



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Burundi Country Report October 2022

In 1972 the Tutsi army perpetrated **The First Burundi Genocide** which killed over 100,000 mostly educated Hutus and purged Hutus from civil society. 5000 Hutus were massacred in the northern communes of [Ntega](#) and [Marangara](#) in August 1988. These massacres were investigated in Burundi by Prof. Gregory Stanton, who then met with Burundian President Buyoya to urge him to appoint a broad, ethnically balanced government. Hutu leaders also asked Buyoya to appoint Hutus to ministerial positions, which he finally did in 1993. Buyoya gave Burundi a new constitution and a multiparty system.

Whilst these political reforms saw a Hutu President elected in 1993, the army revolted and assassinated him. Hutu rebel groups then killed over 100,000 Tutsis in **The Second Burundi Genocide**, prompting retributive reprisals by Tutsis and sparking a civil war from 1993 to 2005. Prof. Stanton wrote UN Security Council [Resolution 1012](#) in 1995, which established the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi. The Commission concluded that Burundi had had two genocides and could have more genocidal violence if the divisions in Burundian politics were not addressed.

The Burundi Policy Forum was established in Washington, DC to address the crisis. It included NGOs, State and Defense Department, UN, and academic experts who met monthly to plan preventive measures without institutional silos. In Burundi, negotiations between the Buyoya government and Hutu rebel groups were conducted with the assistance of President Nyerere of Tanzania and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

The civil war ended with the implementation of a new constitution in 2005, which included an ethnic quota system ensuring a 60% - 40% ratio between Hutus and Tutsis in political and military leadership, and a 30% quota for women in parliament. The largest Hutu party, the *Force for the Defense of Democracy* (CNDD-FDD), won the first election, and Pierre Nkurunziza became President in 2006. He was reelected in 2010 in an [unopposed election](#).

In 2015, Burundi faced a new crisis when Nkurunziza announced he would run for a third term, which seemed to be illegal according to the constitution. The Supreme Court ruled that a third term would not violate the constitution. Mass protests broke out, and the government [violently shut down](#) media and killed key opposition figures, leading to sanctions from the United States and the European Union. The army raided Tutsi homes and [ethnic slurs](#) against Tutsis were widespread.

Burundi faced economic decline and political instability under Nkurunziza's tenure. Burundi ranks at the bottom of all nations in annual per capita income (\$270). Hoping for "reform", the CNDD-FDD put [Evariste Ndayishimiye](#) forward for the 2020 election. The [2020 election](#) was conducted without international scrutiny as opposition members were detained and the press was muzzled. Ndayishimiye has implemented no substantial political reforms despite an easing of Western sanctions.

Fear, repression, and impunity have characterized Burundi's political culture. A [2018 press law](#) requires journalists to provide 'balanced' reporting with only the government's 'facts' considered publishable. In 2018, all NGOs were expelled for three months. They must now be licensed and are tightly monitored and restricted. Most Burundian newspapers [no longer exist](#) as their staffs have been exiled or silenced. The CNDD-FDD's youth wing, the *Imbonerakure*, [intimidates voters](#), conducting assault, murder, and sexual violence with impunity. The International Criminal Court authorized an investigation of crimes against humanity in Burundi in 2017 and that same year, Burundi withdrew from the jurisdiction of the ICC.

Ethnicity remains the key issue in Burundi's politics. Since 2015 Tutsi officers have been driven out of the army. This has [increased the insecurity](#) many Tutsis feel. Social media has seen an increase in [ethnic hate speech](#). A [2018 constitutional amendment](#) removed the ethnic quotas safeguarding Tutsi and Twa minority representation in parliament. Land laws [discriminate](#) against the hunter-gatherer Twa (1% of the population), expropriating their land for farming.

Due to the *Imbonerakure*'s ability to operate with impunity, Genocide Watch considers Burundi to be at **Stage Five: Organization**. Removal of ethnic quotas in parliament, the increase in ethnic hate speech on social media, and targeting of Tutsis by the army and militias, put Burundi at **Stage Six: Polarization** and **Stage Eight: Persecution**.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- The US and the EU should target their sanctions to deter specific individuals engaged in repression.
- The CNDD-FDD must disband the *Imbonerakure* and prosecute the crimes of its members.
- The Burundian government must allow NGOs and the press to have unrestricted access to all of Burundi.
- Burundi must revoke its 2018 press law and permit free speech and a free press.
- Burundi should re-join the International Criminal Court and fully accept the ICC's jurisdiction.