

Urgent Appeal to Protect Burundian Refugees in Tanzania

The present Urgent Appeal is being submitted by the undersigned Burundi Civil Society Organizations and other African and international organizations who agreed to arise together to call for urgent measures to ensure safety and security for the Burundian refugees in Tanzania camps.

The severe human rights violations against Burundian refugees in Tanzanian refugee camps require urgent action by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Tanzanian Government, the East African Community, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Union.

As a result of the political crisis that erupted in Burundi in 2015, more than 500,000 people were forced to flee into exile, many seeking safety in Tanzania. As of February 2019, 274,445 refugees were in three Tanzanian refugee camps: Nduta, Mutenderi, and Nyarugusu, in the districts of Kibondo, Kankoko, and Kasulu, respectively, in Kigoma Region.

Repeated attacks by armed men allegedly coming from Burundi, including the Burundian Intelligence Service (SNR), have been reported. Since the beginning of 2019, nearly 200 human rights violations have been reported in the camps. The reports include cases of sexual violence, arbitrary arrests, torture and other degrading and inhuman treatment, enforced disappearances, and armed robberies. Allegedly, the harassment and violations have increased in an attempt to force the Burundian refugees to return home.

Furthermore, Tanzanian authorities, including President Magufuli, Dr Damas Ndumbaro Vice-Minister of Interior Affairs, and the Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa continue to insist that there is peace and security in Burundi, and that refugees should return home. The following deplorable incidents have been reported:

- Groups of armed Burundian men are based in the forests and areas surrounding refugee camps, causing havoc and committing crimes,

including sexual violence against women and girls who leave the camps in search of firewood. More than 50 victims of sexual violence have been reported. (reference: <http://forscburundi.org/fr/appel-urgent-au-secours-des-refugies-burundais-en-tanzanie-le-calvaire-vecu-par-les-refugies-burundais-dans-les-camps-en-tanzanie-appelle-a-des-actions-urgentes-de-la-part-de-la-communaute-inter/>). Several men who accompany these women are reported to have been killed.

- On 31 May 2019, a group of armed men in Burundian military uniforms opened fire, and attempted to rob a merchant in Nduta camp. Tanzanian police did not intervene, despite being close by.
- On 27 May 2019, an automatic weapon with ammunition was seized in Nduta camp. The person in possession of the weapon later admitted to being an agent of the Burundian Intelligence Service (SNR).
- On 24 May 2019, another agent of the Burundian SNR was arrested in possession of 37 grenades that he intended to introduce in Nduta camp.
- On 3 April 2019, two refugees were attacked and injured by five masked and armed men, carrying guns and machetes, speaking Kirundi, in Nduta camp.
- On 1 April 2019, three armed Burundian men, among them Roger Dusabimana, a known agent of the Burundian SNR and native of the Busoni commune in Kirundo Region, were killed near Nduta camp.
- Attempts to flee the refugee camps, and to seek safety in other countries like Rwanda and Kenya, are systematically blocked by the Tanzanian authorities. On 16 March and 5 April 2019, at least 22 and 50 refugees, respectively, were arrested by Tanzanian police while attempting to flee from Nduta camp to Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya.
- Various arbitrary measures have been taken against refugees, including strict prohibition of doing business or conducting any income generating activity. Moreover, pregnant refugee women from Nduta Camp are no longer authorized to receive care from the *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) health centre.
- Concurrently, cases of suicide have increased as a result of the hardship they are subject to, and fear of death in case of deportation. At least eight cases, of whom two survived, were reported in Nduta camp.

It is worth questioning the reason behind the presence of, and violations carried out by the Burundian National Intelligence Service and security forces on Tanzanian territory, around the areas where Burundian refugees are concentrated.

In light of the above, we strongly appeal to:

- **The Government of Tanzania:**

To ensure that refugee camps are secure, and to ensure justice and accountability for the human rights violations against Burundian refugees; and

Allow refugees to move to other countries where they will feel more secure and enjoy more freedom.

- **The East African Community (EAC):**

To exhort Tanzania Government to stop the ill treatment against Burundian refugees, as it is a clear violation of the regional and international human rights framework in which Tanzania is a party to.

- **The African Union (AU):**

To take all appropriate measures to ensure adequate protection of Burundian refugees in Tanzania, in accordance with the AU Constitutive Act, the AU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees.

- **The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Refugees, Asylum Seekers, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons:**

To take urgent action to request emergency measures to put an end to the harassment of and violence against Burundian refugees in Tanzanian camps and to ensure that they are not forced to return home against their will.

- **The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):**
To take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of Burundian refugees in Tanzania against any form of human rights violations.

Done on ... July 2019