

# BURUNDI: SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The National Intelligence Service (SNR)  
committed acts of torture including **sexual violence**

## WHO


People accused of participating in political or armed actions against the government, mainly men

## HOW

By suspending a heavy container to their testicles, beating with sticks, kicking, burning, injecting substances, raping, forcing sexual intercourse with other detainees (men and women)

## WHY

To punish and extract confessions, by inflicting as much pain as possible



*They undressed me [...] because my hands were still [tied up]. Then they [...] tied my testicles [with a rope] and the rope was attached to a can filled with sand. Then [they told me] to stand up and walk with the can [hanging].*

*It is hard for victims to report this type of violence and **receive support***

## ABSENCE

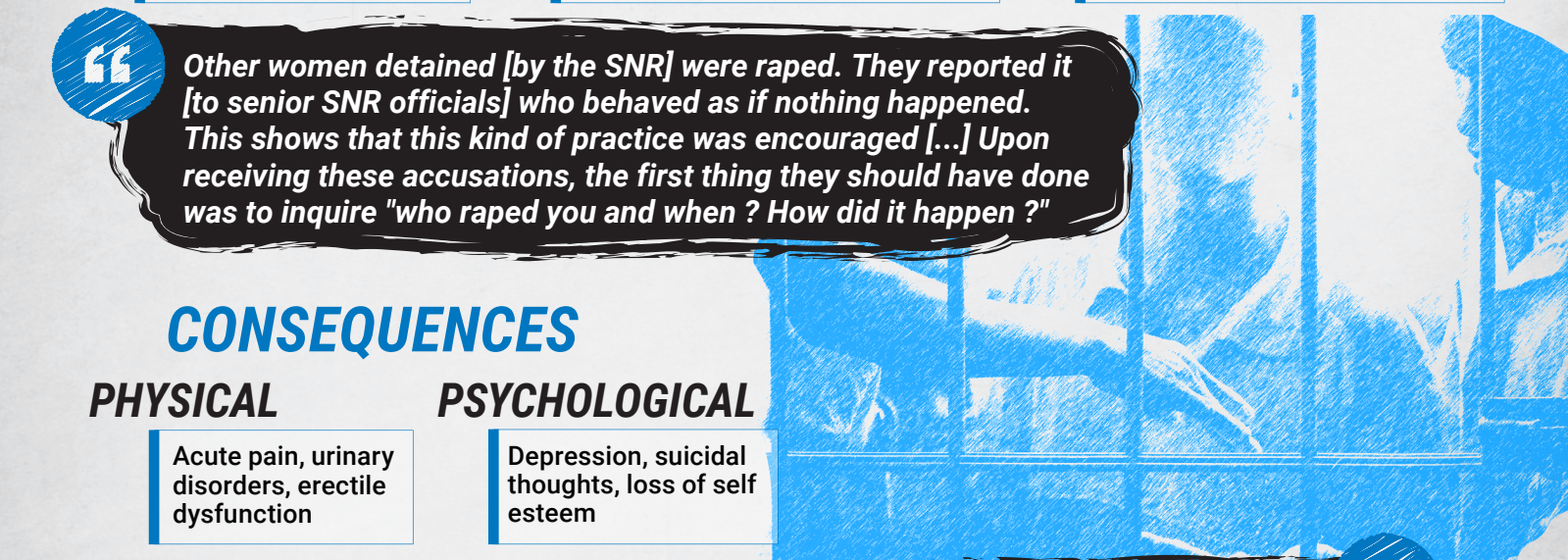
There is little to no specialised support and assistance for men and boys survivors of sexual violence

## IMPUNITY

Torture is commonly used at the SNR, which is under the authority of the President and enjoys a special status for the conduct of its investigations

## STIGMA

Prejudices and taboos related to sexuality, manliness and rejection of homosexuality, fear of being stigmatised, ostracised and rejected.



*Other women detained [by the SNR] were raped. They reported it [to senior SNR officials] who behaved as if nothing happened. This shows that this kind of practice was encouraged [...] Upon receiving these accusations, the first thing they should have done was to inquire "who raped you and when? How did it happen?"*

## CONSEQUENCES

### PHYSICAL

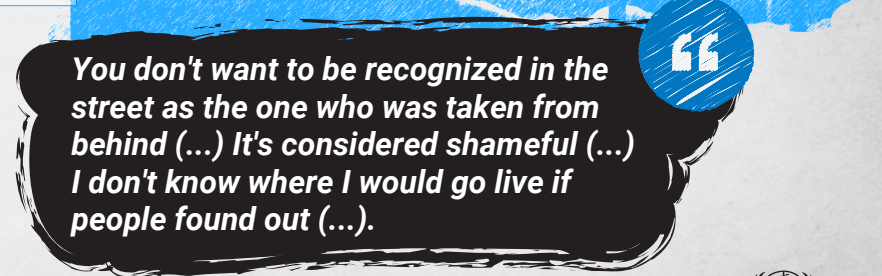
Acute pain, urinary disorders, erectile dysfunction

### PSYCHOLOGICAL

Depression, suicidal thoughts, loss of self esteem

### SOCIAL

Isolation, fear he cannot fulfil his expected role as head of household, domestic violence, destruction of the most valued unit in Burundian society: family" with: destruction of the family which is the foundation of the Burundian society



*You don't want to be recognized in the street as the one who was taken from behind (...) It's considered shameful (...) I don't know where I would go live if people found out (...).*

# **BURUNDI: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN THE 2020 ELECTIONS**

**Weaken the political opposition,  
primarily the CNL, by targeting its members and supporters**

by physically eliminating them

by torturing and subjecting them to ill-treatment

by arbitrarily arresting and detaining them

by preventing them from carrying out their political activities

by preventing their candidates from standing for election and their representatives from observing the electoral process

by using hate speech and inciting violence against them



*I asked the chief why I was there [...] They were embarrassed because they had no accusations to throw at me, but their plan was to put me in a cell to get me out of the way so that I don't teach about or campaign for the CNL.*

**Muzzle independent observers so they do not report on what is happening in the country**

by unduly restricting activities of the media, civil society and its representatives

**Closely control citizens before, during and after the elections**

by forcibly recruiting them into the ruling party and by threatening them so they vote for the ruling party

by preventing or discouraging their participation in electoral rallies

by not allowing them to fully exercise their right to vote

by maintaining the omnipresence of the Imbonerakure and allowing them to substitute the defense and security forces

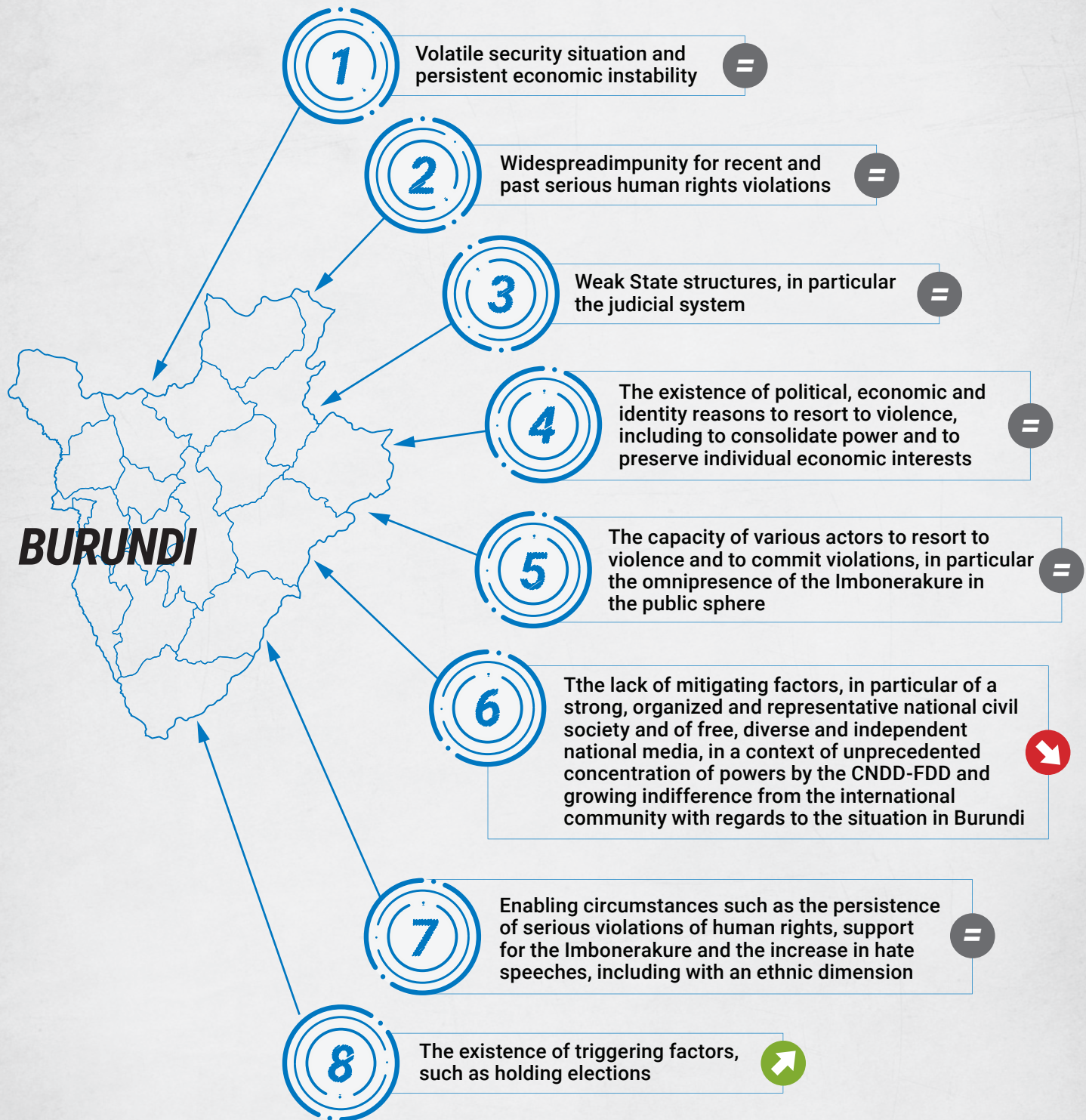


*When they saw people queuing to vote and if they suspected someone was going to vote for the opposition, they intimidated these persons by telling them: "Give me your voting cards, we'll vote for you." Given that some people are easily intimidated, they got scared and gave their cards because they didn't want to be beaten.*



# **BURUNDI: FOLLOWING THE 2020 ELECTIONS, THE EIGHT RISK FACTORS REMAIN**

Compared to the pre-election period, most of the factors remained as they were =, one mitigated ↘ and another worsened ↗\*



\* See the detailed COI report for more information on the existing indicators for each risk factor: A/HRC/45/CRP.1.



# **BURUNDI: PRIORITY ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BURUNDI TO MITIGATE RISK FACTORS**

## **To mitigate factor # 6**

Resume cooperation with the UN and reopen the UN Human Rights Country Office  
Immediately release human rights defenders, journalists and political prisoners  
Guarantee freedom of the press and freedom of association for civil society

## **To mitigate factors # 1 and 8**

Guarantee the freedom and security of political opponents

## **To mitigate factors # 2, 3 and 8**

End human rights violations and the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators  
Guarantee their non-repetition by dismissing or suspending State agents suspected of being involved in violations

## **To mitigate factors # 3 and 5**

Restrict the omnipresence of the Imbonerakure in the public sphere  
Prevent them from substituting the defense and security forces

## **To mitigate factors # 2, 4, 7 and 8**

Systematically sanction hate speech  
Guarantee an inclusive approach by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which includes the four pillars of transitional justice

## **To mitigate factors # 1, 3, 4 and 8**

Fight against economic malpractices and bad governance

## **To mitigate factors # 2, 3 and 8**

Reform the justice system to guarantee its independence and impartiality



# **BURUNDI: ECONOMIC MALPRACTICES UNDERPIN THE ECONOMY**

## **GRAND CORRUPTION**

Common practice in all economic sectors, especially in mining and public works

**No investor can get a major business without giving something to the President [Nkurunziza] or the [CNDD-FDD] party.**

## **BAD GOVERNANCE AND MALPRACTISES**

Untraceable contributions from mining companies for community development

Deductions from salaries paid to soldiers deployed in peacekeeping missions abroad

Late, and to this date, inadequate compensation for people expropriated in the context of development projects funded by international aid

## **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND ILLEGAL ACQUISITIONS OF INTERESTS**

Senior authorities active in economic sectors falling within their purview

## **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT**

Opaque procurement procedures creating opportunities for corruption and malpractices for the benefit of individuals close to those in power

## **CUSTOMS FRAUD**

Significant illegal trade in minerals and in particular gold

## **ILLICIT ENRICHMENT**

Concerns senior Government, Administration or CNDD-FDD officials

**The above economic malpractices reduce the State's resources  
and therefore affect all human rights**

The minimum core obligations of the State to guarantee the right to be free from hunger, to enjoy free primary education, to receive primary health care and shelter

The progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights to health, education, social protection and an adequate standard of living

The protection and promotion of civil and political rights, in particular guaranteeing an efficient justice system, which is essential for the protection of all fundamental rights

The multiplication of various "contributions" required from the population, often under duress, which contributes to its impoverishment



# **BURUNDI: SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS SINCE 2015**

**More than half of the Burundian population is *under 18***

Children killed

Girls raped

Teenagers arbitrarily and/or illegally arrested and detained and have been subjected to acts of torture and ill-treatment

Children shut out from school for political reasons

Children forcibly recruited into the Imbonerakure

Teenagers forced to vote for the ruling party in the 2020 elections

**“**  
*The day after the coup, on 14 May 2015, soldiers came to his home, surrounded the compound of his house [...] and killed his wife and three children. The bodies were found in the house with gunshot wounds.*

**“**  
*My father was a member of the MSD. [...] After the demonstrations, my father wanted to remain, because he didn't think he would be targeted, but people were still searching for him. [...] In the evening, we saw people who came and took my father. The others stayed and raped my mother, and then they killed her. After that, they seized us and they raped us. [...] We were beaten because of our screams.*

**Imbonerakure, police officers and agents of the National Intelligence Service are the *main perpetrators of these violations***

**These violations were carried out with total impunity. In most cases, their parents were afraid to file a complaint for *fear of reprisals***

## **CONSEQUENCES**

Children forced to flee the country, sometimes without their family

Children denied their rights to education, health, food and family life

Girls and boys severely traumatized by the violations they experienced and/or witnessed and in need of appropriate care

**“**  
*The damage caused by exposure to violence in early childhood is often irreversible, damaging brain development, compromising children's physical and mental health and, in more severe cases, leading to disability and death.*

# **BURUNDI: WHY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST REMAIN VERY CONCERNED**

## ***The risks remain high, the democratic space has significantly narrowed***

Nearly all the risk factors are unchanged; the structural factors have not been addressed

The youth group of the ruling party, the Imbonerakure, continues to be used as a security force, particularly in rural areas, their actions largely unchecked

Opposition and civil society actors remain under threat and continue to be pursued by the law enforcement authorities; most were arrested or fled

Multiple security incidents in recent months and regional tensions remain high

***There is no indication that the level of human rights violations has abated under the new Government***

## ***Impunity reigns***

Persons under sanctions for their role in the 2015 crisis and the heads of institutions that commit serious human rights violations have been named to senior positions in the new Government

The rules and practices of those institutions that allowed human rights violations to occur in the past are still allowing them today

The national institutions that should serve to defend against human rights violations are unable or unwilling to do so, including the judiciary, the Parliament, the Independent National Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman, etc

## ***Divisive identity politics continue to be used when convenient***

As evident during the 2020 elections in public and private discourses, school history lessons, the work of national institutions such as the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Proliferation of hate speech, including with ethnic dimensions, for political objectives

## ***Economic and social rights remain distant, financial transparency is low and corruption is widespread***

74% of the population lives in poverty, 1.7 million suffer from food insecurity, and the State is unable to fulfill fundamental economic and social rights

A portion of development/humanitarian assistance as well as public and private contracts is commonly siphoned off

Monitoring of some beneficiaries of international assistance is impeded, eg the returning refugees

## ***There is presently little motivation for meaningful reform***

The ruling party has achieved an unprecedented concentration of powers at all levels through the 2020 elections

The exploitation of lucrative natural resources (rare earths, gold) and the management of national monopolies incentivize the retention of political power

Repatriation of Burundian refugees underway, often without international oversight and with no information available on whether the causes of their flight have been resolved

The stream of human rights violations since 2015 have weakened the ability of the political opposition, civil society and general public to effectively demand reform

Independent international human rights monitoring is needed as much as ever

