

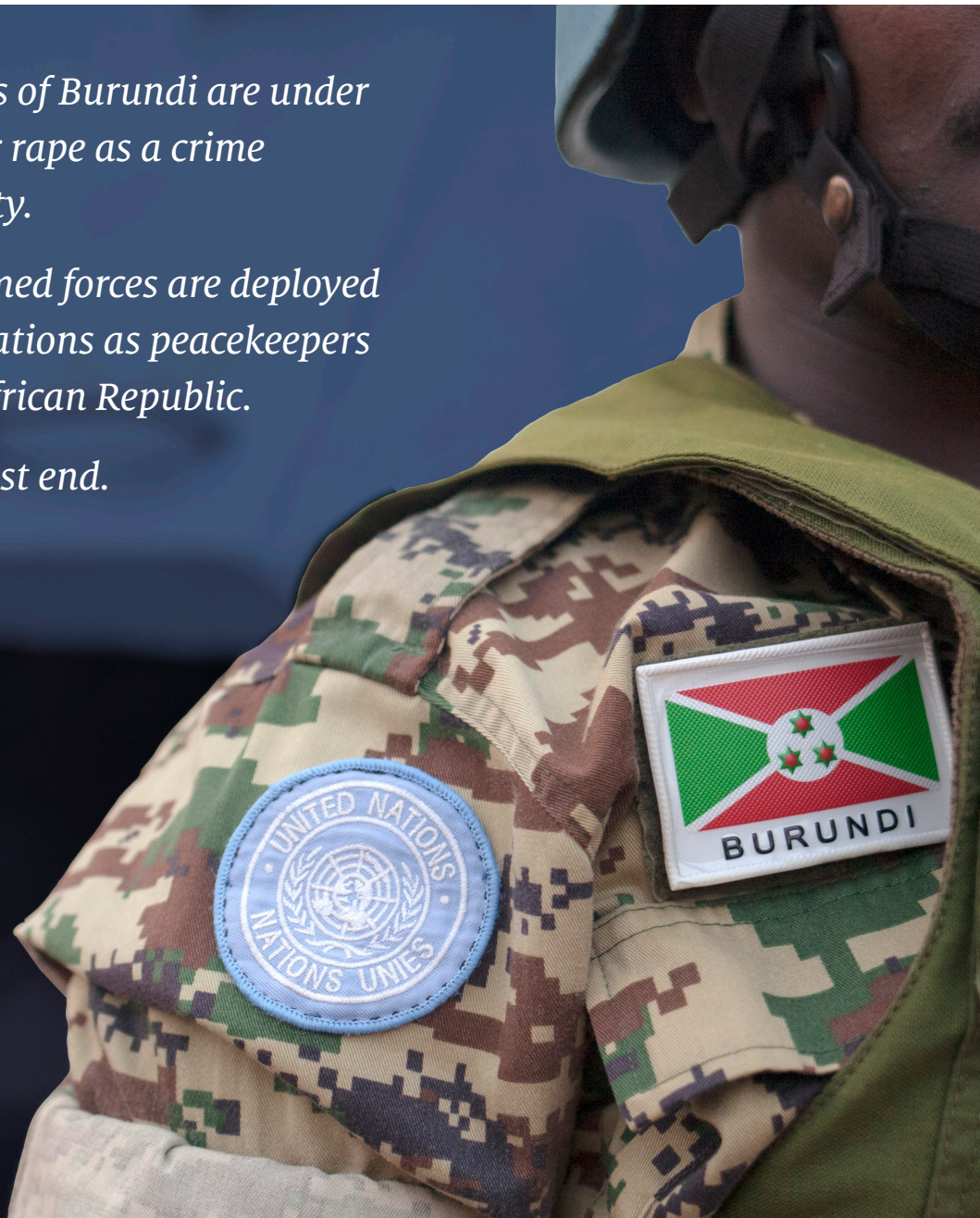
# The UN's Deal With a Dictator

*The armed forces of Burundi are under investigation for rape as a crime against humanity.*

*Yet the same armed forces are deployed by the United Nations as peacekeepers in the Central African Republic.*

*This outrage must end.*

Adrienne Surprenant



# An Unconscionable Contract

Since March 2019, we have been imploring Secretary-General António Guterres to repatriate all the military personnel provided to the United Nations by the Government of Burundi.

Hundreds of Burundian peacekeepers are stationed in the Central African Republic. They have a history of sexually exploiting and abusing the women and girls they were deployed to protect.

Nothing about Burundi's pattern of rape and sexual abuse in the Central African Republic is unexpected. It directly mirrors the government's conduct within Burundi itself. So acute has the violation of human rights become in Burundi that the International Criminal Court has opened an investigation, citing its "reasonable basis to believe that the crime of rape as a crime against humanity" has been perpetrated by government forces against women and girls.

The United Nations pays the Government of Burundi \$13 million a year for the use of its military personnel. That money, in turn, finances the government's campaigns of terror, including rape, both in Burundi and in the Central African Republic. **The question—logical, moral, ethical, and legal—is unavoidable: why is the UN financing sexual violence against women and girls?**

Security Council Resolution 2272(2016) explicitly applies. The first operative paragraph states that the Security Council "endorses the decision of the Secretary-General to repatriate a particular military unit or formed police unit of a contingent where there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic exploitation and abuse by that unit and requests the Secretary-General to give immediate and ongoing effect to this decision."

## Why has Secretary-General Guterres refused to exercise his authority?

This report lays out a narrative of incontrovertible evidence that substantiates our position on Burundi's role in United Nations Peacekeeping. It is our sincere hope that UN Member States will call upon Mr. Guterres to abandon his stance and honor the Security Council's resolutions.

Our commitment to multilateralism is absolute. For that reason, we appeal for an immediate end to an unconscionable contract with a deviant government, one that brings the entire United Nations into disrepute.



**Paula Donovan, Stephen Lewis**  
Co-Directors, AIDS-Free World  
and its *Code Blue Campaign*



Courtesy of Ketty Nivyabandi

**Activist Ketty Nivyabandi, pictured kneeling, led protests against the Nkurunziza regime in 2015 and was forced to flee the country, eventually finding refuge in Canada.**

**T**he small East African nation of Burundi has been embroiled in a political, humanitarian, and human rights crisis since the spring of 2015, when widespread protests broke out following the decision of President Pierre Nkurunziza to seek a third term in defiance of the country's constitution. Since then, and continuing until today, the Nkurunziza regime has conducted a violent crackdown against real and perceived opponents, causing more than a thousand deaths and forcing 350,000 people to flee Burundi.

The crimes committed by the regime's forces—which

include the military, intelligence services, police, and youth militia (*Imbonerakure*)—have been well-documented by the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, activists, NGOs, the Burundian diaspora, and the news media. The crimes include murders, extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, threats and intimidation, and extortion. Above all, it has been firmly established that Nkurunziza's men and boys deploy sexual violence with impunity against those deemed to be regime opponents.

During the nearly five years of the current crisis, the

**“Impregnate the opposition so they give birth to Imbonerakure. There are lots of girls. Impregnate them, Imbonerakure!”**

*—Rape chant of the Imbonerakure, the youth militia of Burundi’s ruling party, which has been accused of widespread abuses against Burundian citizens.*



Shutterstock

**“It’s so hard to generate troops to go to CAR that we can’t afford to lose the Burundians”**

*—Unnamed UN Peacekeeping official*

behavior of Burundi’s government has been roundly condemned by voices of conscience in Burundi, throughout Africa, and across the world.

Yet during the same period, the United Nations—even as it documents Burundi’s human rights abuses—has paid the Nkurunziza regime large sums of money for the services of Burundi government forces that have been credibly accused of crimes against humanity. As of December 31, 2019, 745 contingent troops, eight staff officers, and two Experts on Mission from Burundi are serving as UN peacekeepers for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), where they represent a danger to women and children.

In exchange for the deployment of its personnel, the UN pays Burundi’s government more than US \$13 million a year from funds paid out of the mandatory dues for peacekeeping operations contributed to the UN by Member States. The money represents a significant contribution to the regime. Burundi’s military budget was approximately \$65.4 million in 2018, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

**How have Burundian peacekeepers comported themselves in the Central African Republic (CAR)?**

Since 2015—and excluding all

allegations of non-criminal sexual offenses—the UN has determined that reports of rape or sexual assault lodged against 43 military peacekeepers from Burundi have met the credibility threshold for inclusion in the organization’s Conduct in UN Field Missions database. The online database contains information the UN has made public about vetted sexual misconduct allegations filed against UN peacekeepers. The alleged victims of those 43 soldiers include 49 children, 27 adults, and five individuals of unknown age.

Community activists, victims, advocates, and medical personnel in CAR indicate that a much larger number of victims of Burundian peacekeepers regularly seek emergency care and support services but will not report the incidents to the UN. A *Code Blue Campaign* investigation in 2017 found that even when victims reported allegations against peacekeepers, many complaints were filtered out and discarded by UN mission personnel before victims were given any semblance of a hearing.

Once the UN determines that an allegation against a military peacekeeper is credible, it refers the matter to the soldier’s sending state, known as the Troop-Contributing Country, which is responsible for investigation and prosecution. None of the 43 Burundian peacekeepers in



the UN database has faced criminal punishment.

AIDS-Free World's *Code Blue Campaign*, which seeks to end impunity for sexual abuse by UN personnel, has advocated forcefully over the past year for the United Nations to end its practice of deploying Burundian peacekeepers. There is a solid policy basis to our position: in Resolution 2272 from 2016, the UN Security Council authorized the Secretary-General to send military peacekeepers back to their home countries "when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation and abuse." Further, the Secretary-General is requested to "replace all military units" of a troop-

**A mother and her daughter, who was raped by a Burundian peacekeeper, in Bangui, Central African Republic.**

**Malik (last name withheld), a human rights defender and lawyer based in CAR who has assisted 28 victims of Burundian military and civilian peacekeepers, told the *Code Blue Campaign*, "Victims keep coming to me and saying, 'When will there be reparations? When will the soldiers be judged?' They hope that one day investigators from Burundi will follow up and justice will be served."**

contributing country that “has not taken appropriate steps” to investigate allegations against its troops.

**Our message is clear and unequivocal: UN Peacekeeping has no business contracting with a regime that has an indisputable record of committing sexual violence against civilians, in its own country and beyond.**

UN Secretary-General António Guterres must follow the directive of the Security Council and act immediately to end Burundi’s noxious role in UN Peacekeeping.

-----

In 2015, in the months following the outbreak of unrest and violent government crackdowns on protestors, the UN Human Rights Council established the United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB) to investigate possible human rights abuses and prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Two months later, in December 2015, Burundian activists were horrified to learn that Colonel Gaspard Baratuza, a spokesman for Burundi’s military who had defended the regime’s human rights abuses, had been chosen by the UN to become its spokesman for MINUSCA. A Twitter campaign was launched with the hashtag #SendBaratuzaBack. The UN suspended Baratuza’s

appointment before he reached the Central African Republic.

**In April 2016, the *Code Blue Campaign* revealed that it had obtained leaked internal UN documents discussing 41 undocumented allegations of sexual abuse lodged by women and girls against Burundian and Gabonese military peacekeepers deployed in Dekoa, a remote northern town in CAR.** A total of 30 Burundian military peacekeepers were eventually identified as possible perpetrators, according to the UN’s Conduct and Discipline database. A shockingly flawed investigation by the UN and Burundian National Investigations Officers (NIOs)—described in more detail on page 14—determined that all of the criminal allegations against the Burundian soldiers were “unsubstantiated.”

Two months later, in June

2016, the UN announced that it would not replace 280 police peacekeepers from Burundi who were scheduled to rotate out of MINUSCA. The decision was made “given the current allegations of serious and ongoing human rights violations in Burundi,” according to Stefan Feller, then the top police adviser for UN Peacekeeping.

In August 2016, the UN declared that a senior Burundian officer serving in MINUSCA—Colonel Alfred Mayuyu—would be repatriated. It was disclosed that Mayuyu had run a military detention center in Burundi for military and civilian dissidents.

After a year of investigation, the UNIIB released its report in September 2016. It detailed widespread sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls by regime forces. The UNIIB said it documented “a number of cases” of sexual mutilation.



*Secretary-General António Guterres.*

UN Photo/Mark Garten

“The United Nations and the African Union should phase out the use of Burundian troops in Peacekeeping operations while the crisis continues,” the UNIIB’s experts advised.

A *Washington Post* story published in December 2016 quoted an anonymous UN Peacekeeping official: “It’s so hard to generate troops to go to CAR that we can’t afford to lose the Burundians.”

In the wake of the UNIIB report, the UN Human Rights Council created a Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Burundi, which delivered a searing report in September 2017. The COI detailed numerous cases of rape, attempted rape, and, as in the UNIIB report, sexual mutilation.

The COI said that it believed “crimes against humanity have been committed in Burundi since April 2015” and requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open an investigation. The ICC did so on October 25, 2017. A three-judge panel found “reasonable basis to believe that the crime of rape as a crime against humanity” was perpetrated by regime forces “against women and girls perceived to be associated with or to sympathize with the opposition against the ruling party.”

**“Dozens of cases of sexual violence committed by police officers, military personnel and members of the Imbonerakure have been documented since April 2015,” the ICC judges wrote. “Some of the victims are reported to be as young as eight years old.”**

Two days later, Burundi withdrew from the Rome Statute, the ICC’s legal foundation. The ICC subsequently ruled that the court still “has jurisdiction over crimes allegedly committed while Burundi was a state party to the ICC Rome Statute.” The ICC investigation continues.

At the same time, the UN Human Rights Council extended the Commission of Inquiry mandate.

In New York, UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened a High-Level meeting on combatting

sexual exploitation and abuse that highlighted his “New Approach” to eradicating sexual offenses by UN personnel. The Secretary-General announced the creation of a Circle of Leadership, describing it as a “means for Heads of State and Government to demonstrate resolve and commitment at the highest political level to stand with us against this scourge.”

Leaders who join the Circle are committed “to end impunity, to strengthen measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, to respond rapidly and decisively to credible reports of such acts, and to meet the needs of victims quickly and appropriately.”

**Among the members of Mr. Guterres’ Circle of Leadership is Pierre Nkurunziza of Burundi.**



UN Photo/Vektorios Markogiannis

*UN promotional materials meant to highlight the “no excuses, zero tolerance” approach to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel.*

In July 2018, the European Parliament, the legislative branch of the European Union, passed a resolution demanding an end “to any further payment to the Burundian troops and various contingents from Burundi engaged in UN and AU peacekeeping missions.” The government of Burundi receives a “huge amount of money, which is not being distributed in favour of the population.” The presence of Burundian troops in peacekeeping missions “enables President Nkurunziza’s regime to conceal the reality of internal problems and present Burundi

as a stabilising factor in other countries in crisis,” the resolution stated.

After another year of investigation, during which several hundred additional witnesses were interviewed, the COI issued its second report, which documented numerous instances of sexual violence.

“In most of the cases, the women were raped by one or several men during attacks on their homes, which often took place at night,” the report released in September 2018 said. “The rapes were often accompanied by other types of physical violence against the victims and, in some cases, against other members of the household.”

The Human Rights Council again extended the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for an additional year, during which time the COI “conducted over 300 interviews with victims, witnesses and other sources living in Burundi or in third countries, in person or remotely, to add to the more than 1,000 testimonies already collected.”

**In September 2019, the COI released its third report, reiterating that serious human rights violations “constituting international crimes” continue to be committed by regime forces against people perceived to be internal opponents.**

**“Numerous cases of sexual violence have been documented; the majority of victims were women and girls. Such violence most often took the form of gang rape,” the report said.**

This latest COI report made headlines across the world for its warnings about the possibility of genocide in Burundi. It identified eight common risk factors for genocide as “clearly present in Burundi,” including an unstable political environment; rampant impunity for human rights violations; weak state structures; the “existence of reasons, aims or drivers that justify the use of violence against particular groups”; and the clear capacity of potential perpetrators to commit atrocity crimes.

Among the potential indicators of genocide, according to the COI, were “the increase in the

number of serious acts of violence against women and children, or the creation of conditions that facilitate acts of sexual violence against them, including as a tool of terror.”

The Human Rights Council subsequently renewed the one-year mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for the third time. It continues to investigate.

***“The presence of Burundian troops in peacekeeping missions enables President Nkurunziza’s regime to conceal the reality of internal problems and present Burundi as a stabilising factor in other countries in crisis.”***

— Resolution adopted by  
the European Parliament, July 2018

Many in the diplomatic community have chosen to interpret Pierre Nkurunziza’s announcement that he will not seek reelection in 2020 as a sign that the country is on the right track. Yet Nkurunziza—who has been conferred the title of “Eternal Supreme Guide” by the country’s ruling party—will retain an outsized role in Burundi whether he holds the title of president or not. His handpicked successor, Evariste Ndayishimiye, is a retired army general who heads the department of military affairs in the president’s office and has served as minister of the interior and security.

“We’ll always respect leaders of our party,” Ndayishimiye has said, “because a child can never compare himself to his parents.”

The following timeline, which charts the major events of the past year in Burundi, makes clear that the situation in the country is worsening in the lead-up to the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for May 20, 2020.



# Burundi and the UN

## JANUARY

**31** UN Peacekeeping reported that 742 contingent troops from Burundi were deployed to its mission in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA.



**“It is incomprehensible that, just as a commission established by the United Nations confirms that serious crimes have been perpetrated by the Burundian troops, that same organization (UN) simultaneously uses and pays the same troops to serve as peacekeepers! The UN is at risk of finding itself funding crimes in Burundi.”**

—Lambert Nigarura, president of the Burundian Coalition for the International Criminal Court

Courtesy of Lambert Nigarura

## FEBRUARY

**14** The UN Secretary-General’s annual report on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse was released. It included a summary of the allegations that were recorded against Burundian military peacekeepers in 2018.

In **one case**, a Burundian peacekeeper was accused of raping a child in CAR. In response, the UN suspended the soldier’s pay and Burundi appointed a National Investigation Officer (NIO), which is a contractual obligation of a Troop-Contributing Country. NIOs are assigned to assess evidence and conduct interviews to determine whether allegations should be prosecuted by home-state authorities. Ultimately, the UN closed the case, declaring the allegation “unsubstantiated” due to “insufficient evidence.” The UN reimbursed the Nkurunziza regime for the soldier’s suspended pay.

In the **second case**, a Burundian soldier in MINUSCA was accused of engaging in an exploitative relationship with a local woman. The UN made a formal request

for Burundi to appoint an NIO. Flouting its contractual obligations, Burundi gave “no response” to the UN request. The UN conducted the investigation on its own. Any further action has been pending since June 2018.

In a **third case**, a Burundian soldier in MINUSCA was accused of sexually exploiting two women and impregnating either one or both. Once again, Burundi breached its contract by failing to appoint an NIO. The UN carried out the investigation without Burundian assistance, ultimately closing the case as “unsubstantiated” due to “insufficient evidence.”

The **fourth case** involved a Burundian soldier who served in MISCA, an African-led International Support Mission in CAR that transferred its authority to MINUSCA in 2014. He was accused of child rape. The allegation was investigated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and referred for prosecution to Burundi. Under “action taken by the Member State” in the Special Measures report, the space was blank.

# MARCH

**5** UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet announced that the government of Burundi had ordered the closure of the UN Human Rights Office in Burundi's main city, Bujumbura.

The Nkurunziza regime claimed the office was no longer needed because Burundi had made sufficient progress in putting in place national mechanisms for the protection of human rights.



Peacekeepers serving with MINUSCA patrol the streets of Bangui, Central African Republic.

UN Photo/Herve Sereffo

**12** The UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Burundi delivered an oral briefing to the Human Rights Council, noting that “our role seems to us more than ever necessary as this Commission remains the only international mechanism capable of independently investigating the human rights situation in the country.”

The COI said that “the main perpetrators of serious violations and international crimes committed since 2015 have not

been prosecuted, and they still hold positions of responsibility within the security and defense forces or within Imbonerakure, whose connivance with these forces has been highlighted in our reports.”

**15** Authorities in Burundi arrested seven schoolchildren for the crime of scribbling on a photograph of President Nkurunziza in their schoolbooks. Four were quickly released but three others, all teenage girls under the age of 18, were incarcerated. The teenagers were charged with insulting the head of state, which carries a penalty of up to five years in prison.

A week later, after an international outcry, the girls were released.

**28** The UN's Conduct and Discipline database posted two new allegations against Burundian military peacekeepers serving in MINUSCA.

In the first case posted, a Burundian soldier was accused of rape and transactional sex with an adult victim. A Burundian NIO was appointed. In the second case, two Burundian soldiers were accused of raping one adult victim. A Burundian NIO was appointed. As of January 15, 2020, any further action in both cases is “pending.”

**29** Burundi banned the BBC, incensed by a BBC *Africa Eye* report revealing that the Nkurunziza regime operates secret detention houses to silence dissent.

The documentary featured footage, widely shared on social media, of blood flowing from the drain of a house in Bujumbura. A government official, Sylvestre Nyandwi, claimed that the blood came from goats slaughtered to mark the Muslim festival of Eid.

Former intelligence officials and detainees told the BBC that they heard or saw victims being tortured with electric cables or being killed. A man identified as “Nathan” said he was at the house where blood was seen flowing from the gutter when Alexis Ndayikengurukiye—a senior official with Burundi's intelligence service—ordered the beheadings of three detainees. Nathan said he witnessed two of the beheadings. A third man was killed after trying to escape.

At least 21 other torture locations in Burundi have been reported to the UN, the Burundian civil society organization Ndondeza, and the BBC by victims and intelligence agents, according to the BBC.

Burundi's media regulator revoked the BBC's license. It also extended an existing suspension on the Voice of America, accusing the broadcaster of employing a reporter who opposed the government.

## APRIL/MAY

**17** The UN's Conduct and Discipline database posted a new allegation involving a Burundian military peacekeeper. He was accused of engaging in an exploitative relationship with an adult victim between 2015 and 2016, resulting in a paternity claim. A Burundian NIO was appointed. As of January 15, 2020, any action on the case remained "pending."

**14** Burundi's chief justice ordered the seizure of property belonging to jailed army officers and exiled opposition activists accused of supporting an alleged plot against President Nkurunziza.

"Pierre Nkurunziza and his henchmen continue the persecution of opponents of the third term by seizing their property... a decision which once again ridicules the Burundian justice system," Vital Nshimirimana, one of the exiled opposition figures targeted in the order, wrote on Twitter.

**28** The UN Security Council abruptly cancelled a meeting on Burundi after the Nkurunziza government made clear that it was ready to end relations with Michel Kafando, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Burundi since 2017 (and former head of state of Burkina Faso).



Associated Press

*President Pierre Nkurunziza, an ordained minister who believes he was chosen by God to rule Burundi, will retain an outsized role in the country's affairs whether he is president or not. He has been bestowed with the title "Eternal Supreme Guide" by the ruling party.*

Burundi's UN Ambassador Albert Shingiro demanded that the Security Council put an end to meetings on Burundi, which had been held every three months.

Shingiro argued that the situation in Burundi is not a threat to international peace and security, a stance supported by Russia, China, and African countries on the Security Council.

"The 2020 electoral process in Burundi is an internal affair," Shingiro told Agence France-Presse. "Burundi will not allow meddling by any foreign actor, regardless of their status."

**30** The Southern African Development Community (SADC) announced that it had rejected Burundi's application to join the bloc.

A SADC statement quoted its chair, Namibian President Hage Geingob, as saying that Burundi did not meet the bloc's admission requirements after the latest assessment. President Geingob said it would not be "beneficial for Burundi to be admitted into SADC" due to what he called the unresolved democratic process in the country.

# JUNE

**12** Human Rights Watch released a statement that described how Burundian authorities and Imbonerakure youths have “carried out dozens of beatings, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, and killings against real and suspected political opposition members,” a campaign that has worsened since the registration of a new opposition party—Congrès national pour la liberté (National Congress for Freedom, or CNL)—in February 2019.

**“If elections take place under these circumstances, many Burundians will likely reject them, potentially resulting in street protests that could turn violent ...”**

— *International Crisis Group*

**14** The Security Council held a briefing on Burundi without the UN Special Envoy for Burundi, Michel Kafando.

The representatives from Equatorial Guinea, China, and Russia all claimed that the situation in Burundi was not grave enough to warrant the attention of the Security Council.

The representative of Germany defended the inclusion of

Burundi on the Security Council agenda, noting that its security situation was indeed a threat to international peace and security.

The UK representative expressed worry about a “real risk of violence” in the “fragile” situation, but added that next year’s election would be critical and would provide an “opportunity for the democratic transfer of power.”

The representative of the Dominican Republic was the only participant who mentioned sexual violence committed by Burundian forces. “Women and girls continue to suffer from sexual violence and become victims of hate speech,” he said.

**18** The Nkurunziza government issued a ministerial order suspending one of the country’s last independent civil rights groups—PARCEM, an NGO that campaigns for good governance—accusing it of “disturbing peace and public order.”

PARCEM—an acronym for the French words meaning Speech and Action for Awakening Consciences and the Evolution of Mentalities—had recently launched a campaign highlighting Burundi’s economic crisis, quoting World Bank figures on Burundi’s level of poverty that conflicted with official government data.

**20** The International Crisis Group released a report that provided a comprehensive overview of the failure of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue, the talks led by

the East African Community (EAC) that have been ongoing for nearly three years.

“As a result, and despite the EAC’s efforts, as well as those of other international actors, Burundi remains in crisis: its economy is on life support, more than 350,000 refugees reside in neighbouring states, most of the government’s political opponents are in exile and those who stayed are subject to severe repression,” the report concluded. “If elections take place under these circumstances, many Burundians will likely reject them, potentially resulting in street protests that could turn violent and increase support for armed opposition groups, as happened in 2015.”

**22** *The Economist* published an article describing Imbonerakure who roam neighbourhoods armed with sticks to collect election funds “as many times as they please.”

A middle-aged woman told the magazine that Imbonerakure militants would arrive at her door three times a month. “They would come to the house at night and say: ‘Give us the money for the election or we will kill you.’” She would respond: “We haven’t even got enough money for school fees, how could we pay for the election?”

After her husband refused to give them money, Imbonerakure thugs “beat up the whole family, including her small children, before dragging him away,” the magazine wrote. “She has had no news of him since.”

# JULY

**1** Pierre Nkurunziza marked Burundi's Independence Day by renaming the national stadium, presidential palace, and main airport to reflect the historical contribution of the majority Hutu ethnic group.

"Critics ... say the move was

meant to erase the contribution of members of the minority Tutsi community," the BBC reported.

**2** The COI briefed the Human Rights Council on the conditions in Burundi since March 2019, the date of its last appearance before the Council. "The Government of Burundi is trying to convince the international community that

the situation in the country is returning to a state of normalcy, although violations and even international crimes still occur."

"The history of elections in Burundi, including last year's constitutional referendum, has always been marred by violence and serious human rights violations," the Commission reported.

*"The gross human rights violations, including torture and sexual violence, which are committed by our security forces, are very well documented. How, then, are these same forces deployed in peacekeeping missions around the world?"*

— Burundian activist Ketty Nivyabandi (pictured on page three)

## THE UN INCREASED THE NUMBER OF BURUNDIAN TROOPS IN CAR IN 2019

# AUGUST

**27** Tanzania announced an agreement with the Nkurunziza regime to begin repatriating 200,000 Burundian refugees, raising fears about forced returns of people at risk.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that "conditions in Burundi are not currently conducive to promote returns" and that it would assist only those refugees who indicated they had "made a free and informed choice

to voluntarily return."

An Amnesty International spokesperson said, "It is extremely shocking that the Government of Tanzania is willing to send people against their will to a place the UN has deemed requires close monitoring as crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations continue unchecked."

**31** UN Peacekeeping reported that the number of contingent troops from Burundi deployed to the Central African Republic had increased from 742 to 747.

# SEPTEMBER

**17** The COI appeared before the Human Rights Council and presented its third and most recent report. The expert investigators warned that eight common risk factors for genocide were "clearly present in Burundi," garnering headlines throughout the world.

After the report's release, Willy Nyamitwe, a senior adviser to President Nkurunziza, tweeted, "Burundi is no longer interested in responding to lies and manipulation of opinion on the part of some Westerners whose aim is to destabilize Burundi."

# OCTOBER

**22** Four journalists from the *Iwacu* newspaper and their driver were arrested in the northwest of the country and charged with “complicity to undermine state security.” *Iwacu* is one of the few remaining private media publications in Burundi.

The international media-rights group Reporters Without Borders warned that “there is a risk of all forms of independent journalism disappearing” in Burundi, which it ranked 159th out of 180 countries on its World Press Freedom Index.

**30** Noting a lack of political will to resolve tensions, Michel Kafando, the UN Special Envoy to Burundi, announced that he planned to step down from the post he had held for two years.

“The situation in Burundi remains tenuous,” Kafando told the Security Council.

**31** *The New Humanitarian* published a story on the UN’s mishandling of investigations into dozens of sexual abuse allegations lodged against UN peacekeepers from Burundi and Gabon in 2015 and 2016. The *Code Blue Campaign* had exposed the unpublished allegations in April 2016.

The primary source for the piece was a leaked 50-page internal UN evaluation report.



**“Burundi’s security forces are notorious for human rights violations. Under the current dictatorship, they have committed a multitude of awful crimes, from rape to massacres. The world cannot sit back and watch as our security forces continue to perpetrate sexual abuse even when they are deployed for peacekeeping. It’s about time they are held accountable.”**

— Judicaelle Irakoze, a Burundian feminist activist, writer, and entrepreneur living in the United States.

women and girls with the assistance of investigators from the UN’s Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

The internal UN evaluation, based in part on reviews of the recorded interviews, described how the Burundian NIOs sought to catch “minute inconsistencies” in witness statements, more interested in “discrediting witnesses than taking their testimonies.” Witnesses “who were not relevant to the allegation were interviewed to ‘frame’ the reported victim, whilst relevant witnesses to the reported matter were not flagged by the NIO team.” The investigators’ “inappropriate questions” included asking a rape victim whether she was afraid of “CAR justice if it would become known she had an abortion.”

The NIOs appeared to operate under the assumption that the victims were out for money. One victim was asked whether she wanted to receive her payout in a lump sum or monthly installments. “It’s up to you,” said another victim who “manifestly didn’t know how to respond” when an NIO said something similar to her.

The UN report said the Burundian NIOs “lack the skills and experience to conduct interviews with victims of SEA [Sexual Exploitation and Abuse].” But UN investigators present did not intervene to ensure that the interviews were conducted in an appropriate manner.

None of the Burundian peacekeepers accused of wrongdoing in Dekoa has faced criminal punishment.

Courtesy of Judicaelle Irakoze

Several pages in the UN report were devoted to critiques of the National Investigation Officers (NIOs) from Burundi who were sent to interview victims in Dekoa in northern CAR and determine whether the allegations should be referred for prosecution by home state authorities.

The Burundian NIOs interviewed

# NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER

**7** Burundi's opposition National Congress for Freedom party (CNL) said regime forces detained 200 of its leaders and destroyed the party's headquarters and 50 of its field offices.

"Our members are being assassinated, some are mutilated," an opposition party spokesman had warned in August. "There are cases of those who have lost fingers, others lost their teeth during attacks by youth from the ruling party."

**6** Human Rights Watch released a 48-page report providing stark details on the campaign by President Nkurunziza's political party, Imbonerakure, and local officials to collect "voluntary" contributions from the population.

The report describes how Imbonerakure militants have "blocked access to basic public services for those who cannot show a receipt for their payment."

"They put up barriers everywhere so you couldn't go get water, go to the market, or just get around without the receipt," said a 23-year-old from Cankuzo province. "I paid just so I could live safely. To get to the market, I went through three roadblocks."

Victims reported that Imbonerakure militants at food distribution centers managed by aid groups beat people, prevented them from getting food, or forcibly took food from them.



*Michel Kafando, the UN envoy for Burundi, has left his post. "The situation in Burundi remains tenuous," he said.*

**12** Human Rights Watch issued a statement about tens of thousands of Burundian refugees facing mounting pressure to involuntarily leave Tanzania amid efforts by authorities to reduce the number of Burundians in the country.

The 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 African Refugee Convention prohibit what is known as "refoulement," the return of refugees in any manner whatsoever to a country where they would face torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading

treatment, or punishment and other irreparable harm, the statement noted.

**30** Prosecutors in Burundi sought 15-year jail terms for the four reporters from *Iwacu* and their driver who were detained in October and charged with endangering state security for covering a news story in the northwest of the country.

A witness in the northwestern province of Bubanza, where they were arrested, told Agence France-Presse that the long jail terms were sought after two hours of deliberations.



This report was produced by AIDS-Free World's *Code Blue Campaign*, which works to end impunity for sexual abuse by UN personnel.

**[codebluecampaign.com](http://codebluecampaign.com)**

**[info@aidsfreeworld.org](mailto:info@aidsfreeworld.org) | 1-212-729-5084**

**February 2020**