



PRESS RELEASE

Burundi's 5 June 2025 elections: an electoral process marred by repression, fraud and media censorship

SOS-Torture/Burundi expresses its deep concern about the conduct of the legislative and communal elections of 5 June 2025, which took place in a climate of intimidation, targeted violence, electoral fraud and a clear shrinking of civic space. This process, instead of being a step towards democratic consolidation, has turned out to be a real regression in terms of political freedoms, transparency and citizen participation.

Evidence documented by SOS-Torture/Burundi and corroborated by multiple testimonies collected from journalists, observers and political party representatives reveals that the elections were strongly marked by intimidation and violence. In several provinces of the country, including Bubanza, Bujumbura, Gitega, Makamba, and Ngozi, Imbonerakure, a militia affiliated with the ruling party, were deployed to force citizens to vote under threat, expel opposition representatives from polling stations, and suppress any dissent. Arbitrary arrests and physical violence were also reported

In addition, there is obvious electoral fraud: ballot stuffing, multiple voting, vote substitution, misuse of proxies, deliberate exclusion of opposition representatives during the counting, as well as the premature exhaustion of ballot papers in several localities, without an alternative solution. These practices clearly compromised the integrity of the vote.

In addition, media coverage of the elections was severely hampered. More than 250 journalists have been placed under a centralized coordination under the Ministry of Communication. They have been subjected to strict instructions aimed at limiting the dissemination of critical information and favouring so-called "peace" reporting. Corroborating testimonies point to systematic censorship of articles reporting on irregularities, constant editorial pressure, unfair treatment between public and private media, and logistical restrictions that have hindered the ability of journalists to carry out their work freely.

This general context of surveillance, censorship and insecurity has severely limited freedom of expression, freedom of the press and the right to full and impartial information. Under these conditions, the criteria for a free, transparent and fair election were not met.

Faced with this situation, SOS-Torture/Burundi condemns in the strongest possible terms the electoral violence, the violations of civil and political rights, as well as the manipulation of the electoral process.

The organization calls on the Burundian authorities to restore an environment that respects human rights, to release without delay all those arbitrarily detained, and to prosecute the perpetrators of the violations observed.

It is also imperative that the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) conduct credible and independent investigations and annul the results in all localities where serious fraud has been observed.

SOS-Torture/Burundi calls on the international community, including the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the ICGLR, not to recognize the results of this flawed electoral process, and to urgently dispatch an independent fact-finding mission into the irregularities and violations committed.

It also urges them to strengthen mechanisms to protect journalists, human rights defenders and citizens who are victims of election-related violence.

"Burundi's democracy cannot flourish under the influence of threats, fraud and censorship."

SOS-Torture/Burundi remains fully committed to documenting violations, supporting victims and relentlessly advocating for truth, justice and accountability.

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