

28 April 2015

Elections scheduled to take place between the end of May and August 2015 will be decisive for Burundi. The future of the present rulers and, more importantly, the upholding of the 2000 Arusha agreement as the foundation for peace, are at stake. The return to violence would not only end the peace progressively restored since the Arusha agreement, it would also have destabilizing consequences in the region and mark a failure in peacebuilding.
Moment of Truth, CRISIS GROUP REPORT, goo.gl/gkMrnS

KEY FIGURES

25,000

Number of Burundian refugees who have sought asylum in neighboring countries since the beginning of April 2015

21,000

Number of Burundian refugees who entered Rwanda in April 2015

280

Number of unaccompanied and separated children identified so far

60%

Proportion of children among the refugees arriving in Rwanda

PRIORITIES

- Relocation of refugees to safety from border areas
- Preparation of refugee sites allocated by governments of host countries
- Life-saving emergency protection and assistance interventions including in the sectors of registration, shelter, domestic items, food, water, sanitation, hygiene, health.
- Identification and protection of children including family tracing, family reunification and alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children.

Highlights

- In Burundi, over the weekend, supporters of some opposition parties took to the streets to demonstrate against the announcement of President Nkunruziza's candidature for a controversial third term in office. Demonstrations focused mainly in the Bujumbura area, which was heavily reinforced with police presence. According to media reports, five people were killed in demonstrations in the capital as of 27 April.
- On Monday 27 April, some opposition leaders called for more demonstrations. As of 8.30 am the situation in Bujumbura town was calm, with reports of public gathering in Musaga and Nyakabiga in response to the call.
- Some 25,000 civilians have sought refuge in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo citing cite intimidation, threats or fear of violence linked to the upcoming political elections.
- In Rwanda, ambassadors of donor countries have been visiting and speaking with Burundian refugees directly to obtain first-hand accounts of the reasons for fleeing Burundi, as well as and observing the response put in places by MIDIMAR (the Government refugee agency), UNHCR and other partners in transit sites and the newly established Mahama camp.



In Rwanda, a key priority is the protection of children, who make up 60% of the new refugee population, as well as conducting family tracing and reunification, and alternative care for over 280 unaccompanied and separated children who have been identified by UNHCR and its partner Plan International so far. [Photo: UNHCR/M.Pomeroy]

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Operational Context

- Throughout April, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo have experienced refugee flows from Burundi. Refugees cite intimidation, threats, or fear of violence linked to the upcoming political elections as reasons for fleeing, amid reports of violence and intimidation carried out by the youth groups aligned to political affiliations.
- During the first week of the influx, UNHCR and **Rwanda's** government refugee agency MIDIMAR recorded on average 300 arrivals per day. In mid-April, the arrival rate increased to between 560 and 800 per day. Last weekend alone 5,000 refugees entered the country. The **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** has received nearly 4,000 Burundian refugees in South Kivu; 56% are children. **Tanzania** has reported the arrival of 62 Burundian refugees and one Congolese.



Protection

Rwanda

- Nearly 21,000 Burundians, mostly women and children have fled to Rwanda citing intimidation and threats of violence linked to the upcoming elections. Last weekend alone 5,000 refugees entered the country. The Government is recognizing the refugees *prima facie*.
- On average 3,000 individuals are arriving daily. UNHCR and MIDIMAR are receiving the refugees at two reception centers in southern Rwanda, with support from partner American Refugee Committee (ARC) which is constructing hangars for temporary shelter. These facilities have been overcrowded following the sharp increase in arrivals.
- The Government has allocated 50 hectares of land in Mahama sector in the eastern province for a new camp. UNHCR and partners started relocating refugees from the overcrowded Nyanza reception centre on 21 April. Currently daily convoys are moving up to 1,500 people to Mahama; so far 4,000 have been relocated.
- UNHCR is registering all new arrivals using biometric technology which is key to ensure refugees can prove their identity, receive documentation, and access assistance and services. In order to accelerate the relocation process, UNHCR and MIDIMAR have decided to move the registration process in the new camp as of 28 April.

Democratic Republic of Congo

- The Government has decided new arrivals will henceforth be accommodated in a site close to Bukavu town. Currently the majority are hosted by Burundian refugee families who have been in South Kivu for many years. Others are scattered in villages while others remained very close to the border.
- Asylum seekers have not reported facing problems entering the DRC; indeed access to the asylum has been ensured thus far. Some families however claimed that forces had been deployed on the Burundi side of the Burundi/DRC border to prevent Burundians from leaving the country.
- Protection monitoring has been reinforced at the border and in the localities hosting Burundian asylum seekers. A few sensitive profiles have been identified among the new arrivals for which a follow up is ensured. The situation of vulnerable asylum seekers is being monitored by social workers. Sensitization sessions have started on SGBV and HIV/AIDS issues. A rapid needs assessment is under process in the localities where new arrivals are hosted. Preliminary results show that food, drinkable water and shelters/NFIs are the major concerns.
- All cases of unaccompanied minors and separated children identified so far registered by UNHCR have been referred to ICRC for family tracing purpose.

Tanzania

- The Government of Tanzania has agreed to *prima facie* recognition of refugees.
- A joint monitoring mission to the border took place with participants from UNHCR, Government of Tanzania and WFP in regions of Tanzania. Border monitoring is continuing and has been carried out in Kakonko, Kigadia, Chelioa, Kagunga and Manyovu villages.
- UNHCR, together with IOM and UNFPA, will organize three protection trainings for Government officials in Kigoma and Kagera regions.