



Security Council, PRAMUN 2017 Synopsis

Topic #2: The situation in Burundi

I. Background Information

Burundi is a small country in central Africa with a population of around 10 million, the majority of which identify as ethnic Hutus and the remaining minority as members of the Tutsi tribe. Despite ongoing difficulties between these two tribes, in 2000 Burundi managed to sign peace accords in Tanzania, which envisioned a new democratic system with ethnically balanced institutions. With the help of the United Nations, Burundi held its first democratic elections in 2005 and the country seemed to be entering into a more peaceful era. In 2010, several more elections on different levels were conducted, resulting in a record representation of women in public office.¹

However the current president, Pierre Nkurunziza, is a Hutu. He continues to serve as president in 2016, even though his second term ended last year and a third presidential term is against the Constitution.² When the opposition rose against him, he retaliated with brute force. The UN reports over 400 deaths since last April.³

The worst attack so far is considered to be December 11th, when gunmen attacked three military buildings. The next day, tens of dead were found in different parts of the capital, some with their hands tied behind their backs. Satellite images, published by Amnesty International, confirm testimonies of witnesses who claim that the mass graves were already dug on the 11th.

It is the Tutsi minority, which is now being accused of inciting protests and riots, even though witnesses and journalists suggest otherwise.

The African Union considered sending several thousand peacekeeping troops to halt the violence in Burundi, but the Government resolutely refused.⁴ After complicated negotiations the president has now at least accepted the presence of international observers.

But the violence is not waning, and tens of thousands of Burundians, the UN is now estimating around 300,000, are fleeing the country.⁵

Adama Dieng, special adviser to the UN on questions of genocide, expressed concerns over the potential threat of a civil war and the similarities between the ethnic mix of Burundi and Rwanda.⁶

Many are now comparing the situation in Burundi to that of Rwanda at the beginning of the genocide of the 1990s, which the international community failed to prevent. The Hutu extremists massacred around 800,000 Tutsis and non-extremist Hutus during 3 months of "ethnic cleansing", while millions more fled their homes

¹ <http://www.un.org/undpa/en/africa/burundi>

² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/24/burundi-pierre-nkurunziza-wins-third-term-disputed-election>

³ http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=52868#.WDW7M_krI2w

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/30/burundi-president-pierre-nkurunziza-threatens-fight-african-union-peacekeepers>

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2016/9/57e4ef194/300000-burundians-fled-stretched-neighbouring-countries.html>

⁶ <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/2016-08-24%20Burundi%20Draft%20Statement.final.pdf>

II. United Nations Involvement

The United Nations Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB) began working in Burundi on 1 January 2015.⁷

The Mission was set up at the request of the Government of Burundi to report on the electoral process in the country. Civil unrest erupted in April 2015 in Bujumbura after the ruling party elected President Pierre Nkurunziza as its candidate. Since then, hundreds of people have reportedly been killed. Some 220,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and thousands more have been displaced within the country. While elections were considered relatively peaceful and conducted adequately, the UN reported that the overall environment was “not conducive” to an inclusive, free and credible process. The mission concluded its mandate on 18 November and its operations drew to a close on 31 December 2015.

The United Nations has supported previous electoral processes in the country. In 2005, the UN Operations (ONUB) organized polls in the context of the country emerging from conflict, and provided electoral support again in 2010. The former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, was a member of a strategic consultative committee which aimed to assess key aspects of international community assistance to the process. The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) availed resources for the production of 1,000,000 identity cards. The UN Development Program (UNDP) was also a member of key electoral technical committees and supported fund mobilization.⁸

The Security Council has since passed several more resolutions concerning Burundi. For example, the resolution from November 2015 „expressed the Council’s intention to consider additional measures against all Burundians who contribute to the perpetuation of violence and requested the Secretary-General to update the Council on the situation in Burundi within 15 days”.⁹ And just a few months ago, the resolution from July 2016, by which “The Council established a UN police component in Burundi of 228 officers for an initial period of one year”.

The Human Rights Council has also been active in this area, establishing *The United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB)* on 17 December 2015 which asked the High Commissioner for Human Rights to “urgently organize and dispatch on the most expeditious basis possible a mission by independent existing experts”.¹⁰

Their goals are, among others, “to undertake swiftly an investigation into violations and abuses of human rights with a view to preventing further deterioration of the human rights situation”, “to make recommendations on the improvement of the human rights situation and on technical assistance to support reconciliation and the implementation of the Arusha Agreement”, “to engage with the Burundian authorities and all other relevant stakeholders, including United Nations agencies, civil society, refugees, the field presence of the Office of the High Commissioner in Burundi, authorities of the African Union, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Right”

III. Bloc Positions and Possible Solutions

Unless you are representing an African country directly affected by the situation in Burundi, the different opinions are mainly based on the issue of human rights and whether your country favours direct involvement in preventing their abuse.

⁷ Security Council Resolution 2137 (2014): http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2137.pdf

⁸ <http://www.un.org/undpa/en/africa/burundi>

⁹ Security Council Resolution 2248 (2015): http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2248.pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/UNIIB/Pages/UNIIB.aspx>

IV. Sources and Useful Links

Security Council Resolutions for Burundi

<http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/search.php?IncludeBlogs=10&limit=15&tag=%22Security%20Council%20Resolutions%22+AND+%22Burundi%22&ctype=Burundi&rtype=Security%20Council%20Resolutions&cbtype=burundi>

BBC Country Profile:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13085064>

**Relevant and interesting articles that are worth reading / videos to watch
(not to be cited as Policy Paper sources, as the sources are usually biased):**

Geography Now – Burundi:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebiGew8mYr0>

Amnesty International Annual Report on Burundi 2015/2016

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/burundi/report-burundi/>