise their rights.

The six-year paradox: greater stability, yet institutions still in need of consolidation

Burundi has experienced relative political stabilization since 2020, alongside a gradual improvement in relations with certain international partners. This progress represents an achievement that should not be downplayed. However, stability and good governance are not synonymous. A country can be politically stable while still possessing weak institutions, lacking transparency, or having insufficient oversight mechanisms. True stability relies on more than just the absence of open crisis; it depends on institutions capable of preventing abuses, guaranteeing fundamental rights, and enabling citizens to participate freely in public life.

This is where the paradox of the 2020–2026 record lies. On one hand, the government has publicly prioritized good governance, the fight against corruption, proximity to citizens, and leadership accountability. On the other, independent assessments continue to highlight weaknesses regarding the rule of law, transparency, political pluralism, and institutional oversight. The overall picture is therefore neither entirely bleak nor artificially rosy; it is a mixed one. And it is precisely this contradiction that is worth noting.

After six years, the issue is no longer merely what those in power promise to do, but what institutions are now capable of guaranteeing, independently of a leader's will. True governance reform will begin when the protection of citizens, state transparency, independent oversight, and respect for pluralism no longer depend on the goodwill of those in power, but on the robustness of the institutions themselves.

⁹<https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2025/06/12/burundi-des-elections-sans-opposition>



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II.4. CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Six years between the promise of easing tensions and persistent violations of fundamental freedoms

Évariste Ndayishimiye's accession to the presidency in June 2020 had sparked genuine hope. After years of political crisis, violence, and the shrinking of civic space, the new administration promised a new relationship between the State and its citizens one characterized by greater justice, freedom, accountability, and human rights protection. Six years later, that promise remains unfulfilled. Data compiled by the Ligue Iteka for the period covered by this report indicate 7,967 allegations of human rights violations, including 3,157 killings, 283 abductions and disappearances, 348 cases of torture, 830 cases of gender-based violence, and 3,349 arbitrary arrests.

These numbers do not represent an exhaustive tally of all violations committed in Burundi; rather, they reflect cases documented through available sources and mechanisms. In a context where victims and witnesses may fear reprisals and access to information remains difficult at times, the number of documented cases may fall far short of the actual figures.

Grave violations of the right to life and liberty

The right to life remains a matter of grave concern. Of the 3,157 documented killings with 1,739 bodies recovered the victims account for approximately 55% of the total recorded cases. This reality, combined with instances of enforced disappearance and allegations of extrajudicial executions, raises a fundamental question: is the State capable of establishing the truth regarding these deaths and ensuring that the perpetrators are held accountable?

The same question arises regarding the 283 individuals who were abducted and remain missing. Behind every disappearance lies a family condemned to wait, to search, and to live in uncertainty. The right to know the fate of a loved one is not merely a moral imperative; it is a requirement of justice.

Torture also remains a major concern, with 348 documented cases. Its prohibition cannot remain merely theoretical. It demands effective oversight of places of detention, access to legal counsel and independent medical care, accessible complaint mechanisms, and impartial investigations whenever abuse is reported.

The 3,349 documented cases of arbitrary arrest highlight the persistent vulnerability of individual liberty. A democracy cannot be lastingly consolidated when arrest or detention becomes the response to the expression of opinion, political engagement, or the defense of human rights.

Civic space under continued pressure

The human rights situation is not measured solely by the number of people killed, arrested, or tortured. It is also measured by the freedom citizens have to speak out, organize, investigate, protest, and peacefully dissent.

However, during the period studied, journalists, human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and opposition actors continued to face restrictions, intimidation, and pressure. The 2025 election period particularly highlighted this fragility of civic space.

[Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International notably pointed out restrictions on political and media space, as well as cases of arrests, intimidation, and disappearances](#)

II.4. CONTEXT OF HUMAN RIGHTS (the following of page 13)

targeting people seen as critical of those in power.¹⁰

This situation is worrying because when journalists can no longer investigate freely, when human rights defenders hesitate to document abuse, and when citizens are afraid to speak out, it's not just individual freedom that is shrinking: it's the society's ability to hold those in power accountable that is weakening.

In this context, the independence of institutions tasked with protecting human rights is equally important. The difficulties faced by the National Independent Human Rights Commission in 2025 specifically the flight of its chairperson, Sixte Vigny Nimuraba, and the replacement of all its commissioners have raised concerns regarding its independence and compliance with the Paris Principles. **A national human rights institution can only fully perform its role if it possesses genuine independence, institutional safeguards, and the trust of the citizenry.¹¹**

Gender-based violence: another facet of vulnerability

With 830 documented cases over 80% of which involved sexual violence gender-based violence represents another particularly concerning aspect of the overall situation. Behind these statistics lie victims facing consequences that are often long-lasting in physical, psychological, social, and economic terms. Consequently, the State's response cannot be limited to punishing perpetrators; it must also ensure protection, care, psychosocial support, access to justice, and reparation for victims.

The increased representation of women in political institutions is certainly a positive development worth acknowledging. However, this progress cannot mask the persistent violence and discrimination to which women and girls remain subjected. Political representation only constitutes genuine progress when accompanied by the effective protection of rights.

A mixed picture, yet an unfulfilled promise

It would, however, be an oversimplification to portray the past six years as a period marked exclusively by setbacks. Institutional reforms, certain social initiatives, and positive developments regarding women's political representation must be taken into account. Yet, these measures are insufficient to dispel persistent concerns regarding violations of the right to life, disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, restrictions on public freedoms, and weak accountability mechanisms.

The human rights record from July 2020 to June 2026 thus appears to be one of unfinished transition. There was genuine hope for a clean break; some openings did occur; yet consolidating a true rule of law remains a major challenge. In this regard, the 7,967 documented allegations serve as a signal that cannot be ignored. They represent neither a judicial verdict nor the full extent of the violations committed. They do, however, remind us that behind the statistics lie shattered lives, families left waiting, victims seeking justice, and citizens whose freedoms remain fragile.

Six years after the promise of a new era, the real issue is no longer merely whether Burundi is more stable. It is whether the Burundian citizen is now freer, better protected, and more assured of obtaining justice when a right is violated. Ultimately, it is by this standard that the depth of the break promised in 2020 must be judged.

¹⁰: <https://www.hrw.org/fr>

¹¹: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/statements-and-speeches/2025/10/declaration-du-rapporteur-special-sur-la-situation-des-droits-de>

II.5. SECURITY CONTEXT

Between domestic stability, armed threats, and regional turbulence

In June 2020, President Évariste Ndayishimiye inherited a country marked by years of political crisis and violence. His stated priority was clear: to restore security, protect the population, and prevent a return to a cycle of widespread violence.

Six years later, the security record presents a truly mixed picture. Burundi has not relapsed into a civil war comparable to past crises, and the state has retained control over the bulk of its territory. This relative stability is a significant achievement, yet it remains fragile. The activities of armed groups notably RED-Tabara tensions with Rwanda, Burundi's military involvement in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the progressive militarization of the regional landscape have transformed the security issue into a matter that extends far beyond national borders.

A persistent armed threat in an explosive regional environment

The threat posed by RED-Tabara has been a defining feature of this period. Deadly attacks occurred, particularly in western Burundi, in 2023 and 2024. Meanwhile, the war in the eastern DRC intensified with the advance of the M23 rebel group, bringing Burundi closer to a regional conflict with unpredictable consequences. According to the authorities, the deployment of Burundian forces to South Kivu is driven by the need for national defense and the protection of the country's interests. However, this involvement also entails human, military, and financial costs, and further exposes Burundi to regional tensions.

At the same time, relations with Rwanda have deteriorated sharply. The closure of the border in early January 2024 and the suspension of diplomatic relations highlighted the severity of the crisis between the two nations. In a region where internal conflicts, state rivalries, and armed groups are intertwined, diplomatic tension can quickly escalate into a security threat. The influx of tens of thousands of Congolese refugees into Burundi in 2025 further demonstrated that the consequences of this instability extend far beyond the military sphere. Regional security has become a humanitarian issue.

The paradox of security that must also guard against its own excesses

Fighting against armed groups is a legitimate responsibility of the State. However, this task cannot be carried out outside the framework of the law. Consolidated data in this report indicate that, over a six-year period, 3,157 people were killed, 283 were abducted and went missing, 348 cases of torture occurred, and 3,349 arbitrary arrests took place, alongside 830 cases of gender-based violence. While these figures cannot be attributed solely to security operations or armed groups, they nonetheless demonstrate that ensuring security has not always been accompanied by adequate protection of fundamental rights.

Confusing political opponents, suspected sympathizers of armed groups, and actual combatants poses a significant risk. Such confusion can transform the fight against rebellion into a tool for repressing civilians. The role of the *Imbonerakure* particularly their reported involvement in security operations, acts of intimidation, and paramilitary activities also raises a fundamental question: in a state governed by the rule of law, who should exercise the legitimate monopoly on the use of force?

The answer cannot be ambiguous: the forces must be legally established and subject to civil, judicial, and democratic oversight. Any confusion between a political party and the security

II.5. SECURITY CONTEXT (the following of page 15)

apparatus weakens both the rule of law and citizens' trust.

True security is measured by the safety of the citizen.

The main lesson from these six years may be this: the security of the state should never be confused with the security of the citizen. A country can have a large army, controlling its territory and preventing a widespread insurrection while allowing some citizens to live in fear.

True security is measured differently: can citizens move about without fear? Express themselves without being branded as enemies? Report abuse without facing reprisals? Can a family learn the truth when a loved one disappears? Are security forces held accountable for their actions when accused of abuse? These questions are all the more important given the likelihood of persistent regional tensions. Burundi must therefore simultaneously protect its territory, manage the fallout from the Congolese crisis, and preserve national cohesion without sacrificing fundamental freedoms.

A mixed record and the need for lasting security

After six years, Burundi can claim a degree of internal stability, yet this remains vulnerable to armed threats and the turbulence of the Great Lakes region. The challenge for the coming years is to transform this stability into lasting peace. This requires a republican army, a professional police force, intelligence services subject to the rule of law, an independent judiciary, democratic oversight of security forces, and effective mechanisms for investigation and redress in cases of abuse.

For peace is more than just the absence of war. A country is not truly secure when its citizens fear their own institutions. It is not truly at peace when families are searching for missing loved ones. And it cannot build lasting stability when security becomes a pretext for impunity. The true security record of these six years must therefore be measured not only by the State's ability to repel external threats, but also by its capacity to protect its citizens without becoming a source of insecurity itself.



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II.6. JUDICIAL CONTEXT

A justice system central to the promise of the rule of law, yet still seeking independence

In a society marked by political crises and violence, the justice system should be the citizen's last refuge. When a person is arbitrarily arrested, a loved one disappears, a victim is tortured, or a right is violated, the citizen must be able to turn to the courts. Upon taking office in 2020, President Évariste Ndayishimiye made judicial reform and the fight against impunity key priorities. Six years later, however, the judicial system continues to face significant challenges: insufficient independence, arbitrary detentions, limited access to legal aid, allegations of torture, and persistent impunity for certain serious violations.

A justice system that still struggles to inspire confidence

The central issue is not merely having courts in place, but ensuring that the law applies equally to everyone. A magistrate must be able to adjudicate without pressure, a lawyer to defend without fear, and a victim to file a complaint without risk of reprisal. Yet, assessments by both national and international organizations continue to highlight concerns regarding judicial independence and political interference. A truly independent justice system is not one that opposes the government; it is one capable of saying "no" to the government when the law requires it.

This issue takes on particular significance in the context of the 3,349 arbitrary arrests documented over the past six years. [United Nations experts also reported 892 arbitrary detentions between January 2024 and May 2025](#) ¹². The justice system should serve as the primary safeguard against unlawful deprivation of liberty. When this safeguard fails to function properly, arbitrary practices can extend into the judicial system itself.

The right to a defense and the prohibition of torture: guarantees that must be made effective

Fair justice requires that anyone facing prosecution be able to effectively defend themselves. Yet, access to legal counsel and legal aid remains problematic, particularly for the most vulnerable individuals. The issue of torture is even more concerning. This report documents 348 cases of torture during the period under review. A judicial process that begins with violence cannot yield credible justice. Prompt access to a lawyer, an independent doctor, and effective complaint mechanisms is therefore an essential safeguard. A confession obtained through torture is not a judicial victory; it is a failure of justice.

Impunity: the ultimate test for justice

The credibility of a judicial system is measured primarily by its ability to prosecute perpetrators of violations, including those belonging to state institutions or enjoying political protection. Data in this report record 3,157 people killed, 283 abducted and missing, 348 cases of torture, 830 cases of gender-based violence, and 3,349 arbitrary arrests. Behind these figures lies a fundamental question: how many victims have obtained truth, justice, and reparation?

When serious violations do not lead to independent investigations and effective sanctions, impunity fosters a cycle of recurrence. It also creates a dangerous inequality before the law: justice appears swifter for the weak than for the powerful.

¹²: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

II.6. JUDICIAL CONTEXT (the following of page 17)

The case of journalist Sandra Muhoza marked by jurisdictional disputes on appeal, unlawful continued detention, new charges, and fluctuating sentences leading up to her final release exemplified the concerns surrounding the enforcement of judicial decisions and procedural consistency.¹³ Beyond her individual case, it serves as a reminder that a court ruling is meaningful only if it is consistent, respected, and effectively enforced.

Transitional justice: truth cannot be separated from justice

Finally, the issue of justice extends beyond the violations committed over the past six years. Burundi continues to grapple with the legacy of decades of violence and impunity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was intended to help establish the truth regarding this violence; however, concerns about its independence and credibility highlight the process's limitations. Reconciliation cannot be lasting without truth; truth cannot be complete without justice; and justice cannot be credible without independence.

Transforming the justice system into a true bulwark against arbitrary action

After six years, the Burundian justice system remains essential to consolidating the rule of law, yet its independence, accessibility, and effectiveness continue to pose major challenges.

The priority is not simply to increase the number of courts or enact more laws. It is to ensure that judges can rule without pressure, that impoverished citizens have access to a defense, that detainees are protected from torture, that victims can obtain redress, and that no one stands above the law. For the true independence of the judiciary is revealed precisely when cases involve the powerful.

Credible justice doesn't ask who the accused is before applying the law. It asks what the facts say, what the law provides, and who should be held accountable. Only under this condition can justice in Burundi become, not just a state institution, but a real shield for citizens against arbitrariness and impunity.

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¹³:<https://cpj.org/2026/03/burundian-journalist-sandra-muhoza-provisionally-released-after-nearly-2-years/>



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From Nkurunziza to Ndayishimiye: A Change of President, Persistent Divisions

Comparing President Évariste Ndayishimiye's six years in office with the final years of Pierre Nkurunziza's regime is not an attempt to artificially pit two periods of suffering against one another. Rather, it addresses a fundamental question regarding Burundi's recent political history: Did the change in presidency actually bring about a systemic shift in human rights protection?

This question is particularly significant given that Évariste Ndayishimiye's rise to power in June 2020 was accompanied by a promise of a clean break with the past. The new president positioned himself as a leader who would restore trust, reform institutions, put an end to abuses, and improve Burundi's relations with the international community. Initial measures taken after his inauguration did indeed spark some hope. Journalists and human rights defenders detained under the previous regime were released, and certain restrictions on the media were lifted. Several media outlets—including the BBC, Radio Bonesha, Isanganiro TV, and Iwacu gradually resumed their operations.

However, that hope gradually faded. Under the new regime, international organizations have continued to document killings, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and restrictions on civic space. Human Rights Watch even assesses that many of the structural problems documented under Pierre Nkurunziza persist under Évariste Ndayishimiye. The comparison must therefore focus on two dimensions: observable breaks with the past and concerning continuities.

III.1. TWO PERIODS, TWO PROMISES, ONE SAME DEMAND: PROTECT THE CITIZEN.

President Pierre Nkurunziza led Burundi for fifteen years, from 2005 to 2020. However, the period selected for comparison in this report is the one immediately preceding the 2020 transition specifically the 2015–2020 period, which was marked by the political crisis sparked by his bid for a third term.

This crisis deeply disrupted the country. Protests in April 2015 were suppressed by security forces. Following the attempted coup in May 2015, the crackdown intensified. Political opponents, journalists, and human rights defenders fled the country, while several independent media outlets were suspended. [Human Rights Watch describes this period as one marked by killings, disappearances, arrests, imprisonments, and threats targeting, in particular, civil society actors and the media.](#)¹⁴

President Évariste Ndayishimiye came to power in this environment. He therefore faced a monumental challenge: not merely to govern in line with the legacy of the previous system, but to break with its mechanisms of repression. Six years later, the question remains open.

III.2. THE RIGHT TO LIFE: THE PERSISTENCE OF A DRAMATIC INDICATOR

The right to life is arguably the best starting point for this comparison. During Pierre Nkurunziza's tenure particularly after 2015 international organizations documented extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and the discovery of dead bodies in various regions of the country. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry on Burundi concluded that serious violations had occurred,

¹⁴<https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2021/05/26/avril-2015-juin-2020-chronologie-de-la-repression-des-medias-et-de-la-societe>

III.2. RIGHT TO LIFE (the following of page 19)

including summary executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, and sexual violence.

Under the presidency of Évariste Ndayishimiye, these phenomena have not entirely disappeared. The consolidated database maintained by Ligue Iteka, which serves as the basis for this report, records 3,157 deaths over the six-year period from June 2020 to June 2026. Of these, 1,739 involved the discovery of dead bodies—representing approximately 55.1% of the recorded fatalities. This figure does not imply that all these deaths are attributable to the same actors or that they all constitute extrajudicial killings; each case requires individual analysis. However, it raises a question that spans both administrations: Why, after fifteen years of Nkurunziza's rule followed by six years under Ndayishimiye, does the right to life remain so vulnerable?

Furthermore, UN experts reported 605 extrajudicial killings between January 2024 and May 2025 alone, often involving the alleged participation of state agents or their proxies.¹⁵ This continuity is therefore a matter of serious concern.

III.3. FORCED DISAPPEARANCES: THE CHANGE OF POWER WASN'T ENOUGH

Enforced disappearances represent one of the deepest wounds of the Burundian crisis. During Nkurunziza's rule, they were extensively documented, particularly targeting individuals suspected of belonging to the opposition or supporting armed groups. Members of the security forces and the *Imbonerakure* were frequently implicated in international reports.

The phenomenon has persisted under Ndayishimiye's rule. The Ligue Iteka database records 283 people abducted and reported missing over a six-year period. United Nations experts have also documented 58 enforced disappearances between January 2024 and May 2025. The persistence of these cases is particularly significant.

For an enforced disappearance does not merely deprive a person of their liberty; it also deprives a family of the truth. It deprives a mother of the certainty of knowing whether her child is alive or dead. It deprives a child of the opportunity to grieve. And it deprives society of a part of its collective memory. When the government changes but families continue to search for their missing loved ones, the question of systemic change remains unresolved.

III.4. TORTURE: A PRACTICE THAT RESISTS POLITICAL CHANGES

Torture serves as another indicator for measuring continuity or rupture between the two periods. Under Nkurunziza's presidency, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry documented numerous cases of torture attributed to certain members of the security forces and the Imbonerakure.¹⁶ Human Rights Watch notably reported that individuals detained by the National Intelligence Service had been subjected to severe torture and other forms of ill-treatment.¹⁷

Under Ndayishimiye's presidency, the allegations have persisted. The Iteka League documented 348 cases of torture over the six-year period. UN experts also reported 62 acts of torture between January 2024 and May 2025.¹⁸

The problem, therefore, does not lie solely in the existence of laws prohibiting torture; it lies in the State's capacity to prevent its practice, investigate allegations, and punish those responsible.

¹⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

¹⁶ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/hr-bodies/hrc/co-i-burundi/co-i-burundi>

¹⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2021/09/17/burundi-allegations-de-meurtres-de-disparitions-et-de-torture>

¹⁸ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

III.5. ARBITRARY ARRESTS: A WORRYING CONTINUITY

Arbitrary arrests represent one area where the continuity between the two periods is particularly evident. Under Nkurunziza, the arrest of suspected opposition members or sympathizers had become a key instrument of political control following the events of 2015; [Human Rights Watch documented mass arrests and arbitrary detentions amidst the political crisis](#).¹⁹

This pattern persists under Ndayishimiye. [The consolidated balance of this report record 3,349 arbitrary arrests. United Nations experts documented 892 cases of arbitrary detention between January 2024 and May 2025](#).²⁰ This situation is particularly concerning when it affects opposition figures, journalists, human rights defenders, or individuals merely suspected of having ties to movements viewed as hostile to the government. The question is therefore no longer simply "Who governs?" but rather "How is the country governed?"

III.6. THE CIVIC SPACE: AN INITIAL OPENING FOLLOWED BY A NEW NARROWING

It is likely in this area that the difference between the early days of the Ndayishimiye administration and the final phase of the Nkurunziza regime is most apparent. The new president's arrival had brought signs of greater openness. Prisoners were released, and some media outlets resumed operations. Presidential rhetoric focused more on easing tensions and fostering reconciliation. Human rights organizations had cautiously welcomed these changes, yet this momentum did not lead to lasting transformation.

[Amnesty International notes that, a decade after the 2015 crisis, Burundi remains trapped in a cycle of repression and impunity, with freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly severely restricted](#).²¹ [Human Rights Watch similarly observes that most independent Burundian human rights organizations continue to operate from exile due to threats to their safety](#).²²

III.7. CIVIL SOCIETY: THE CHANGE OF PRESIDENT HAS NOT LED TO THE FULL REHABILITATION OF THE ASSOCIATIVE SPACE

Under the Nkurunziza regime, several major Burundian human rights organizations were suspended or banned following the 2015 crisis. Ligue Iteka is among the organizations whose activities were prohibited.

The arrival of Évariste Ndayishimiye did not lead to a general reopening of this space. [As recently as 2023, Human Rights Watch noted that independent national and international human rights organizations were still unable to operate freely in Burundi and that several major organizations remained suspended or banned a status dating back to 2015](#).²³ This continuity warrants particular attention in the present report, precisely because Ligue Iteka the organization behind this documentation itself operates within a context of prohibition.

However, the difficulty of documenting violations should not be seen as a reason to abandon the effort. In contrast, the more the space for monitoring shrinks, the more important documentary records become.

¹⁹: <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2015/08/06/burundi-vague-darrestations-arbitraires-et-de-torture>

²⁰: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

²¹: <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2025/07/ten-years-on-reflections-on-the-silent-crisis-in-burundi/>

²²: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/08/20/burundi-as-risk-factors-multiply-extend-the-special-rapporteurs-mandate>

III.8. JUSTICE AND IMPUNITY: THE REAL COMMON GROUND OF THE TWO REGIMES.

Comparing the Nkurunziza and Ndayishimiye administrations ultimately points to the same problem: impunity. Under the former, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry concluded that serious violations were committed within a general climate of impunity, fostered notably by the lack of judicial independence²⁴.

Under the latter, concerns persist. As recently as 2023, Human Rights Watch noted that the Burundian justice system lacked independence and that insufficient measures had been taken to put an end to political interference.²⁵ Amnesty International also reports that alleged perpetrators of serious violations continue to enjoy impunity.²⁶ Thus, the change in president has not yet brought about the expected institutional shift.

III.9. AN IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE: POLITICAL STYLE AND THE FIRST SIGNS OF OPENING

To be credible, a comparison must not turn the two periods into one single reality. There are differences. Évariste Ndayishimiye's arrival was accompanied, at the beginning of his term, by gestures of openness that were not insignificant. The release of journalists and human rights defenders, the resumption of activities of certain media outlets, and a speech more focused on appeasement were signs of change.

So it would be unfair to say that nothing has changed. But it would be equally hard to claim that the initial change has turned into lasting structural reform. That's where one of the main comparative conclusions lies.

²³: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

²⁴: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/hr-bodies/hrc/co-i-burundi/co-i-burundi>

²⁵: <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2021/09/17/burundi-allegations-de-meurtres-de-disparitions-et-de-torture>

²⁵: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

²⁶: <https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2015/08/06/burundi-vague-darrestations-arbitraires-et-de-torture>



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III.10. SYNTHETIC COMPARATIVE CHART

Domain	Nkurunziza Period 2015-2020	Ndayishimiye Periode 2020-2026	Comparative reading
Right to life	2245 documented deaths	3 157 documented deaths	Worrying continuity
Lifeless bodies found	1312 Lifeless bodies found	1 739 Lifeless bodies found	Persistent problem
Kidnapping / Disappearances	597 cases	283 cases	Persistence of the phenomenon
Torture	1027 cases documented by ITEKA	348 cases documented by ITEKA	Continuity
Arbitrary arrests	10,907 documented cases Political repression tool after 2015	3 349 documented cases	Worrying continuity
Freedom of the press	Closure/suspension of numerous media outlets	Initial opening, then new restrictions	Opening followed by a setback
Civil society	Suspension and exile of numerous ONGs	Several organisation still suspended or in exile	Strong continuity
Justice	Strong political influence denounced	Independence remains problematic	Structural continuity
Impunity	Widely denounced	Still reported	Insufficient break
Political space	Intense repression after 2015	Opposition and civic space still severely restricted	Continuity with evolving forms
Political	Very limited at end of term	Initial opening in 2020-2021	Temporary improvement

III.11. A DEEPER READING: CHANGE OF REGIME OR SYSTEM CONTINUITY?

This is where the present report must go beyond a mere catalog of violations. The fundamental question is not whether Pierre Nkurunziza and Évariste Ndayishimiye are identical figures. They are not. Rather, the question is the extent to which the institutional mechanisms that enabled violations under the first regime have been dismantled under the second. Yet, available evidence suggests that several of these mechanisms have persisted: political influence over institutions; weak judicial independence; the controversial role of the Imbonerakure; restrictions on civic space; surveillance of political opponents; inadequate investigations into violations; and persistent impunity.

[Human Rights Watch has explicitly noted that, despite Évariste Ndayishimiye's promises of reform, the structural human rights problems documented under his predecessor remained.](https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/14/human-rights-watch-submission-universal-periodic-review-burundi)²⁷

This is one of the most important conclusions of this analysis.

²⁷: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/14/human-rights-watch-submission-universal-periodic-review-burundi>

III.12. FROM THE ANNOUNCED BREAK TO THE OBSERVED CONTINUITY

The recent history of Burundi seems to have created a paradoxical situation. In 2020, many hoped that a change of president would lead to a change in approach. The first decisions seemed to go in that direction. But six years later, the same words keep showing up in reports: disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, killings, impunity, restrictions on civil space. The vocabulary has changed slower than expectations. And it's precisely this contradiction that gives full meaning to the assessment of the past six years.

III.13. THE VERDICT OF SIX YEARS: A POLITICAL BREAK WITHOUT A COMPLETE INSTITUTIONAL BREAK?

In light of the available evidence, it would be premature to conclude that the two regimes are identical in every respect. However, it would be equally difficult to speak of a complete break with the past. The comparison points instead to an intermediate conclusion: Évariste Ndayishimiye's arrival brought about an initial opening and certain shifts in tone and method, yet it has not yet led to the dismantling of the institutional and political structures that facilitated abuses under Pierre Nkurunziza.

In other words: the president has changed. The rhetoric has changed. Some practices have changed. Yet, various mechanisms of repression and impunity have persisted. This distinction is crucial. For from a human rights perspective, genuine regime change is not measured solely by the face occupying the presidential palace; it is measured by the State's ability to guarantee that no one can be killed, tortured, abducted, or arbitrarily detained simply for thinking, speaking, or acting differently from those in power.

III.14. SIX YEARS LATER, THE QUESTION REMAINS THAT OF THE BREAKUP

Comparing Pierre Nkurunziza's final years with Évariste Ndayishimiye's first six years reveals a picture that is both harsh and nuanced. The Nkurunziza regime left behind a profound crisis: thousands of victims, a weakened civil society, media outlets forced into exile or shut down, a contested judicial system, and a deeply entrenched culture of impunity. International reports have extensively documented this reality.

The Ndayishimiye regime had a historic opportunity to break with this legacy. Initially, it did so to some extent. However, that break remains incomplete: the Ligue Iteka has documented 7,967 allegations over these six years, including 3,157 killings, 283 abductions and disappearances, 348 cases of torture, 830 instances of gender-based violence, and 3,349 arbitrary arrests. Thus, the most significant conclusion is perhaps not simply that "nothing has changed."

The reality is more specific: the areas most in need of change impunity, judicial independence, citizen protection, and the lasting opening of civic space have not undergone sufficiently profound transformation. And therein lies the true challenge of this seventh anniversary: moving from a change of president to a change of system; from a promise of reform to institutional reform; from imposed stability to rights-based peace; and from a justice system that merely functions to one that truly protects.



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IV.1. CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Burundi is among the countries that adhere to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1965) and its Optional Protocol (1976) without any reservations, since May 9, 1990²⁸. In order to implement it, Burundi has taken measures in its domestic legislation, particularly in its constitution of June 7, 2018 (main law), in Article 19, which guarantees that all the rights proclaimed and protected by duly ratified international texts are an integral part of this constitution. Implementation texts have been put in place, notably 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.

IV.1.1. A SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

Six years in power aren't just about speeches, announced reforms, or statements of intent. They are also measured by what citizens experience in their daily lives: those who are still alive, those who have disappeared, those who have been arrested, those who have been tortured, those who have suffered violence, and those whose families are still waiting for the truth.

Between July 2020 and June 2026, the consolidated documentation used for this report shows 7,967 allegations of human rights violations. This total comes from the sum of five main categories:

	Personnes tuées	3 157	(39,6 %)
	Arrestations arbitraires	3 349	(42,0 %)
	Violences basées sur le genre	830	(10,4 %)
	Cas de torture	348	(4,4 %)
	Personnes enlevées et portées disparues	283	(3,6 %)

These figures form the consolidated six-year dataset used in this report. However, they should not be viewed merely as an arithmetic sum. A documented violation represents an individual, a family, or a community whose fundamental rights have been infringed upon. Behind the 7,967 allegations lie 7,967 human stories some known, some anonymous; some recounted by survivors, others borne solely by the victims' families.

It is also important to note that the term "allegations" has been deliberately retained. It signifies that the facts were gathered and documented by the organization in accordance with its working

²⁸: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/DownloadDraft.aspx?key=jrbZefJS53CXKxmwQgIZceNrmqCyszdtW96ZvTx3Pwee00IFEFwNI2UIowikH6UF

IV.1. CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS. (the following of page 25)

methods, but that they do not automatically in every instance result in a final judicial conviction of the alleged perpetrator. This methodological caution strengthens rather than weakens the report's significance: documenting an allegation preserves a record that can subsequently be subject to investigation, verification, and, where appropriate, legal proceedings.

Trends observed by international organizations point in the same direction. Human Rights Watch reports that, between January 2024 and May 2025 alone, United Nations experts documented at least 605 extrajudicial killings, 58 enforced disappearances, 62 acts of torture, 892 arbitrary detentions, and 200 cases of sexual violence.

[Amnesty International also notes the persistence of arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, torture, and impunity in Burundi.](#)²⁹

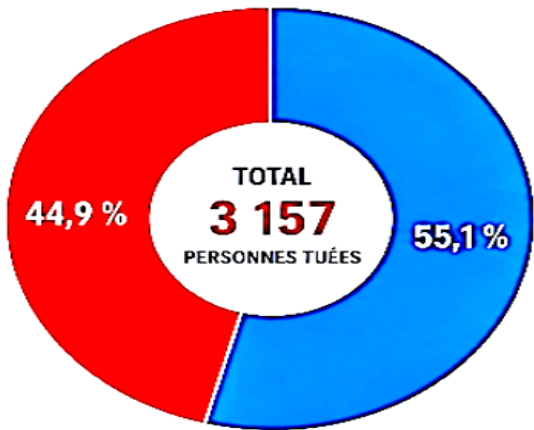
IV. 1.1.1. RIGHT TO LIFE

3,157 people killed: a figure that challenges the national conscience

The right to life is the foremost and most fundamental human right. When a person is unlawfully deprived of their life, no form of reparation can truly undo the loss suffered by their family. Over the six-year period covered by this report, the Iteka League documented 3,157 killings. This figure alone accounts for nearly 40% of the total 7,967 violations documented across the five categories analyzed.

Furthermore, the bodies of 1,739 of those killed were recovered representing approximately 55.1% of the documented cases. This proportion is particularly alarming. It means that in more than one out of every two recorded cases in this category, the victim was found dead, leaving behind a family grappling not only with grief but often with uncertainty regarding the exact circumstances of the death, the alleged perpetrators, and the motives behind the crime.

CATÉGORIE DES PERSONNES TUÉES
JUILLET 2020 – JUIN 2026



CATÉGORIE	NOMBRE	PART DU TOTAL
 Corps sans vie retrouvés	1 739	55,1 %
 Personnes assassinées	1 418	44,9 %
 TOTAL	3 157	100 %



Parmi les **3 157** personnes tuées entre juillet 2020 et juin 2026, 1 739 (55,1 %) sont des corps sans vie retrouvés et 1 418 (44,9 %) sont des personnes assassinées.

Source : Ligue Iteka – Période : Juillet 2020 – Juin 2026

²⁹<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/burundi/report-burundi/>

IV. 1.1.1. RIGHT TO LIFE (the following of page 26)

1,739 lifeless bodies: when death becomes a question without an answer

A recovered body constitutes physical evidence of death. Yet, it does not necessarily provide an answer. Who killed the victim? Why? Under what circumstances? Had the victim been arrested previously? Had they been tortured? Had they gone missing days earlier? Did the authorities open an investigation? Were the alleged perpetrators identified? Were they prosecuted? Were they convicted? These are the questions that must accompany the analysis of the 1,739 lifeless bodies recovered.

The report must therefore avoid mechanically turning every death into an accusation against a specific actor when the available evidence does not support such a conclusion. Instead, it must highlight any potential inadequacy in the institutional response to these deaths. This precaution is all the more important given that international reports continue to document extrajudicial killings in Burundi. Notably, United Nations experts reported 605 extrajudicial killings between January 2024 and May 2025, often involving the alleged participation of state agents or their proxies.

Human life cannot be reduced to an administrative statistic

The figure of 3,157 must therefore be viewed in its human dimension. Behind every person killed lies: a family deprived of a loved one; children deprived of a parent; parents deprived of a child; a spouse facing bereavement; a traumatized community; and when justice is not served a memory that remains wounded.

The true challenge, then, is not merely to count the dead. It is to understand why they died, to establish accountability, and to prevent others from dying under similar circumstances. A society truly protects the right to life only when a suspicious death marks the beginning of an investigation rather than the end of a story.

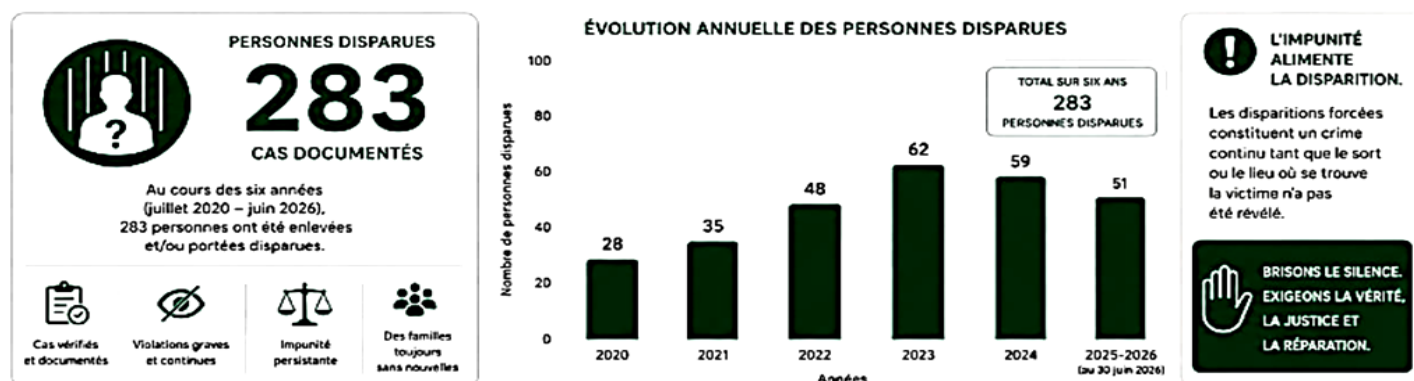
IV. 1.1.2. ABDUCTIONS AND/OR FORCED DISAPPEARANCES

283 Missing People: Silence as a Second Violence

Among the documented violations over six years are 283 people who were kidnapped and are now missing. Disappearance is a particularly painful violation because it leaves families in a state of permanent uncertainty. Death at least allows for mourning. Disappearance, on the other hand, leaves questions unanswered. Are they alive? Where are they? Who is holding them? Why? Will we ever see them again? In some situations, disappearance can also become a tool of intimidation against an entire community.

ENLÈVEMENTS ET/OU DISPARITIONS FORCÉES

JUILLET 2020 – JUIN 2026



IV. 1.1.2. ABDUCTIONS AND/OR FORCED DISAPPEARANCES (the following of page 27)

When a person disappears and their family receives no official information, fear spreads far beyond the victim. Neighbors fall silent. Witnesses hesitate to speak. Loved ones sometimes stop asking questions. Thus, the disappearance becomes not only an act of violence against an individual but also a message directed at those left behind.

Both national and international organizations continue to report cases of enforced disappearance in Burundi. Mainly, Human Rights Watch reports 58 cases of enforced disappearance between January 2024 and May 2025 ³⁰. Amnesty International has also documented instances where individuals perceived as government critics were allegedly arrested or subjected to enforced disappearance, without their families obtaining sufficient information about their fate ³¹.

A disappearance is never solely the concern of the person who vanishes.

For a family, every day becomes a long wait. Every phone call can spark hope. Every piece of information from a neighbor can give rise to new anxiety. Every discovery of an unidentified body can become an additional ordeal.

That is why the State has an obligation to search for missing persons, inform their families, and conduct credible investigations when public officials—or individuals acting with their complicity are suspected. A family should never have to choose between the hope of finding their loved one alive and the need to grieve.

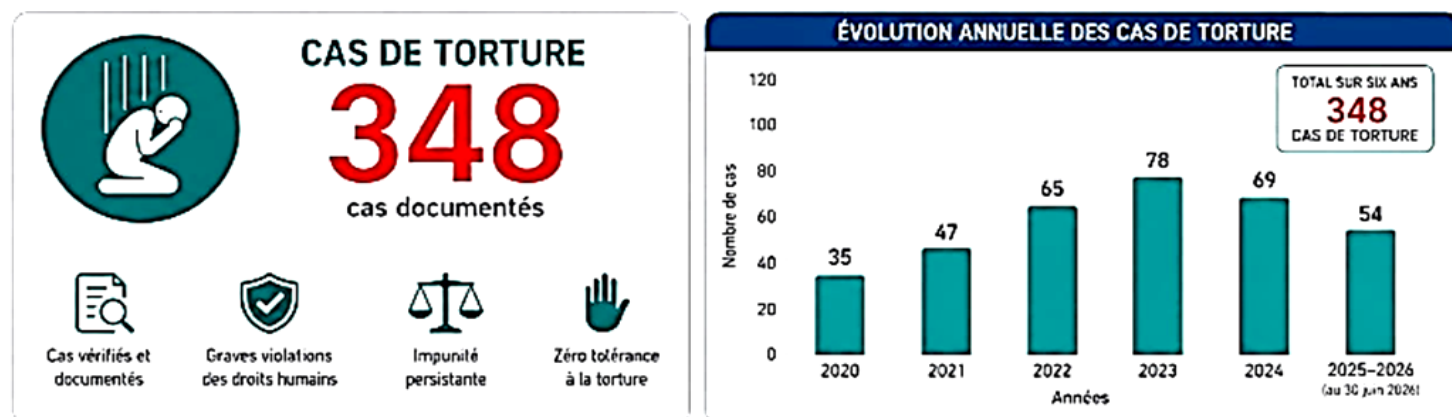
IV.1.1.3. TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENTS OR TREATMENTS.

348 cases: when detention becomes a physical and psychological ordeal

Torture is a particularly serious violation of human dignity. It is prohibited under all circumstances. No justification related to national security, fighting crime, terrorism, or rebellion can legitimize torture. Yet, the consolidated documentation in this report records **348 cases of torture over six years**. This number reflects the presence of allegations serious enough to require special attention from judicial authorities and national and international human rights protection mechanisms.

CAS DE TORTURE DOCUMENTÉS AU COURS DE SIX ANNÉES

PÉRIODE : JUILLET 2020 – JUIN 2026



³⁰: <https://www.hrw.org/fr/world-report/2026/country-chapters/burundi>

³¹: <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/location/africa/east-africa-the-horn-and-great-lakes/burundi/report-burundi/>

IV.1.1.3. TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENTS OR TREATMENT (the following of page 28)

[United Nations experts have also reported 62 acts of torture between January 2024 and May 2025.](#)³²

Torture destroys far more than just the body

The aftereffects of torture can be both physical and psychological. A victim may continue to suffer long after their release: chronic pain, psychological trauma, sleep disorders, constant fear, social isolation, loss of trust in institutions, and professional and family difficulties. Torture thus directly violates human dignity. It transforms a place meant to be governed by the rule of law such as a police station, prison, detention center, or interrogation room into a place of suffering.

The problem of impunity

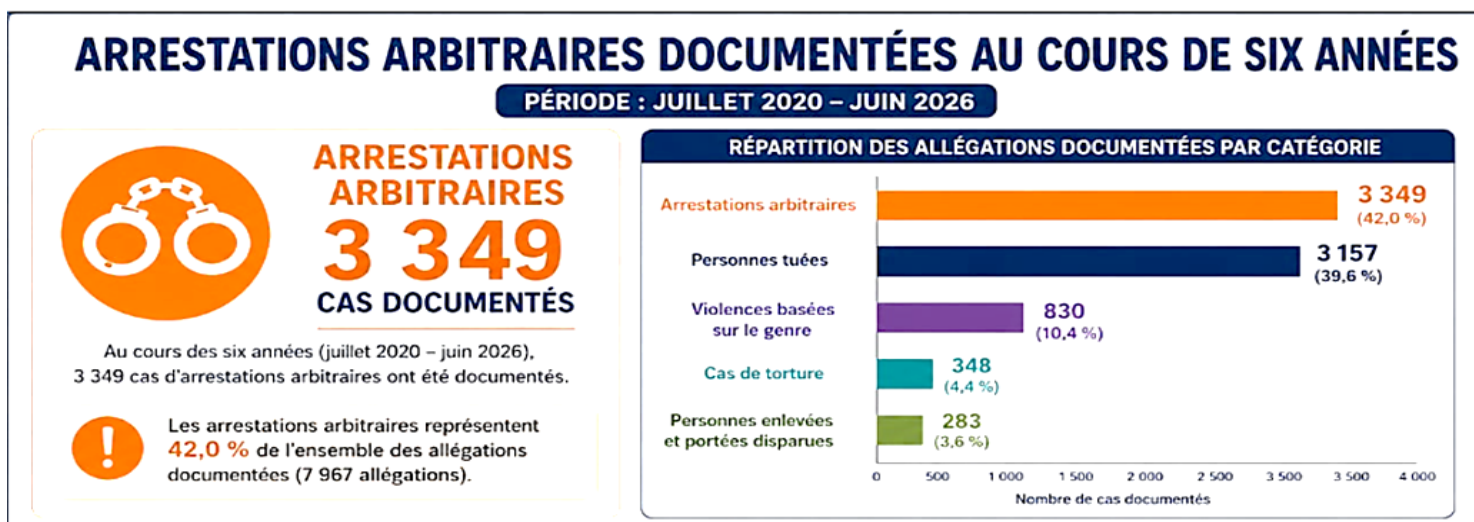
However, the crucial question is not merely how many cases have been documented. It is also: How many investigations have been opened? How many alleged perpetrators have been prosecuted? How many victims have obtained redress? Impunity remains a major concern highlighted by international organizations. [Amnesty International reports that alleged perpetrators of past and recent abuses continue to enjoy impunity.](#)³³

A society does not put an end to torture simply by banning the practice in law. It puts an end to it when the torturer knows they will be identified, prosecuted, and punished.

IV. I.1.4. RIGHT TO FREEDOM

Arbitrary arrests: when taking away someone's freedom becomes a tool of control.

With 3,349 documented cases, arbitrary arrests make up the largest category of violations recorded in this report. They account for about 42% of the 7,967 documented allegations. This number is particularly significant. Individual freedom is a fundamental right. A person can only be deprived of their freedom under the conditions set by law and with all the safeguards of due process. An arrest should never be used to punish an opinion. It should never be used to intimidate a family, become a way to silence a journalist, or be a response to peacefully engaging in political or community activities.



³²: <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

³³: <https://www.amnesty.fr/nous-connaître/nos-combats/justice-internationale/>

IV. I.1.4. RIGHT TO FREEDOM (the following of page 29)

However, recent reports continue to document arbitrary detentions in Burundi. [UN experts recorded 892 such cases between January 2024 and May 2025.](#)³⁴ [Amnesty International also reports arbitrary arrests and detentions targeting individuals perceived as critical of the government.](#)³⁵

The presumption of innocence must not become a mere formality

This issue is particularly sensitive when an arrest occurs before the judicial system has even made a ruling. An arrested person is not necessarily guilty; they are, first and foremost, a suspect. It is precisely for this reason that the law must protect their rights. Access to a lawyer, notification of the grounds for arrest, judicial oversight of detention, the right to a fair trial, and protection against torture constitute essential safeguards.

When arrest becomes a tool of intimidation

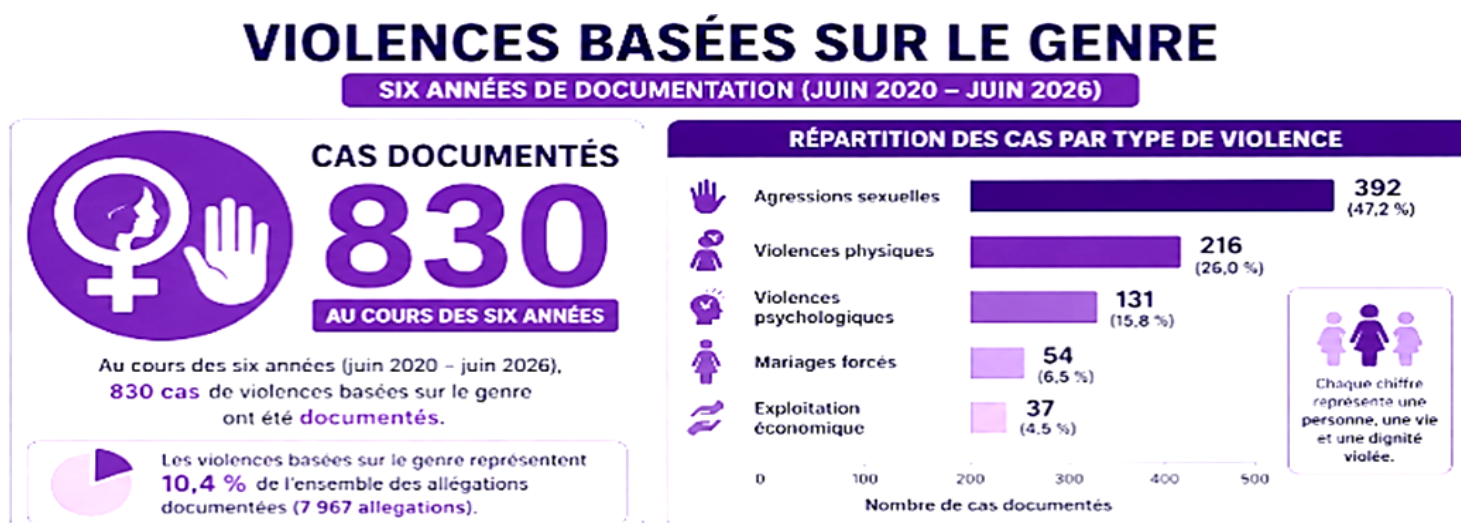
The situation becomes even more concerning when arrests repeatedly target the same groups: political opponents, activists, journalists, human rights defenders, members of civil society organizations, or individuals suspected of having ties to armed groups.

As recently as 2024, Amnesty International noted that human rights defenders, activists, journalists, and opposition members continued to face intimidation, arrests, arbitrary detention, and unfair prosecution under the Ndayishimiye government. Thus, the problem extends beyond a mere policing issue.

It becomes a matter of governance and the rule of law. In a state governed by the rule of law, a citizen's freedom must not depend on their proximity to those in power.

IV.I.1.5. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE/RAPE

Documented cases: the violence that often happens in silence. Gender-based violence is the fifth major category highlighted in the consolidated report. Over the six years, 830 cases were documented, with more than 80% being sexual violence according to the consolidated database used in this report.



³⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

³⁵ <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2024/08/burundi-four-years-into-evariste-ndayishimiyes-presidency-repression-of-civic-space-continues-unabated/>

IV.1.1.5. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE/RAPE (the following of page 30)

This figure is particularly concerning because sexual violence is often underreported. Shame. Fear of reprisals. Economic dependence. Family pressure. Stigmatization. Fear of not being believed.

All these factors can prevent a victim from reporting the abuse. The documented figure should therefore never be interpreted as the actual number of all acts of violence committed. Rather, it represents the visible part of a phenomenon that is likely much more widespread. Both national and international organizations continue to highlight the scale of gender-based violence in Burundi. [Mainly, Human Rights Watch reports that at least 200 cases of sexual violence including the rape of children were reported between January 2024 and May 2025.](#)³⁶

Sexual violence: a violation of the body and dignity

Sexual violence does not end when the assault itself is over. Victims may carry the consequences for years: physical effects, psychological trauma, fear, stigma, social exclusion, economic repercussions, and even long-lasting impacts on their family life.

That is why the State's response cannot be limited to punishing perpetrators. It must also guarantee access to medical care, psychological support, legal assistance, protection against reprisals, confidentiality, social reintegration, and reparation.

Protecting women and children must be a national priority

An effective public policy must also focus on prevention. Rights education. Awareness-raising. Combating forced marriage. Child protection. Access to justice. Training for police officers and magistrates. Medical and psychological care. All these elements are essential.

IV.1.2. A CROSS-SECTIONAL READING OF THE 7,967 CLAIMS

Taken individually, each of these figures is striking. Taken together, they tell a much deeper story: 3,157 people killed, including 1,739 whose lifeless bodies were recovered; 283 people abducted and reported missing; 348 cases of torture; 830 incidents of gender-based violence; and 3,349 arbitrary arrests making for a total of 7,967 allegations. This tally reveals that the violations do not affect just a single right.

They infringe upon the right to life, liberty, physical and psychological integrity, dignity, security, and equality. Above all, they affect various segments of the population. That is why the analysis must not be confined to a purely statistical reading.

The figures first show a significant concentration in two categories: arbitrary arrests and killings. These two categories alone account for 6,506 cases (3,349 + 3,157) or approximately 81.7% of all documented allegations. In other words, more than eight out of ten documented violations fall into these two categories. This concentration warrants specific analysis later in the report.

Perhaps the greatest danger of a protracted human rights crisis is not merely the proliferation of violations, but rather the onset of complacency. It happens when a body is found and no one asks why anymore; when a person disappears and the family eventually resigns itself to the loss; when an arbitrary arrest is viewed as normal; when a torture victim no longer dares to file a complaint,

³⁶<https://www.ohchr.org/fr/press-releases/2025/09/burundi-un-experts-alarmed-increase-serious-human-rights-violations-during>

IV.1.2. A CROSS-SECTIONAL READING OF THE 7,967 CLAIMS (the following of page 31)

or an assaulted woman chooses silence over facing stigma. At that point, the violation gradually ceases to be perceived as an anomaly. It becomes a habit. And when an injustice becomes a habit, it eventually becomes a system. It is precisely against this normalization that documenting violations remains so crucial.

IV.2. ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Between projected growth and lived hardship: when figures tell the story of Burundians' lives

Assessing economic, social, and cultural rights over the six years of President Évariste Ndayishimiye's administration cannot be reduced to a mere list of adopted public policies, infrastructure projects, or recorded growth rates. Above all, it must answer a simple question: **what impact have these policies had on the daily lives of Burundians?**

This question is particularly important because macroeconomic indicators can paint a picture that differs from the reality experienced by households. An economy may register positive growth even as families' real incomes decline, the prices of essential goods rise, students study in difficult conditions, and young people look abroad for their future.

During the period covered by this report, Burundi returned to positive economic growth. Real GDP grew by approximately 4.1% in 2024 and 4.2% in 2025. However, this growth occurred against a backdrop of high inflation: the rate rose from an average of 20.2% in 2024 to around 34% in 2025, peaking at 45.5% in April 2025.

These figures are not neutral; they reflect a social reality. When prices rise much faster than incomes, 4.2% GDP growth does not necessarily mean families are living better. For a civil servant on a fixed salary, a farmer who must purchase seeds and inputs, a mother feeding several children, or a small business owner whose operations are disrupted by shortages, economic growth is only tangible if it effectively improves disposable income and access to essential goods and services.

Furthermore, the World Bank estimates that approximately 74.8% of the Burundian population lived below the international poverty line of \$3 per day in 2024, compared to 74.2% in 2020.³⁷ In other words, despite development policies and the return of growth, the proportion of the population living in extreme poverty remains virtually unchanged. The contrast is striking: GDP is rising, yet poverty remains widespread; the economy is growing, yet purchasing power is declining; investments are being announced, yet essential needs remain substantial. It is against the backdrop of this contrast that the record of the past six years must be assessed.

³⁷: <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/pays/burundi>



Anyone should be respected

IV.2.1. PURCHASING POWER: WHEN SALARIES NO LONGER KEEP UP WITH THE COST OF LIVING

One of the most telling indicators of a population's economic situation is its purchasing power. In Burundi, however, this has been severely affected by the rising cost of living. [An average inflation rate of around 34% in 2025 following 20.2% in 2024 means that, on average, prices have risen much faster than the incomes of many households](#) ³⁸. Yet, behind these percentages lie daily choices.

A family facing simultaneous increases in the costs of food, transport, housing, medicine, and school fees cannot simply "absorb" inflation. They must cut back on certain expenses. They might buy less food, postpone a medical consultation, reduce travel, temporarily withdraw a child from school, or go into debt.

The situation of civil servants is particularly revealing. Nominal wages may remain unchanged while the cost of living rises rapidly. In such a case, a salary of 100,000 BIF which previously allowed for the purchase of a specific basket of goods no longer buys that same basket a few months or years later. The problem, therefore, is not merely the salary amount itself; it is the relationship between the salary and the actual cost of living.

Data analyzed in the report on civil servant remuneration under the UMUSEKE program show a decline in purchasing power when wage trends are compared to price trends. This situation is gradually turning the salary into a mere subsistence wage.

The paradox is stark: **the State expects teachers, nurses, administrative staff, technicians, and other civil servants to maintain public services, even though their incomes do not necessarily keep pace with the rising cost of living.** The issue of wages thus becomes a matter of the right to an adequate standard of living.

IV.2.2. THE ECONOMY OF SHORTAGES: WHEN ESSENTIAL PRODUCTS BECOME HARD TO FIND

The economic experience of Burundians during this period goes beyond the inflation measured by official statistics; it has also been characterized by recurring shortages of essential products. Fuel is one of the most significant examples. When fuel becomes scarce, the problem affects not only motorists but the entire economy. Transport becomes more difficult and costly; the movement of goods is hindered; prices rise; workers face greater commuting challenges; and business activities are disrupted.

A fuel shortage thus becomes an invisible tax imposed on the entire population.

The same logic applies to sugar, certain medicines and pharmaceutical products, and other basic necessities. When a product disappears from standard distribution channels, its price may rise on parallel markets, fueling speculation and further limiting access for poor households. The central issue, therefore, is not merely whether a product is officially available. One must also consider: at what price it is available; where it can be found; what quantity a household can actually purchase; how long it takes to obtain; and whether income levels still allow for its acquisition. **The right to an adequate standard of living is measured precisely by these factors.**

³⁸: <https://www.afdb.org/fr/countries/east-africa/burundi/burundi-economic-outlook>

IV.2.3. LIMITED ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES: WHEN THE PROHIBITION OF AN ACTIVITY MEANS LOSING INCOME

For a large segment of the population, particularly in urban areas, economic activity does not take the form of stable, salaried employment. Instead, it relies on small-scale trade, street vending, artisanal work, minor services, and other forms of the informal economy. Consequently, measures aimed at banning, relocating, or restricting such activities carry a human cost that must be taken into account.

For a household living hand-to-mouth, **the elimination of an economic activity is not merely an administrative matter; it can mean the immediate loss of the family income.** When the state bans an activity on grounds of urban planning, hygiene, safety, or public order, it must also consider what economic alternatives are available to the people affected.

This issue is particularly critical in a country where the informal sector is a major source of income. A public policy that bans an activity without creating an alternative may improve the apparent order of an urban space while exacerbating the precariousness of those who relied on that activity for their livelihood.

IV.2.4. MIGRATING TO WORK: BURUNDIANS LEAVING AS A SIGN OF THE JOB CRISIS

One of the most telling indicators of the economic situation is the significant movement of people seeking better opportunities. Burundians are heading to countries within the East African Community as well as to certain Arab nations, hoping to find employment, higher incomes, or better prospects. Migration is not, of course, a failure in itself; it can be a rational economic strategy that allows families back home to benefit from remittances.

However, when young people, workers, and skilled individuals view their economic future as lying abroad rather than in Burundi, migration also becomes an indicator of the limited opportunities offered by the national economy. This phenomenon must be viewed in the context of a lack of productive jobs, the precarious nature of the informal sector, low wages, and the difficulties young graduates face in entering the workforce.

Thus, beneath the migration statistics lies a fundamental question: how many Burundians are leaving the country not because they want to, but because they no longer see sufficient opportunities to earn a decent living from their work at home?

IV.2.5. AGRICULTURE: WHEN THE FARMER PAYS BUT WAITS FOR HIS FERTILIZER

Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for a large segment of the Burundian population. Its importance, therefore, cannot be measured solely by its contribution to GDP; it is best gauged by the number of households that rely directly on agricultural production for food, school fees, healthcare, and other essential needs.

In this context, access to agricultural inputs is directly linked to the right to food and household standards of living. During President Évariste Ndayishimiye's six-year tenure, agricultural policy has focused heavily on improving access to fertilizers. The introduction of a prepayment system with FOMI was intended to ensure supply for producers and boost agricultural productivity.

IV.2.5. AGRICULTURE: WHEN THE FARMER PAYS BUT WAITS FOR HIS FERTILIZER *(the following of page 34)*

However, the reality for many farmers has been characterized by difficulties regarding the availability and distribution of prepaid fertilizers. The issue is particularly concerning when a farmer has already paid for fertilizer but fails to receive it when needed. The agricultural calendar cannot be postponed indefinitely; seeds planted in the ground require fertilization at the right time, and any delay in application can jeopardize expected yields.

Thus, the term "prepayment" conceals a simple financial reality: **the farmer has tied up a portion of their income while awaiting an input essential to production.** If the product does not arrive on time, the farmer bears both the financial cost of the prepayment and the agricultural risk associated with the delay. This situation warrants even harsher criticism when the authorities are aware of the availability and distribution problems yet allow them to persist throughout the agricultural season.

The paradox of an agricultural policy that increases expenditure without adequately guaranteeing production

The goal of a fertilizer policy is to increase productivity. However, when farmers simultaneously face difficulties accessing fertilizers, improved seeds, manure, crop protection products, credit, and markets, increasing productivity remains a challenge. The problem, therefore, extends beyond the mere availability of fertilizer. Burundian farmers require a coherent agricultural value chain: **seed availability → fertilizer availability → adherence to schedules → sufficient production → storage → transport → market access → remunerative prices.** A breakdown at any one of these stages undermines the effectiveness of the others.

What six years of governance reveal

The agricultural record of these six years should not be presented solely in terms of announced programs, quantities of fertilizer distributed, or the number of registered farmers. It must address far more concrete questions: **How many farmers paid for fertilizer but failed to receive it on time? How many received their inputs after the optimal application window? How many lost part of their yield due to these delays? How many were forced to purchase additional inputs on the parallel market? What was the cost of these difficulties for farming households?**

For the true indicator of an agricultural policy is not the number of tons of fertilizer announced or distributed. **It is the amount of additional food the farmer actually manages to produce, the income derived from that production, and the family's ability to eat better thanks to that labor.**

After six years of governance, the paradox remains: **while agriculture is consistently touted as the engine of national development, a segment of producers continues to struggle to access the most basic means of production.**

When a farmer must pay before production begins but fails to receive fertilizer at the right time, it is not merely a logistical failure. **This is a failure that can result in lower production, reduced income, and greater food insecurity for households.** It is against this backdrop and not merely based on the number of agricultural programs announced that the record of the past six years must be assessed.

IV.2.6. THE RIGHT TO FOOD: HUNGER BEHIND THE STATISTICS

Available data on children's diets reveal the scale of the problem. According to data cited in this report, 82% of children under the age of five consume only five of the eight recommended daily food groups. Among children aged 6 to 23 months, only 28% had access to a sufficiently diverse diet according to the 2024 SMART survey while just 18% received a minimally acceptable diet.³⁹ These percentages take on profound significance when translated into human terms.

Behind the 18% of children receiving a minimally acceptable diet lie the remaining 82% who do not meet this minimum standard. This figure adds a new dimension to the issue of poverty: it is no longer merely a matter of insufficient income, but of direct consequences for child development. Inadequate nutrition can affect growth, learning abilities, resistance to disease, and in the long term economic prospects. Malnutrition is therefore simultaneously a health, social, and economic issue.

IV.2.7. THE RIGHT TO HEALTH: BETWEEN ACCESS TO CARE AND FORGOING TREATMENT.

Progress has been made in several areas of healthcare, particularly regarding vaccination, maternal and child health, and the fight against certain diseases. However, the mere existence of a health facility does not automatically mean that the right to health is being realized. The issue must be viewed from the patient's perspective: do they have access to the health center? Is the medication available? Can they afford the consultation? Can they pay for tests? Can they cover transportation costs?

In some areas facing health emergencies, facilities have had to treat large numbers of patients despite a lack of adequate human resources, equipment, and infrastructure. The cost of care is also a major factor contributing to vulnerability. In a context where real incomes are eroded by inflation, any medical expense can place a significant financial burden on a household.

Thus, the true indicator of the right to health is not merely the number of health centers built, but the number of people who can actually receive treatment when they fall ill.

³⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/burundi/fr/recits/burundi-projet-no-time-waste-une-r%C3%A9ponse-int%C3%A9gr%C3%A9e-multisectorielle-en-faveur-de-la-nutrition>



Anyone should be respected

IV.2.8. EDUCATION: CHILDREN GOING TO SCHOOL, BUT NOT ALWAYS UNDER DECENT CONDITIONS

Education is one area where the gap between public announcements and daily reality warrants particular attention. Rising school enrollment has led to a substantial increase in the need for classrooms, teachers, teaching materials, and school furniture. The challenges are evident in many schools: overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of teachers, a lack of supplies, and poor learning conditions.

School dropout rates are another key indicator. A child who leaves school prematurely is more than just an educational statistic; their situation often stems from a combination of factors, such as family poverty, the need to work, access issues, a lack of materials, the distance to school, or inadequate facilities.

The case of the 336,000 school desks

The announced program to manufacture **336,000 school desks** offers a particularly telling example of the scale of the need. The government allocated a budget of **18 billion Burundian francs (BIF)** for this program. Based on the number of desks, this budget works out to approximately **53,571 BIF per desk**, assuming the entire amount were dedicated to their manufacture.

However, field observations analyzed in the specific report on this program reveal that prices announced in some communes reached as high as **130,000 to 150,000 BIF per desk**, far exceeding the estimated actual value. These discrepancies are not merely accounting details; they raise questions about the optimal use of public resources.

The same report documented that 34% of students in the surveyed areas lacked desks described as **"badly seated kids"** and noted the felling of over **19,000 trees** for production, with no clear or proportionate replanting program in evidence. Thus, behind the figure of **336,000 desk-benches** lie three human rights questions: how many children were actually deprived of school furniture? how much public money truly benefited these children? and what was the environmental cost of the operation?

The number of 18 billion BIF should not, therefore, be presented merely as a public expenditure: it must be weighed against the number of children actually served, the real unit cost, and the quality of the furniture delivered.

IV.2.9. BURNED MARKETS: THE DESTRUCTION OF LIVELIHOODS

The deterioration of household economic conditions stems from more than just inflation, shortages, or low incomes; it also manifests through the direct destruction of thousands of people's livelihoods. In this regard, fires affecting various markets and commercial areas during this period serve as a particularly telling indicator.

The case of the Kamenge market, which burned down in October 2020, is emblematic. More than 85% of the market was destroyed. [Surveys identified 1,297 victims, while losses in merchandise were valued at approximately 2.223 billion Burundian francs and the destroyed infrastructure at at least 1.5 billion Burundian francs.](#)⁴⁰ Total losses were thus estimated at nearly 4 billion Burundian francs.

⁴⁰: <https://burundi-eco.com/4-milliards-bif-partis-en-fumee-suite-a-lincendie-marche-kamenge/>

IV.2.9. BURNED MARKETS: THE DESTRUCTION OF LIVELIHOODS (the following of page 37)

These numbers illustrate the tangible impact of a market fire on a low-income population. Behind the **1,297 victims** lie as many disrupted family lives; behind the **2.223 billion francs' worth of destroyed goods** lies the capital that sustained families; and behind the destroyed infrastructure lie years of investment and economic activity.

However, this phenomenon was not limited to Kamenge. Other markets and commercial areas were affected during the period. In September 2024, the **Kukabasazi market in Mutanga-Nord was devastated by fire**, leaving traders without their goods and their usual means of livelihood. In May 2026, the **Kinama market** was also struck by fire. Other fires affected warehouses and commercial spaces as well.

The lack of a consolidated national public registry makes it impossible to state with certainty the total number of markets destroyed during the six years covered by this report. This statistical gap is itself a governance issue: **a phenomenon that regularly destroys livelihoods ought to be subject to national monitoring that allows for the identification of victims, the assessment of losses, the determination of causes, and the measurement of the public authorities' response.**

Beyond the issue of the fires themselves, the problem lies in the protection of small-scale economic actors. In a country where a significant portion of the population derives its income from small-scale trade and the informal sector, the destruction of a market can be tantamount to the loss of a job. A trader who loses their stock loses more than just merchandise; **they may lose their capital, their daily income, and their ability to support their family.** When adequate compensation is not provided and reconstruction is delayed, the economic disaster persists long after the fire has been extinguished.

An assessment of governance must therefore examine not only the physical reconstruction of markets but also the situation of the victims: **Have they been compensated? How quickly? Have they regained a workspace? Have they been compensated for their goods? Have the causes of the fires been established? Have those responsible been identified in cases of arson? Have prevention measures been strengthened?**

These questions are essential for evaluating the realization of the right to work and the right to an adequate standard of living. Thus, **a market destroyed by fire is not merely a ruined building; it represents a family economy that can vanish in a matter of hours.** The true indicator of the public response is therefore not simply the number of markets rebuilt, but the number of people whose livelihoods have effectively been restored.



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IV.2.10. RURAL AND URBAN HOUSEHOLDS DO NOT EXPERIENCE THE CRISIS IN THE SAME WAY

Poverty in Burundi also has a strong territorial dimension. According to World Bank estimates, about 79% of the rural population lives below the international poverty line, compared to around 35% in urban areas ⁴¹. The gap is considerable: the rural poverty rate is **more than 44 percentage points higher** than the urban rate. This difference shows that national policies cannot be judged solely by what is visible in urban centers.

In rural areas, households are more exposed to climate hazards, difficulties accessing markets, the cost of inputs, and low agricultural incomes. In cities, households are more affected by transportation costs, food prices, housing, and the precariousness of informal work. So, the **economic crisis doesn't have just one face it takes different forms depending on the area.**

IV.2.11. SOCIAL PROTECTION: A SAFETY NET THAT REMAINS TOO WEAK IN THE FACE OF THE SCALE OF VULNERABILITY

When nearly three-quarters of the population live below the international poverty line established by the World Bank, social protection should be a central element of public policy. Yet, when faced with a sudden price hike, illness, job loss, a poor harvest, or a disaster, poor households have very limited room for maneuver.

The family itself then becomes the primary mechanism for social protection. In practical terms, this means that when incomes fall, households cut back on food, medical, or educational expenses, sell assets, go into debt, or send family members elsewhere to seek work. An effective social protection system should specifically prevent a temporary economic shock from turning into a lasting loss of human capital.

IV.2.12. CULTURAL RIGHTS: A DIMENSION NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED

Cultural rights are still less visible than the rights to food, health, or education, but they also contribute to dignity and social cohesion. Preserving heritage, freedom of creation, access to culture, and passing on traditions are important elements in a country marked by several decades of crises. Culture can contribute to collective memory, reconciliation, and bringing communities closer together. However, in a context where a large part of households spend most of their income on food, health, and education needs, access to cultural activities becomes heavily dependent on living standards.

IV.2.13. SUMMARY: WHEN THE NUMBERS DON'T BACK UP THE DEVELOPMENT TALK

The data examined in this section lead to a conclusion that deserves to be clearly stated. The 2020–2026 period has not been one of total stagnation. Infrastructure has been built, social and health programs have been implemented, economic growth has returned to positive territory, and certain sectoral policies have yielded results. Yet, these advances must be weighed against the reality faced by households.

⁴¹: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099335404212570757>

IV.2.13. SUMMARY: WHEN THE NUMBERS DON'T MATCH THE DEVELOPMENT SPEECH (the following of page 39)

74.8% of the population living below the international poverty line. Average inflation of 34% in 2025. Inflation of 45.5% in April 2025. Poverty rates of 79% in rural areas and 35% in urban areas. 82% of young children failing to meet the minimum acceptable diet standard for the 6–23 month age group. 34% of students lacking desks, according to field data used for the specific report on school furniture. 336,000 desk-bench units announced. 18 billion BIF mobilized or pledged for this program. Over 19,000 trees cut down during the documented course of this operation.

Taken together, however, **these numbers tell a far more precise story than a mere presentation of public policies ever could.**

They depict a country where growth exists, yet poverty remains widespread; where wages struggle to keep pace with the cost of living, and shortages disrupt daily life. A country where farmers face difficulties accessing inputs, young people seek their futures abroad, and children drop out of school or learn in inadequate conditions. A country where merchants can lose their capital in market fires, and households have few mechanisms to protect themselves against shocks.

The true issue regarding these six years of governance, therefore, is not whether **GDP grew by 4.2%**. **The key questions are whether real household income has risen, whether children are eating better, whether the sick can access medical care, whether farmers are producing more using affordable inputs, whether young people are finding jobs, whether students have teachers and decent learning conditions, and whether families can cope with sharp price hikes without slipping further into poverty.**

In this regard, the available numbers point to a conclusion that is far more nuanced yet also far more critical than a mere "mixed record." **The economic growth recorded in recent years has not yet yielded a sufficiently broad or perceptible improvement in living conditions for a large segment of the population.**

The paradox of Burundi's development during the period under review lies precisely in the fact that **macroeconomic indicators can improve while indicators of actual social conditions remain alarming**. Therefore, the assessment of economic, social, and cultural rights must be based not on the number of announcements made or programs launched, but on their tangible impact on citizens' lives.

A successful economic policy is not one that merely generates growth. It is one where that growth ultimately translates into food on families' tables, workers' wages, farmers' harvests, supplies in pharmacies, conditions in classrooms, and better prospects for the youth. It is by this standard that these six years of governance must be evaluated.



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After six years of President Évariste Ndayishimiye's administration, the human rights record presents a mixed and concerning number. Hopes for a break with past practices and the consolidation of the rule of law have not yet yielded all the expected changes. Consolidated data for the period from July 2020 to June 2026 records 7,967 allegations of human rights violations, including 3,157 deaths (with 1,739 bodies recovered), 283 abductions and disappearances, 348 cases of torture, 830 incidents of gender-based violence, and 3,349 arbitrary arrests.

Beyond the statistics, this record highlights persistent major challenges: protecting the right to life, combating disappearances and torture, respecting individual freedoms, ensuring judicial independence, fighting impunity, and opening up civic space. Economically and socially, despite some progress and a return to growth, poverty, inflation, limited access to essential services, and inequality continue to weigh heavily on the population's living conditions.

This report does not deny the progress made or the efforts undertaken. However, it underscores that governance is measured not merely by intentions or tangible achievements, but by the State's capacity to protect every citizen, guarantee their rights, and deliver justice to victims. After six years, the challenge now lies in translating commitments into lasting results: ending impunity, guaranteeing judicial independence, protecting civic space, ensuring citizen safety, and making economic development a genuine tool for improving living conditions.

Ultimately, Burundi faces a decisive choice: to continue practices that perpetuate fear and impunity, or to embark on a profound transformation grounded in justice, truth, accountability, and human dignity.



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