
Burundi : Unravelling the Peace

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Introduction

Burundi is a small overpopulated landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Since achieving independence in 1962 it has experienced several episodes of civil war, the last of which came to end when the Arusha Accord was signed in 2000. The gradual return to peace in the wake of the Arusha Accord¹ has been jeopardised by Pierre Nkurunziza's announcement on 25th April 2015 that he would stand as a candidate for the presidency.

While more than 190,000 Burundians took refuge in neighbouring countries, the parliamentary, municipal, presidential and hill elections took place between June and August this year, despite repeated calls for postponement and threats of sanctions on the part of the international community. From a distance, Burundi's current crisis looks like one of Africa's usual electoral quarrels: an opposition standing up to a President's intention to remain in power in the teeth of constitutional legality and political decency. But a closer perspective demonstrates that the crisis in Burundi is much more than that. The electoral crisis provoked by the President's desire to serve a third term means that Burundi has returned to violence, and this stems from the desire to deconstruct the Arusha Accord. More generally, in the current pre-guerilla atmosphere the crisis is testing the durability of the peace accord, which set up power sharing as a system of conflict resolution, as well as testing the legitimacy and risks associated with this challenge.

1. The Arusha Accords for peace and reconciliation in Burundi were signed on 28th August 2000 and brought the civil war to an end. They defined a system for sharing political and ethnic power which is the basis of the current regime. This system, which is mentioned in the preamble to the Burundian Constitution, limits the number of presidential terms of office to two and was the fruit of four years of negotiations under the aegis of two Presidents (Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela).

The Burundi crisis: much more than an electoral quarrel

After ten years as President, Pierre Nkurunziza decided once again to stand for re-election. The announcement that he would be standing, made at his CNDD-FDD² party congress on 25th April this year, provoked a wave of violent demonstrations in Bujumbura, the capital. The demonstrations were organised by civil society organisations and the opposition who came together in the "Halte au troisième mandat" ("*Stop the third term*") movement, the self-styled "Mouvement Arusha" ("Arusha Movement") in reference to the Accord of the same name which they sought to protect. This movement is supported by the Catholic Church, which has taken a stance against a 3rd presidential term. Not only did the Church withdraw from the provincial and municipal electoral committees on 27th May 2015, but on 12th May it also ordered Pierre Nkurunziza to postpone the presidential election and allow the independent media to resume work. Three attempts at international mediation and two East African Community (EAC) summits devoted to Burundi merely succeeded in postponing the parliamentary, municipal and presidential elections for a few weeks. All these elections were won by the party in power which gained 77 of the 100 seats in the National Assembly, whereas 21 seats were won by the *Amizero y'Abarundi*³ coalition and the 2 remaining seats by the Union pour le Progrès National (Uprona).⁴ In the first round of the presidential election on 21st July, Pierre Nkurunziza was re-elected with 69.41% of the votes, ahead of Agathon Rwaswa who gained 18.99%, and Gérard Nduwayo (Uprona) who attracted 2.13%. Pierre Nkurunziza was sworn in as President on 20th August in a rather discreet manner.

Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial claim to a third term in office triggered the current crisis and is a bone of contention between the coalition of opposition parties and the government. The party in power, playing on an ambiguity in the Constitution, maintains that a

2. National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces in defence of democracy.

3. After the shattering defeat suffered by the opposition in the 2010 elections, Charles Nditije and Agathon Rwaswa were both ousted from their respective parties, Uprona and the FNL. In November 2014, the former enemies and their activists joined forces to fight the forthcoming elections in 2015 and created the *Amizero y'Abarundi* coalition.

4. Since 1962 Uprona, the independence party, has been the main Tutsi political movement.

new term in office complies with the law. The limitation on terms in office is imposed by article 96, which states "The President of the Republic shall be elected by direct universal suffrage for a term of five years which may be renewed once". In fact, pursuant to the exceptional provision contained in article 302 in relation to the first post-transition presidential election, Pierre Nkurunziza was elected by indirect suffrage in 2005. The CNDD-FDD and subsequently the Constitutional Court, in a judgment dated 5th May 2015, consider that only Pierre Nkurunziza's second election by direct suffrage in 2010 should be taken into account, thus allowing him to stand for another term. Nevertheless the pressure to which the judges were subjected and the Court's lack of impartiality are demonstrated by the fact that the vice-president of the Court, Sylvère Nimpagaritse, fled the country on 4th May 2015.⁵

5. Cf. *RFI*: "Burundi: the vice-president of the Constitutional Court flees the country", 4th May 2015.

Quarrel over a peace accord: who is "for" and "against" Arusha

The third term is one of those issues where you can't see the wood for the trees. What's at stake in this crisis is not the presidency but a challenge to the Arusha Accord. As a result of the Accord, which were ratified in 2000, a civil war which had seen over 300,000 deaths was gradually brought to an end and an ethnic dictatorship was replaced by a consociative democratic regime.⁶ As well as limiting the number of presidential terms in office to two, the Arusha Accord lays down the principle of political power sharing based on an ethnic criterion (between the Hutu majority, which constitutes 85% of Burundi's population, and the Tutsi minority). In the Constitution this principle manifests itself in the appointment of two vice-presidents, each from a different ethnic group, and by the regulations governing the composition of the government and the National Assembly (maximum 60% Hutus and 40% Tutsis), as well as the Senate (by means of two delegates per province each from a different ethnic group) and the administration (maximum 60% Hutus and 40% Tutsis). Power sharing between these two ethnic groups also applies to the security services, one of the most important and most difficult points during the Arusha negotiations.

When President Nkurunziza became a candidate for a third term in office this was once too much for many Burundians. This candidacy does indeed contravene the Arusha Accord⁷ and as such is perceived by several significant segments of Burundian society as an indication of his intention to challenge the system of power sharing.

Opposition to the Arusha Accord on the part of Pierre Nkurunziza and his party is nothing new. Since he first came to power there have been several attempts to challenge the letter and especially the spirit of the Accord. In 2013, the policy of restoring property seized during the civil war, as stipulated in the Accord, was changed even though there was no consensus on this point. Instead of trying to reconcile the interests of the current and previous owners, the authorities favoured a more legalistic approach which was also

6. Stef Vandeginste, "Consociative theory and power sharing in Burundi", *Cahier*, Institute of Development Policy and Management, 2nd February 2006.

7. Arusha Accords, Protocol II, article 7.

much more complex and problematic.⁸ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR in French) – one of the fundamental aspects of the Arusha Accord – was put in place last December after a twelve-year delay. This delay was largely due to the party in power dragging its feet and to its selective reading of the terms of the Arusha Accord relating to transitional justice: it created the CVR – which did not start work before the elections but is now being encouraged to do so by none other than the President⁹ – yet it rejected the idea of creating a special joint court as specified in the Accord. The most significant offensive against the Arusha Accord took place on 21st March 2014, although the government's attempt to revise the Constitution was rejected by Parliament on that day by a single vote. The bill provided for a stronger executive and removed the limitation on presidential terms in office. It deleted all references to the Arusha Accord in the preamble and challenged the political and ethnic balance which resulted from the 2000 Accord: replacing the two vice-president posts, each from a different ethnic group, by a strong Prime Minister and an honorary vice-president, while a simple majority replaced the two-thirds majority in Parliament. Had this attempt at constitutional revision succeeded, Burundi would no longer be a regime based on the Arusha Accord. A new internal regulation removing stipulations covering ethnic groups and gender in relation to the composition of the National Assembly constitutes a further distortion of the spirit of Arusha. But the most alarming occurrence came during Pierre Nkurunziza's speech at the inauguration of his third term, when he declared his intent to change article 129 of the Constitution in relation to the composition of the government and to ethnic quotas. The government which emerged from the summer 2015 elections is dominated by the Hutu parties (the CNDD-FDD and FNL¹⁰), since Uprona representatives could no longer claim a partnership role in government as they had after the 2005 and 2010 elections. In fact, Charles Nditije and Gérard Nduwayo, who represented the two branches of Uprona, either boycotted the vote (in the case of the former) or achieved a low score (in the case of the latter). As a result, even though the formation of the government reflects the ethnic balance, the political balance has been disrupted.

Furthermore, the party in power has never made a secret of its criticism of the Arusha Accord. It considered that the Accord was too protective of Tutsi interests and that they had been overtaken by the country's political situation. In recent years, the CNDD-FDD has often criticised the Tutsi monopoly over certain sectors of society (associations, the media, the judiciary, etc.). It believed, moreover, that as over ten years had passed since the Arusha Accord was

8. "Field of BitternessII: Restitution and Reconciliation in Burundi", *Africa Report* N°214, International Crisis Group, 17th Feb. 2014.

9. Pierre Nkurunziza's presidential inauguration speech, Bujumbura, 20th August 2015.

10. National Liberation Forces, a rebel movement which became a political party.

signed a simple majority system should be imposed in the institutions. In the context of the current crisis, and following the failed putsch, the ethnic balance in the upper echelons of the armed forces is in jeopardy (several Tutsi officers have been arrested), while pro-government media and some members of the party in power are developing a rhetoric of ethnic mistrust and bitterness.

The issue of the 3rd term has mobilised so many people and has proved so divisive within Burundian society precisely because all Burundians are aware that it will open the door to dismantling the various balances which resulted from the Arusha Accord. This quarrel has laid bare the bipolarity of the Burundi political stage and shown that past divisions still rankle. These are ethnic and political divisions, but some are also social or relate to security. At first the army intervened between the police and the demonstrators, before being taken in hand. Nevertheless it remains riven by deep internal dissent, demonstrated by the attempted coup on 13th May, the soldiers arrested as part of the investigation into the assassination of General Adolphe Nshimirimana, and the attempt on the life of the Chief of Staff on 11th September.

From street protests to a pre-guerilla situation

In the wake of the "Arusha Movement", the opposition parties, civil society organisations and former presidents Sylvestre Ntibantunganya and Domitien Ndayizeye, as well as high-profile members of the CNDD-FDD in exile and soldiers, met in Addis Ababa on 31st July 2015 for the official creation of a National Council for Respect of the Arusha Accord for peace and reconciliation in Burundi and to restore the rule of law (CNARED), whose president is Léonard Nyangoma, a senior CNDD politician who had fled the country after the 2010 elections. A CNARED delegation was immediately invited to the African Union (AU)'s head office. The opposition has broadened in recent months and this is reflected in CNARED's structure. This coalition is wider than the opposition formed after the 2010 elections and also includes a number of high profile figures who had left the Burundian political stage (voluntarily or under duress), as well as other people who were in the forefront of the CNDD-FDD.

Nevertheless, one significant player is missing from this coalition. After the presidential election, Agathon Rwasa decided to sit in the National Assembly, bringing with him the elected members of his FNL party. He sits as vice-president of the National Assembly's newly-elected office along with two representatives of CNDD-FDD, Pascal Nyabenda – the president – and Edouard Nduwimana, a former minister of the Interior who is now the National Assembly's second vice-president. As required by the Constitution, FNL members have also been appointed to five ministerial posts out of twenty (the ministries of Good Governance and Planning; Trade, Industry and Tourism; Public Sector Work and Employment; Local Development; and Youth, Sport and Culture) but what's surprising is that they agreed to do this. Agathon Rwasa's decision to participate in this government is actually inconsistent with the fact that he boycotted the elections and denounced the election results. His militants, who are also victims of repression on the part of the authorities¹¹, have been taken by surprise by what looks very much like an opportunistic alliance.

11. On 22nd August this year, Pontien Barutwanayo, the only one of the 129 local administrators in Burundi to be a member of the FNL, was assassinated.

The spiral of violence

While police crackdowns have intensified significantly, the popular protests seen in the spring have evolved into low-intensity guerilla activity in some parts of the capital, and the recent appointment of Alain Guillaume Bunyoni as Minister for Public Safety does not augur well for a relaxation of the repression policy. As soon as the demonstrations began, after Pierre Nkurunziza had announced he was standing for office, the Burundian authorities referred to the anti-3rd term popular mobilisation as "insurrection" and the police carried out numerous arbitrary arrests. What is more, crackdowns were intensified as a result of the failed attempted coup on 13th May, with police units firing live ammunitions at the demonstrators. The assassination of Zedi Feruzi, president of the opposition Union for Peace and Democracy party (known in French as the UPD) on 23rd May by members of the *Institutions Protection Unit* – part of the Burundian security forces – was the first of a series of political assassinations which have not yet run their course.¹² Although this was followed by a quiet period between the parliamentary and presidential elections, on 2nd August the assassination of the regime's unofficial number two, General Adolphe Nshimirimana, the man behind the crackdowns and the head of the *Imborenakure*¹³, saw a return to violence. In a swift response there was an attempt to assassinate Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a well-known human rights activist, and then the murder of Colonel Jean Bikomagu, former Chief of Staff and, as a Tutsi officer, a symbol of the military old guard. Patrice Gahungu, the UPD's spokesman, was assassinated on 7th September and on 11th September the Chief of Staff only just escaped an ambush by the skin of his teeth. Both camps are carrying out targetted assassinations.

Although by day Bujumbura seems to be back to normal and people have returned to work, the nights are punctuated by shots and grenade explosions. In certain areas of the capital perceived as the bastions of opposition like Jabe, Nyakabiga, Musaga, Cibitoke, Kinanira and others searches of both individuals and premises have increased, with numerous arrests, while every morning delivers a batch of corpses bearing marks of torture. With each fresh incident Bujumbura's troublesome areas are sealed, human rights abuses are

12. "Braving bullets. Excessive force in policing demonstrations in Burundi", Amnesty International, 23rd July 2015.

13. See insert.

a daily occurrence and torture is widespread.¹⁴ Journalists are being threatened and attacked by the authorities and the arrest and subsequent beating of the RFI/AFP correspondent a few hours after Nshiriminama's assassination was a message to the whole profession. Similarly, lawyers are being refused access to clients who have been arbitrarily detained and are subject to pressure from members of the police. On 2nd September, a member of the Bujumbura Bar who regularly assists clients detained by Bujumbura's Brigade spéciale de recherche (*Special Investigation Unit*) was assaulted and detained without charge for over 24 hours before being released after the Bujumbura Bar protested to the authorities.¹⁵

In the provinces the number of violent incidents is constantly on the increase and the regular army periodically confronts unidentified armed groups. The first confrontation took place in mid-July in the northern province of Kayanza. According to official sources, clashes lasting three days resulted in the arrest of 170 combattants and the death of 31 others. Because members of this group were thought to have come from Rwanda, border areas and population movements are closely watched and by dint of hints the Burundian authorities have accused Rwanda of subversion. Since the beginning of September, several military positions have been attacked by armed groups or unidentified armed individuals. In rural areas, in recent months, a network of Burundian civil society organisations which is recording the state of violence throughout the country has observed a significant deterioration, with an increased number of attacks, beatings, personal searches, searches of premises, assassinations and arbitrary detentions. Furthermore, the suspicion that rebel groups are being organised from neighbouring countries has led the Imbonerakure and the security services to focus more particularly on people who are trying to flee the country or those who are returning to Burundi. A hundred or so men were arrested recently in Gitega province on their return from abroad.¹⁶

The protest phase (the demonstrations between April and June) have given way to a pre-guerilla phase in which police crackdowns and targeted assassinations go hand-in-hand. The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, noted recently that at least 90 people had been killed, 600 arrested and imprisoned and 40 tortured since the demonstrations began in mid-April. He pointed out that the figures are undoubtedly much higher but that the investigation had for the most part been obstructed by the Burundian authorities.¹⁷

14. "“Just tell me what to confess to torture” and other ill-treatment by Burundi service since April 2015", Amnesty International, 24th August 2015.

15. "Attacks on defence rights in Burundi", Avocats sans frontières, September 2015.

16. "Over 100 arrested in one province amid rebel fears" WRAL, 16th September.

17. Speech by Ivan Simonovic, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, at an emergency session of the Security Council about Burundi, on 10th August 2015.

Echoes and resonance in Africa

The crisis in Burundi focuses attention on the issue of the democratisation of African regimes. Pierre Nkurunziza is not the first and is unlikely to be the last African leader to hold on to power. Some Presidents have beaten records for their longevity as national leaders, including Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe (35 years), Paul Biya in Cameroon (32 years) and Yoweri Museveni in Uganda (29 years). However, recent years have seen more and more popular protests against African heads of state determined to die at the helm. Burkina Faso has become an example of the popular desire for a democratic change of government. On 31st October 2014, faced with the huge numbers mobilised in the streets, which had the support of the army, Blaise Compaoré was compelled to flee the country. In Senegal the 85-year old former president Abdoulaye Wade lost the 2011 elections mainly because civil society mobilised in opposition to his wish to remain in power. In both countries, Senegal and Burkina Faso, the size and duration of the mobilisation of civil society and the opposition was sufficient to thwart the President's initiative. Although the problem in both countries was the same as in Burundi, the difference lies in the fact that Burundi lacks a popular consensus against the 3rd term in office and security forces distancing themselves from the regime. Without these two elements, the power balance will always be to the disadvantage of the democratic movement.

Recent developments in Burundi are especially important in the regional context, given that presidential elections will be taking place in 2016 and 2017. In Congo Brazzaville, Denis Sassou Nguesso has made no secret of his wish to remain in power. On Tuesday 22nd September he announced that a referendum is to be held with a view to revising the Constitution to allow him to seek a third term in office at the 2016 presidential elections. What is more, two ministers who hold contradictory views have recently been dismissed. Last January the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Joseph Kabila, faced a strong wave of mobilisation among the population which forced him to withdraw draft electoral legislation which would have allowed a population census to be held before the next presidential election. This would have meant delaying the election. Although Joseph Kabila has not yet given a clear indication that he will stand for a third term, the recent national consultations and local and provincial elections are being used to delay the 2016 presidential election. In Uganda the electoral situation looks equally undemocratic: Yoweri Museveni, in power since 1986, has announced that he wants to stand for a fourth term as President

and has already had two potential rivals arrested (Kizza Besigye, the FDC¹⁸ candidate, and Amama Mbabazi, the disgraced former head of the government). The Rwandan President Paul Kagame might seem to be in a different position. He put himself into an awkward situation in relation to Pierre Nkurunziza by asking him to withdraw his candidacy, arguing that no-one can go against the will of his people¹⁹. The Rwandan Parliament has recently decided in favour of an amendment to the Constitution after organising national consultations which appeared to show that only ten of the Rwandan citizens who took part opposed a third term for Paul Kagamé. Recently, the third terms issue has even been raised in West Africa: the President of Benin, Boni Yayi, who was suspected of plans along these lines, dismissed the rumours, saying he would not be standing again at the end of his term. In Dakar on 10th September, the West Africa Civil Society Forum (known in French as FOSCAO) made an appeal to heads of member-states of the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), inviting them to adopt the additional protocol on limiting their terms in office²⁰, but they finally refused. Even though there is no "African Spring", new democratic movements are opposing certain African Presidents' desire for lifelong power and this resistance may cause domestic crises like the one in Burundi.

18. Forum for Democratic Change.

19. Answer given by President Paul Kagamé to a question about the current situation in Burundi during an international symposium organised by the University of St. Gall in Switzerland.

20. "The ECOWAS heads of state were invited to limit their terms of office", APA, 10th September 2015.

The failure of African diplomacy and the UN – a warning

The crisis in Burundi has left observers with an impression of widespread helplessness among the sponsors and guarantors of the Arusha Accord. Yet again preventive diplomacy seems to be an empty concept.

Faced with this opposition, the regional African organisations are struggling to apply a consistent policy and are tending towards a compromise position favouring the current incumbents. Today the stance taken by the President of the African Union Commission, Mrs. Dlamini-Zuma, against the 3rd term in Burundi looks both courageous and isolated²¹. The East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) sidestepped this crucial matter and in June they merely asked for the electoral calendar to be rejigged, indicating that a suitable environment must be created for the elections.

The United Nations Special Envoy adopted the same approach to the dialogue between government and opposition in Bujumbura. Pursuing a policy of persuasive diplomacy, all the Special Envoys sent to Bujumbura by the AU, COMESA²² and the EAC were united in their support for this position. It failed to provide a solution to the crisis in Burundi as it takes no account of the principal demand made by the opposition. This is why the opposition and civil society have denounced the two successive UN special envoys, Saïd Djinnit and Abdoulaye Bathily. Paradoxically, in the face of this obstruction and given South Africa's non-interventionist position, the EAC appointed the Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, in power for nearly 30 years, as mediator. Immediately rejected by part of the opposition, the Ugandan President was not informed by the Burundian Presidency of the expected inauguration date because of the adverse security situation, and although he remains officially in charge he has not re-established the political dialogue. It is true that the regional interplay surrounding the Burundi crisis is marked by both personal and political divisions. Burundi's chief neighbours (Rwanda and Tanzania) have taken up diametrically opposed positions, whilst Kenya has shown no interest in the problem. The

21. Interview with Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma on the TV channel CCTV on 7th May 2015.

22. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

lack of credibility attaching to the Ugandan mediation, combined with divisions within the EAC, the spiral of violence and the re-election of Pierre Nkurunziza have reduced the likelihood of a constructive dialogue.

Sticking faithfully to the peace and security architecture doctrine, the AU has officially left the EAC to manage the Burundi crisis. It is keen to avoid any repetition of the differences of opinion which consistently emerge between the Union and the regional organisations in crisis management situations (differences between the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) over the Malagasy crisis, between the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) over the Central Africa crisis, etc.). Yet at the same time the AU's audacity in deciding to send 70 human rights observers and military experts makes it stand out from the other regional organisations (at present about twenty of them have been deployed; they appear to be waiting for agreement on the part of the authorities before starting their work). The AU has also embarked on emergency planning in case the crisis in Burundi becomes dramatically worse. Given that the AU cut its teeth in Burundi, this crisis has questioned its past successful engagement in the early 2000s, which probably explains the unprecedented position taken by Mrs. Dlamini-Zuma.

After its failed mediation attempts, the UN has been reduced to declamatory diplomacy. Divisions within the Security Council have actually prevented it from taking a clear and unequivocal position. As for Burundi's main backer, the European Union, it seems out of its depth in the interplay of regional strategies whose subtleties often escape it. Those of its member states which are active in Burundi have taken steps to suspend their assistance, while the EU is still hesitant about following suit and seems to be betting on the hypothetical return to dialogue.

Conclusion

What is at stake in Burundi is something much more important than the choice of a new leader, hence the sensitivity provoked by the electoral crisis. The 3rd term issue is the tip of the iceberg: the very nature of the Burundian regime is at stake. Should power-sharing be continued or should it be abandoned? This crisis could have been obviated if an open collective discussion had taken place on the relevance of retaining the Arusha Accord as the foundation of the regime, fifteen years after they were signed. After the constitutional revision failed, the party in power resorted to force rather than debate, thus demonstrating its yearning for repression. If the Arusha Accord is in jeopardy this threatens to bring down the fragile edifice of peace in Burundi, with the risk of terrible consequences which will extend beyond the borders of this small Great Lakes country. So far, some of the guarantors of the Arusha Accord (the United Nations, the African Union, the region, the European Union, South Africa, the United States, France, Belgium and so on) have proved incapable of preserving that edifice, while others do not even seem interested in preserving it.

Imbonerakure

In Kirundi Imbonerakure means "those who see far". The group is the youth wing of the Presidential party – the CNDD-FDD – and has Denis Karera as its president. It consists of young people aged under 35 with a variety of profiles, for the most part Hutus but including a number of Tutsis. Today the most highly educated among them have been to university but are unemployed. Other who joined the group when it was created in 2010 are really veterans who fought as part of the CNDD-FDD during the civil war. The movement, considered by many in Burundian civil society and on the international stage as an armed militia, was in actual fact led by Adolphe Nshimirimana, who was the symbol of repression in Burundi and was assassinated on 2nd August this year. Both the leadership and membership of the Imbonerakure remain a grey area (officially there are 5,000 members). The movement has little following in the capital and its strength lies in rural areas.

Before the current crisis the Imbonerakure appeared to be a parallel power through which CNDD-FDD maintained its influence in rural areas. Never afraid to oppose local administrators or intimidate the population, especially during election periods, they acted with total impunity. Since the beginning of the Burundi crisis there have been accusations from human rights organisations, the Burundian opposition and Burundians who have fled the country, that the Imbonerakure are armed by the party in power and are instrumental in carrying out repression. After their involvement in electoral violence in 2010 there is widespread evidence that this political militia collaborated with the country's security forces last spring during the crackdown on demonstrations. In particular there has been strong criticism of the presence of Imbonerakure members wearing police and army uniforms among the security forces. Whereas leaders of the Community of East African States, United Nations and the Burundian opposition have made innumerable appeals for the Imbonerakure to be disarmed, the government continues to deny that the movement is violent in nature.