

BURUNDI: THE LIGUE ITEKA AND KING UMURUNDI FREEDOM LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN AGAINST POLITICAL-ETHNIC DIVISIONS AND ECONOMIC MISMANAGEMENT

« TURWANYE AMACAKUBIRI N'UBUSUMA »

Aiming to preserve social cohesion, restore public trust, and prevent conflict.

BRUSSELS-PARIS, OCTOBER 2026. Political-ethnic divisions and economic mismanagement represent two major threats to social cohesion, governance, and peace in Burundi. In light of the risks of escalating political, security, and socio-economic tensions, the Burundian human rights organization Ligue Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom are launching an awareness campaign against political-ethnic divisions and economic mismanagement referred to as «**Turwanye Amacakubiri n'Ubusuma**» at the end of a week of international consultations held from October 5 to 9, 2026, as part of the **UMUSEKE** program.

IN BRUSSELS, the two organizations met with representatives from the European Commission specifically the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (INTPA) as well as the Belgian Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs and several international organizations, including EURAC, PAX Christi International, Justice and Peace, 11.11.11, RCN Justice & Democracy and Lawyers Without Borders (ASF).

IN PARIS, they held discussions with representatives from the French Development Agency (AFD), the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF), and the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). Additionally, on the sidelines of the meetings in Brussels, they met with the president of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

These discussions highlighted eight major concerns regarding the future of Burundi and the stability of the Great Lakes region:

01. A political crisis that has persisted since 2015

The two organizations believe that the root causes of the political crisis, which began in 2015, remain inadequately addressed leading to ongoing tensions, an exodus into exile, and an erosion of trust among political actors. The organizations also express concern over arrangements made with some host countries that could facilitate the forced return of Burundian refugees. They advocate for any repatriation process to be strictly voluntary and to uphold the dignity and safety of the individuals involved. In their view, a sustainable resolution to the crisis requires an inclusive dialogue that brings together opposition leaders, civil society organizations, media in exile, and other relevant stakeholders.

02. Contested elections in 2025 and the shrinking political space

Describing the 2025 elections as rigged, they denounce the narrowing of space for the opposition, specifically regarding the “National Congress for Freedom” (CNL) political party, the faction associated with Agathon Rwasa. For Ligue Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom, political competition cannot be reduced merely to the periodic holding of elections; it also requires guarantees for freedom of expression, association, participation, and pluralism.

03. Security issues in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The discussions addressed the alleged involvement of Burundian security forces in the Congolese crisis, as well as the presence of the FDLR in Burundi and along the front lines in the eastern DRC. Military dynamics, the movement of armed groups, and inter-state tensions could increase the risk of escalation and exacerbate the humanitarian consequences for civilian populations. Ligue Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom emphasize the importance of prioritizing regional dialogue mechanisms, ensuring transparency regarding security commitments, and upholding international law, in order to prevent existing tensions from escalating into a broader confrontation.

04. Tensions between Rwanda and Burundi

The two organizations warn of the risks posed by a deterioration in bilateral relations, which could undermine regional cooperation and stabilization efforts. According to them, preserving peace requires keeping diplomatic channels open, favoring consultative mechanisms, and avoiding decisions that might fuel distrust between the populations and authorities of the two countries.

05. Misappropriation of public funds and shortages

Both organizations denounce financial mismanagement and a socio-economic situation characterized by recurring shortages of medicines, fertilizers, water, electricity, and fuel. These hardships affect households, weaken economic activity, and hinder the functioning of social services particularly in the health, transport, business, and agricultural sectors. In a country where a large portion of the population relies on limited resources, the consequences of these shortages extend beyond mere material hardship. They fuel a sense of abandonment, exacerbate inequalities, and risk further eroding trust in public institutions.

06. Distortions in the foreign exchange market

The coexistence of an official exchange rate and a parallel market rate was also addressed. The gap between the official rate and the “black” market rate complicates the procurement of goods and facilitates the illicit enrichment of some officials. This situation raises concerns regarding transparency, economic equity, and governance. When access to foreign currency becomes difficult and allocation mechanisms lack transparency, importers and economic operators face additional obstacles in supplying the market. The resulting impact is felt in prices, product availability, and household purchasing power.

07. High cost of living and the departure of civil servants

Inflation and declining purchasing power are placing a strain on households, while civil servants are leaving the country in search of better living conditions and higher pay abroad mainly in the Gulf states, neighboring countries, and other destinations. This mobility, when driven by the need to seek a livelihood elsewhere, raises questions regarding the attractiveness of public-sector jobs, worker compensation, and the country’s ability to keep its skilled workforce.

08. The deterioration of the human rights situation

Both organizations express concern over what they perceive as an intensification of rights violations in Burundi, particularly in recent days. They believe that this increase cannot be explained solely by the approach of an election. They draw particular attention to the abductions and targeted killings of individuals suspected of collaborating with armed groups. They call for the prevention of such violations, the conduct of independent and impartial investigations, and the prosecution of alleged perpetrators once the facts have been sufficiently established. They also emphasize the need to protect victims, witnesses, and those who document these violations.

Preventing further escalation: a collective responsibility

For Ligue Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom, these eight factors risk reinforcing one another, exacerbating frustrations, and further undermining peace in Burundi and the wider region. They warn of the potential for an escalation that could reignite armed tensions if appropriate measures are not taken on time. The campaign «**Turwanye Amacakubiri n'Ubusuma**» (divisions and theft/corruption) therefore seeks to fight against politico-ethnic divisions, theft, and the misappropriation of public funds, while promoting responsible governance, transparency, justice, and respect for human rights.

Dividing citizens weakens the nation, and the misappropriation of public resources compromises the common good. For the two organizations, preventing conflict requires tackling these two scourges «**Amacakubiri n'Ubusuma**» at their root, restoring trust between citizens and their institutions, and mobilizing authorities, civil society, international partners, and the general population around a common goal: **preserving peace and preventing current divisions from escalating into a new tragedy.**

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