

## ACCORD: ENGAGING ARMED GROUPS IN PEACE PROCESSES

### **Burundi Primer**

*This document is intended as a simple overview produced for the Accord Programme workshop on 'Engaging armed groups in peace processes', London, July 2004. As such, it does not seek to represent the full complexity or the contested nature of the situation described.*

#### **Basics**



Borders: Tanzania, Rwanda, Democratic republic of the Congo

Population: 6.2 million

Ethnic groups: Hutu 85%; Tutsi 14%; Twa 1%  
Religions: Christian 67% (mainly Catholic);  
Indigenous beliefs 23%; Muslim 10%

Government: Republic. President is head of state and head of government. Currently a 'transitional government'.

Economy: GDP per capita \$600 (ppp 2003). Main exports: coffee, tea, sugar, cotton, hides.

#### **Historical Background**

The Twa were the first inhabitants of what is known today as Burundi. The Hutus arrived from 10,000 A.D. followed in the 16th century by the Tutsi who came to dominate the society politically.

Burundi became a German territory in 1903 as part of German East Africa (now Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania). Belgium took control of the then 'Ruanda-Urundi' after World War I under a mandate from the League of Nations, followed by United Nations' trusteeship from 1946 until Burundi's independence in 1962.

In the early 1970s, Hutus launched an unsuccessful uprising against the Tutsi minority's domination of the country. Some 10,000 Tutsi and 150,000 Hutu were killed.

A Hutu, and leader of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU), Melchior Ndadaye, won Burundi's first democratic presidential elections in 1993 by a landslide. He was assassinated by elements within the army in months later, sparking off what is known in Burundi as *la crise* (crisis) in which well over 200,000 Burundians have died. Hundreds of thousands have been internally displaced or have become refugees in neighbouring countries.

The fighting has pitted mainly Hutu armed groups in guerrilla warfare against the Tutsi-dominated military, the Burundi Armed Forces (FAB). In 1996, the army started implementing a policy of *regroupement* or resettlement to separate the rebels from civilians and exert greater control over the population. 300,000 Hutu peasants in vulnerable zones have been forced to leave their homes and farms and move to new settlements or camps protected by the army. Burundi troops, seeking to secure their borders, intervened in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1998. More recently, many of these troops have been redeployed back to Burundi to deal with periodic upsurges in rebel activity.

In 1996, Burundi's former military ruler, Major Pierre Buyoya (who had relinquished power for the 1993 elections), seized power in a bloodless putsch and suspended the constitution. In early June 1998, Burundi's two main political parties, the Hutu-dominated FRODEBU and the Tutsi-led Union for National Progress (UPRONA) agreed on a political partnership and a transitional constitution. Buyoya was sworn in as the country's transitional president.

#### *Main Hutu armed groups*

The National Council for Defence of Democracy / Forces for the Defence of Democracy (**CNDD-FDD**) are Hutu organizations, many of whose supporters originate from southern Bururi region. They have around 15,000 troops altogether. Former FRODEBU Minister **Leonard Nyangoma** founded CNDD-FDD 1994 and was leader until a split in early 1998; he continues to lead a faction. **Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurkiye** led the breakaway faction, which in turn split again, with a group being led by **Pierre Nkurunziza** from October 2001. Nkurunziza's faction is currently the most significant CNDD-FDD group. Jean-Bosco Ndayikengurkiye's faction signed a ceasefire in August 2002.

The Party for the Liberation of the Hutu / National Liberation Forces (**PALIPEHUTU / FNL**) supporters tend to originate from the central Muramvya region. They have something like 3,000 troops altogether. PALIPEHUTU was formed in the late 1970s, and split in 1992 between factions led by **Etienne Karatasi** and Cossan Kabura. Karatasi, who participated in the Arusha process continues to lead a faction. Kabura was replaced by **Agathon Rwasa** in January 2001. He leads the faction that in early 2004 was still fighting. There is also a faction led by **Alain Mugabarabona** created after a split with Rwasa's group, August 2002. Mugabarabona's faction signed a ceasefire December 2002, and declared it was transforming into a political party.

The Front for National Liberation / People's Armed Forces (**FROLINA / FAP**) was launched in 1990 by former PALIPEHUTU executive **Joseph Karumba**.

From 1996 the Burundian government and the country's opposition groups regularly met with the foreign-based armed groups. The 'Arusha process' led by Julius Nyerere (who had been appointed in March 1996) led to the first talks at Arusha held in June 1998. The government and the CNDD also reached an agreement in 1997 in Rome under the auspices of the Community of Sant' Egidio.

Nelson Mandela took over as leader of the Arusha peace process in December 1999 after Nyerere's death. In August 2000, the *Arusha Agreement* was signed by the military government,

the seven Hutu political parties and the main Tutsi opposition parties. A scaled down version had to be devised to get the Tutsi parties to sign, although a coalition of groups did not. The main armed factions of the CNDD-FDD and the FNL did not sign, and there was no ceasefire. The agreement designed a power sharing arrangement between FRODEBU and UPRONA.

Buyoya agreed to ceasefire talks with the CNDD-FDD, hosted by President Omar Bongo of Gabon in January and April 2001. In October, talks brokered by Mandela led to the installation of a transitional government under which Hutu and Tutsi leaders would share power. The CNDD-FDD renewed its committed to Libreville process but split in two immediately after the summit. Fighting intensified, but a new transitional government was inaugurated on 1 November 2001, intended to be the first step toward holding national elections in 2004. In January 2002, Jean Minani, leader of FRODEBU, was elected president of the transitional national assembly set up to bridge ethnic divide. In March Tanzania hosted a meeting with all the splintered Hutu groups.

An upsurge in fighting in July delayed further Tanzanian-backed peace talks. But talks began in August, and in December, the government and three of the Hutu rebel groups (but not the FNL) signed a ceasefire at talks in Tanzania under which rebels would join a new national army.

Renewed fighting broke out in January 2003. In March, fighting continued while it emerged that secret talks were underway in Switzerland between groups including the FNL and sources close to the government. At the end of April, Hutu Domitien Ndayizeye succeeded Buyoya as president, under the terms of the three-year power-sharing government inaugurated in 2001.

In November 2003 President Ndayizeye of the transitional government and CNDD-FDD leader Pierre Nkurunziza signed an agreement to end the civil war at a summit of African leaders in Tanzania.<sup>1</sup> Nkurunziza and other CNDD-FDD members were given ministerial posts.

Agathon Rwasa's FNL continued to attack government targets, fighting both the FAB (soon to become the new Burundi National Defence Force) and FDD forces. In April 2004 they declared a unilateral ceasefire, dismissed by the President as insincere. Talks between the government and the FNL had been held in January 2004 in the Netherlands.

In May, the Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD withdrew from the transitional government citing inadequate representation, although Secretary General Hussein Rajabu said the decision did not mean a return to war. Meanwhile the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to send a peacekeeping force to Burundi. Election are scheduled for November.

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<sup>1</sup> South African mediators led talks on 7-8 October and 2 November in Pretoria. Final meeting in Dar Es Salaam, 16 November. On 8 October a *Protocol on Political, Defence and Security Power Sharing in Burundi* was signed, and on 2 November a *Protocol on Outstanding Political, Defence and Security Power Sharing in Burundi* was signed. The *Forces Technical Agreement* was signed 16 November under the framework of the *Arusha Accord*. The *Global Ceasefire Agreement* was signed 16 November.

**Further reading**

International Crisis Group. 'The Mandela Effect: evaluation and perspectives of the peace process in Burundi'. Africa Report No. 21, April 2000.

International Crisis Group. 'The Burundi rebellion and the ceasefire negotiations', Africa Briefing 6 August 2002.

Jan Van Eck. 'Challenges to a durable peace in Burundi' Institute for Security Studies, Situation Report, 15 April 2004.