

## "A country on the edge" Civilian protection in Burundi

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- 1993** — Beginning of Burundian Civil War
- 1994** — Genocide in Rwanda: 800,000+ Tutsi and moderate Hutu killed
- Aug 2000** — Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi
- Apr 2003** — African Union deploys 'AMIB' peacekeeping force to Burundi
- Jun 2004** — United Nations peacekeeping mission succeeds 'AMIB'
- Aug 2005** — Nkurunziza elected President by both houses of parliament
- Aug 2005** — Formal end of Burundian Civil War
- June 2010** — Nkurunziza re-elected in public vote boycotted by opposition
- Mar 2011** — DFID announce termination of bilateral aid to Burundi
- Apr 2015** — Nkurunziza announces intention to stand for third term
- Nov 2015** — UNSC adopts Resolution 2248 condemning political violence
- Dec 2015** — UN Special Advisor Adama Dieng warns of genocide risk
- Dec 2015** — Rebel and Govt violence lead to high civilian casualties
- Jan 2016** — Evidence of torture, sexual violence and mass graves
- Jan 2016** — African Union decides not to deploy peacekeeping force

### The Burundi crisis:

The period since April 2015, when the ruling party controversially announced that President Pierre Nkurunziza was running for a third term in office, has been marked by ongoing violence and increasing civilian casualties. These events follow several years of increasing authoritarianism in Burundi that threatens to unravel power-sharing agreements between Tutsi and Hutu that brought an end of the 1993-2005 civil war.

During this period, over 400 people have been killed and more than 230,000 have fled Burundi to neighbouring countries. Recent satellite footage appears to verify accounts that dozens of people were killed by police on 11 December 2015 and later buried in mass graves. It is believed that on that day alone over 100 people were killed. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has warned that new patterns of violence have emerged since December, including the use of sexual violence, torture, and enforced disappearances.

Around	More than	More than
<b>10.5 Million</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>230,000</b>
People make up the population of Burundi	People have been killed since protest began in April 2015	Burundians have fled the country during the recent unrest

While the crisis is a political one, reports indicate that some victims are now being targeted because of their ethnic identity. The increased use of hate speech and language associated with the violence of the 1990s should raise particular alarm; identity-based rhetoric is being employed to stoke divisions between the ethnic Hutu and ethnic Tutsi communities. On 29 October the President of the Burundian Senate, Révérien Ndikuriyo, urged local officials and ordinary citizens to identify opposition members and threatened that security forces may "go to work" to exterminate them. As rumour and fear continue to escalate, the likelihood of mass atrocity crimes occurring increases.

Cycles of identity-based mass violence in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s have left deep scars throughout the region; if the crisis in Burundi continues, there is a serious risk that the wider region will be increasingly affected. Both the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, have warned of the possible return to civil war if ongoing violence is not addressed. Burundi now features on the world's watch lists for mass atrocity crimes.

Warning signs of instability, violence, and hate speech should have been identified long before April last year but in recent years international attention towards Burundi has wavered, and always been overshadowed by substantial commitments made to Rwanda. In 2011, the UK ended its bilateral aid programme to Burundi, which meant there was no longer a DFID office monitoring the country. Had atrocity prevention been a UK priority in 2011, the UK Government would have found it difficult to cut Burundi's aid budget.

There is a serious risk that violent political crisis in Burundi is descending towards identity-based mass violence. Together with the international community, the UK Government must prioritise the protection of Burundians from identity-based violence, particularly mass atrocity crimes.

The Government's reluctance to acknowledge atrocity prevention as a national priority and the failure to integrate an atrocity prevention 'lens' in foreign and international development policy streams ensures UK responses to the crisis -such as the one unfolding in Burundi- are reactive. As with the crisis in Syria, significant efforts have been made by the UK at the United Nations Security Council and UK humanitarian aid contributions for Burundian refugees in the region is considerable. However, a more pro-active policy is needed if atrocity is to be prevented and civilians are to be protected in Burundi and elsewhere.

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### 3-way approach for atrocity prevention in Burundi:

1. **Multilateralism:** Ensure UN commitments, including a UNSC resolution with Chapter VII provisions, are accompanied by African Union engagement and participation of the Great Lakes states
  2. **Dialogue & mediation:** Support high-level comprehensive and inclusive inter-group-Burundian dialogue and ensure humanitarian aid programmes with refugees monitor and address identity-based rumour, fear, and grievance among Hutu and Tutsi communities
  3. **Long-term commitment:** Commit to comprehensive investment strategy for peacebuilding and development for Burundi, and to developing a new UK atrocity prevention policy
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#### 1. Multilateralism

Atrocity prevention is a global responsibility yet efforts to find solutions to the Burundi crisis have so far failed to halt the violence. The crisis is fast becoming a test-case for the international community's resolve declared unanimously in April 2014 to learn the lessons of the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

“The international community has a responsibility to protect Burundians.”

- UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide,  
9 November 2015

The AU - On 31 January 2016 the African Union decided against sending in a peacekeeping force following threats from the Burundian government that any such move would be interpreted as an invasion. However, more recently Burundi has agreed to allow AU human rights observers and military monitors into the country. AU strategy remains focussed on the mediation efforts being led by Uganda, which is rightly being supported by the international community, however the lack of progress so far suggests AU efforts could be bolstered with a more pro-active and multilateral approach. Furthermore, the AU should be encouraged to address potential identity-based divides that could, if left unchecked, continue to worsen and impact the wider region.

The UN - In November 2015, UNSC Resolution 2248 warned of possible further UN measures against those perpetuating violence in Burundi but there are concerns the UNSC remains underprepared should the crisis suddenly escalate. On 1 December 2015 the Secretary-General outlined two possible options for Burundi: an integrated UN special political mission or a fully-fledged peacekeeping operation. While rhetoric has been strong, actions have been lacking. Deadlock at the UN could leave Burundian without security of protection. Any UN mission in Burundi must be developed alongside AU efforts, to ensure complementarity and regional legitimacy.

#### Recommendations:

As a P5 UNSC member, the UK must continue to use diplomatic influence to secure agreement. The UK must work with other members of the UNSC to draft a credible resolution that prioritises the protection of Burundi's civilians. This should include the establishment of a UN special political mission in Bujumbura with a mandate to facilitate an inclusive political dialogue, monitor and report on human rights abuses, and assist with security and justice sector reforms. The mission should include an international police force able to protect civilians and demonstrate a visible international presence. The UK should ensure there is adequate contingency planning for the rapid deployment of a Chapter VII UN peacekeeping force if the situation deteriorates further.

## 2. Mediation & Dialogue

Burundi had made significant peacebuilding gains in the years following the 1993-2005 civil war, however, the current crisis illustrates the fragility of social cohesion in Burundi. While resumption of the high-level inter-group-Burundian dialogue is essential, humanitarian aid programmes with refugees should monitor and address identity-based rumour, fear, and grievance among the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

**300,000**

People were killed during the 1993 - 2005 civil war

**1million**

People were displaced during 1993 - 2005 civil war

Large numbers of refugees have fled to neighbouring countries, including Rwanda and DRC where tensions between Hutu and Tutsi still exist. While the crisis is a political one, the intentional stoking of identity-based divisions threaten to re-establish 'us versus them' divides. This comes after years of painstaking efforts at reconciliation and dialogue. If tensions continue to rise, political solutions will be far more difficult to secure.

### Recommendations:

Any strategy for Burundi must be accompanied by an inclusive dialogue that brings together all relevant Burundian stakeholders, assisted by the African Union and wider international community. Furthermore, mediation, reconciliation and inclusivity should be integrated into any eventual political settlement. DfID and FCO should work with Burundian communities inside and outside of Burundi, regional civil society groups, and regional member states, and non-governmental organisations in order to facilitate inter-group dialogues and address, not ignore, rising inter-group tensions.

*During the colonial period in Burundi and Rwanda the predominantly social identities of Hutu and Tutsi were transformed into ethnic identities.*

**85%**  **14%**

Of Burundians are Hutu

Of Burundians are Tutsi

*(The Twa ethnic group makes up the remaining 1%)*

Development programmes aimed at addressing underlying identity-based divisions, that increase social cohesion and create safe spaces for community dialogue are essential to sustainable peace: Humanitarian assistance projects for Burundi's refugees have the capacity to counter identity-based rumour and divisions. This can be done by funding media programming that promotes social cohesion and addressed the everyday

fears of the ordinary community. Likewise, facilitating conversations and breaking down assumptions can allay fears and lead to stronger inter-group relationships.

## 3. A long-term commitment

Numerous risk factors have long indicated that Burundi was at risk of identity-based violence, including mass atrocities. Specific atrocity prevention UK policy frameworks would have encouraged better co-ordinated preventive action, rather than the ad-hoc reactive measures that have characterised the period since April 2015. It is difficult to imagine, for example, that the Government would have cut bilateral aid to Burundi, had preventing mass atrocities been an explicit national priority.

The current crisis in Burundi underlines the need for the UK to integrate a cross-cabinet strategy explicitly aimed at the protection of civilians from atrocity crimes. An integrated atrocity prevention lens across the FCO, MoD, and DFID - incorporated into primary policy streams such as the Building Stability Overseas Strategy and new UK Aid Strategy - would have identified the 2015 presidential elections in Burundi as a key point of political instability with the potential for a renewed outbreak of violence.

The absence of an atrocity prevention policy framework and the reluctance of the UK government to acknowledge atrocity prevention as a national priority has not only inhibited civilian protection in Burundi but also in Syria, Burma/Myanmar, and the Central African Republic. While the UK has been active in its support for the development of policy initiatives such as the [UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes](#) it can do more to integrate these and other atrocity prevention measures into its own decision-making procedures.

Integrating an atrocity prevention framework or 'lens' would facilitate early and proactive policy and potentially save human lives and money. Addressing the early signs of crisis before violence escalates into protracted and costly regional conflict is both a moral imperative and a clear national interest.

### Recommendations:

- The UK government must acknowledge the prevention of mass atrocities is a matter of national interest and therefore a national priority
- Political parties should appoint a spokesperson for civilian protection/prevention of mass atrocities
- The UK government should increase its political and financial support to the UK mission to the United Nations
- Scrutiny of UK atrocity prevention measures can be increased through the work of international development and foreign affairs select committees
- Launch a cross-government review to examine how to strengthen capacity, coordination, and understanding of atrocity prevention across Whitehall