



## **Joint Statement on Political Intolerance in Burundi Ahead of the June 2025 Elections**

As the legislative, municipal, and hilltop elections scheduled for June 2025 in Burundi approach, the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights and the organization SOS-Torture/Burundi express their deep concern about the growing political intolerance characterizing the pre-election climate, exacerbated by an upsurge in violence, hate speech, and other serious violations of fundamental rights.

Political tensions and acts of repression against members of the opposition, independent journalists, human rights defenders, and ordinary citizens exercising their freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly are increasingly being reported in various regions of the country.

Since the launch of the electoral campaign, several opposition political parties have denounced a series of acts of intimidation, physical attacks, and harassment, which they attribute to youth affiliated with the ruling CNDD-FDD party, known as Imbonerakure. These practices fuel a widespread climate of fear, hindering free participation in the electoral process and undermining the very foundations of democracy.

We are also concerned by the hostile rhetoric in public speeches, the arbitrary arrests of political activists, and the disproportionate restrictions imposed on public demonstrations and the activities of opposition parties.

We strongly condemn this systemic political intolerance, which compromises the integrity of the electoral process.

We also condemn the silence of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which, by failing to denounce or act on these abuses, contributes to impunity and weakens the credibility of the electoral process.

We call on the Burundian authorities to ensure a free, peaceful, and fair electoral environment that respects the civil and political rights of all citizens.

We reiterate that democracy cannot flourish without respect for political pluralism, freedom of expression, the rule of law, and an independent judiciary. As such, the government's responsibility is to ensure a framework for fair political competition, where every citizen can make a choice freely, without fear of reprisal.

Faced with this worrying situation, we call on:

1. The Burundian government to put an end to political intolerance, protect the rights of all political actors, and ensure a credible, transparent, and inclusive electoral process;
2. National institutions, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and security forces, to fulfill their mission impartially and with strict respect for human rights;
3. Political parties, opinion leaders, and the media to promote peaceful dialogue, mutual respect, and political tolerance;
4. The international community must closely monitor developments in the situation, support the efforts of civil society organizations, and use its influence to prevent any escalation of political violence. Canada, in particular, should play a leading role in denouncing these violations and pressuring the Burundian regime to respect fundamental human rights.

At this crucial time for Burundian democracy, we reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the principles of tolerance, justice, inclusive dialogue, and respect for human dignity. The Burundian people deserve a future based on peace, democracy, and the rule of law.

Signed:

Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights

SOS-Torture/Burundi