



Burundi Watch Update

17 – 22 April 2018



19 targeted for opposing referendum

Human Rights Watch reported in the last week that Burundian officials and government affiliated militia (Imbonerakure) are targeting, torturing and killing Burundians campaigning against the referendum to take place next month.

The referendum could see the president extend his rule in Burundi to 2034. Human Rights Watch confirmed nineteen cases since December 2017. The Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch, Ida Sawyer, said that there is little doubt that the referendum will be accompanied by further abuses. She added these abuses seem aimed at allowing the president to keep his hold on power. The Burundian government however continues to deny the crimes committed against these people.¹

Police to search without permits

Parliament in Burundi has passed a law that allows the police and other security organs to carry out searches without the need for a search warrant with a vote of 90 in favour and 22 against. The draft law now awaits approval from the senate and the president before it becomes law. Justice Minister Aime-Laurentine Kanyana says that the new law would apply to cases of trafficking of narcotics and arms, terrorism and illegal possession of firearms. The legislators that voted against the law say that the ruling party has buried democracy in Burundi and that bill would legalize the illegal measures that the government has been employing against the people.²

¹ "Burundi: Repression Linked to Presidential-Term Vote," *Human Rights Watch*, 17 April 2018, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/17/burundi-repression-linked-presidential-term-vote>

² "Burundi MPs approve police searches without warrants," *Mail Online*, 19 April 2018, available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5633979/Burundi-MPs-approve-police-searches-without-warrants.html>

Human Rights violations

- At least two people were killed when a grenade exploded in a business center in northern Burundi. According to a police spokesperson, the explosion happened in Gasenyi village on Saturday night. At least 35 people were injured and investigations are under way. Three suspects have been apprehended.³
- Two people were killed by government militia for opposing the referendum and several others have been tortured. A 20-year-old farmer was beaten after a member of the Imbonerakure overheard him tell a friend in a bar that he would vote against changing the constitution in the upcoming referendum slated for 17 May 2018. He was later taken to jail. In a separate incident, Imbonerakure went to a household on February 24 at about 10pm and asked the man of the house if he had a receipt to show that he had registered for the referendum. When he refused to show it to them, they beat him to death outside his house.⁴
- Gunmen attacked Karwema village in Bubanza Province as confirmed by the Minister of Security Alain Guillaume Bunyoni. It is said that the gunmen attacked the village at about 8pm, laying several ambushes on the roads and attacking households. One person was shot dead and their house was burnt while an unknown number of people were injured.⁵
- Eight people were arrested by the police after a search operation. According to police spokesperson, Pierre Nkurikiye, the people were arrested on suspicion that they were planning to disrupt the constitutional referendum. Mr. Nkurikiye said that the eight who were arrested were found to be in possession of firearms.⁶

³ "At Least 2 People Killed in Grenade Explosion in Burundi," *Sputnik*, 22 April 2018, available at <https://sputniknews.com/africa/201804221063799142-grenade-explosion/>

⁴ "Two People Have Reportedly Died and Several Others Beaten and Jailed Because They Oppose Their President Serving Until 2034," *Buzzfeed News*, 17 April 2018, https://www.buzzfeed.com/tamerragriffin/burundi-referendum?utm_term=.sa158jy6m#.gdGN4wbK3

⁵ "Gunmen kill 2, injure 3 in western Burundi: witnesses." *Xinhuanet*, 18 April 2018, available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/18/c_137118193.htm

⁶ "Eight arrested in Burundi for planning to disrupt key vote." *Mail Online*, 20 April 2018, available at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-5639013/Eight-arrested-Burundi-planning-disrupt-key-vote.html>