



## BURUNDI: Country Dossier

June 2018



**Open Doors**

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

Open Doors International / World Watch Research Unit

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# World Watch List 2018

		1. Private Life	2. Family Life	3. Community Life	4. National Life	5. Church Life	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2017	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2016	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2015	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2014
Rank	Country	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score
1	North Korea	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.6	94	92	92	92	90
2	Afghanistan	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7	10.0	93	89	88	81	78
3	Somalia	16.0	16.2	16.1	16.3	16.4	10.4	91	91	87	90	80
4	Sudan	14.2	14.5	14.3	15.6	16.0	12.0	87	87	84	80	73
5	Pakistan	14.4	13.5	13.8	15.0	13.1	16.7	86	88	87	79	77
6	Eritrea	15.2	14.5	15.8	16.1	15.2	9.4	86	82	89	79	72
7	Libya	15.2	15.3	14.2	15.7	15.5	10.4	86	78	79	76	71
8	Iraq	14.7	14.7	14.9	14.9	15.1	11.3	86	86	90	86	78
9	Yemen	16.7	16.6	16.4	16.5	16.7	2.6	85	85	78	73	74
10	Iran	14.0	14.1	14.5	15.8	16.4	10.0	85	85	83	80	77
11	India	12.6	12.7	13.2	14.7	12.9	14.4	81	73	68	62	55
12	Saudi Arabia	14.9	13.7	14.2	15.5	16.4	4.1	79	76	76	77	78
13	Maldives	15.2	15.5	13.5	15.8	16.7	1.1	78	76	76	78	77
14	Nigeria	11.8	11.5	13.1	12.1	12.1	16.5	77	78	78	78	70
15	Syria	14.4	14.3	14.1	14.5	14.7	3.7	76	86	87	83	79
16	Uzbekistan	15.5	12.1	13.0	13.1	16.0	3.5	73	71	70	69	68
17	Egypt	11.3	12.8	12.2	11.7	9.5	12.4	70	65	64	61	61
18	Vietnam	12.4	8.4	12.7	14.2	13.8	7.4	69	71	66	68	65
19	Turkmenistan	15.2	10.3	12.9	12.8	15.2	1.9	68	67	66	63	62
20	Laos	12.9	8.6	13.6	13.9	14.9	3.5	67	64	58	58	62
21	Jordan	13.2	13.3	11.5	10.9	13.0	4.3	66	63	59	56	56
22	Tajikistan	13.3	11.3	11.8	11.8	12.9	4.3	65	58	58	50	47
23	Malaysia	12.0	14.9	12.8	12.4	9.3	3.9	65	60	58	55	49
24	Myanmar	11.6	11.1	13.2	10.4	11.0	7.8	65	62	62	60	59
25	Nepal	12.6	11.9	10.7	11.5	12.4	4.6	64		(not in WWL)		
26	Brunei	14.3	14.2	10.7	10.2	13.5	0.9	64	64	61	58	57
27	Qatar	13.4	12.9	11.7	11.3	14.1	0.0	63	66	65	64	63
28	Kazakhstan	12.8	10.0	10.2	12.2	13.7	3.7	63	56	55	51	49
29	Ethiopia	9.8	10.0	10.8	10.9	10.5	10.4	62	64	67	61	65
30	Tunisia	11.9	13.2	10.6	10.7	12.0	3.9	62	61	58	55	55
31	Turkey	12.5	9.7	9.8	11.7	9.6	8.7	62	57	55	52	(not in WWL)
32	Kenya	12.0	10.9	10.0	7.9	11.7	9.4	62	68	68	63	48
33	Bhutan	11.9	11.6	12.4	11.4	13.1	1.1	62	61	56	56	54
34	Kuwait	13.4	12.6	11.6	10.9	12.3	0.4	61	57	56	49	50
35	Central African Republic	9.0	8.1	10.1	8.9	8.8	16.1	61	58	59	67	67
36	Palestinian Territories	12.1	12.8	10.7	10.5	12.6	1.1	60	64	62	58	53
37	Mali	11.4	9.6	11.2	8.1	9.2	9.6	59	59	55	52	54
38	Indonesia	10.3	11.0	11.5	10.0	9.3	6.9	59	55	55	50	46
39	Mexico	8.3	7.6	12.1	10.7	9.7	10.4	59	57	56	55	(not in WWL)
40	United Arab Emirates	13.6	12.2	10.0	10.4	11.8	0.2	58	55	55	49	51
41	Bangladesh	10.4	8.8	11.4	9.6	7.5	10.0	58	63	57	51	46
42	Algeria	12.3	13.1	7.5	10.4	12.4	2.0	58	58	56	55	54
43	China	9.2	7.2	8.0	10.7	13.3	9.1	57	57	57	57	51
44	Sri Lanka	11.1	7.6	10.5	11.3	10.1	6.9	57	55	(not in WWL)	51	55
45	Azerbaijan	13.1	9.1	9.3	11.1	12.4	2.4	57	(not in WWL)	57	50	(not in WWL)
46	Oman	12.1	12.2	9.9	9.4	12.6	1.1	57	53	53	55	56
47	Mauritania	11.5	11.3	11.1	12.2	11.0	0.0	57	55	(not in WWL)	50	51
48	Bahrain	12.9	13.1	10.2	9.9	10.3	0.2	57	54	54	(not in WWL)	48
49	Colombia	7.9	7.6	11.9	8.6	8.5	11.9	56	53	55	55	56
50	Djibouti	12.2	12.2	10.3	9.9	11.7	0.0	56	57	58	60	46

## WWL 2018 Persecution Watch Countries<sup>1</sup>

		1. Private Life	2. Family Life	3. Community Life	4. National Life	5. Church Life	6. Violence	TOTAL SCORE WWL 2018
Rank	Country	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score	Score
51	Comoros	11.7	11.5	9.1	9.4	13.9	0.4	56
52	Kyrgyzstan	11.7	9.5	10.0	8.1	11.6	2.8	54
53	Tanzania	10.1	10.3	10.1	9.5	9.0	3.9	53
54	Russian Federation	11.1	8.4	10.1	8.9	10.7	2.0	51
55	Morocco	10.4	11.5	7.6	8.8	12.0	0.6	51
56	Cuba	8.5	4.9	10.7	10.4	12.2	2.4	49
57	Uganda	10.9	8.7	9.5	8.7	4.8	3.9	46
58	Niger	9.9	9.7	9.0	7.0	7.1	2.6	45

<sup>1</sup> These countries reached a score of 41 points or more but did not receive enough points to be included in the WWL Top 50.

# BURUNDI – Country Dossier (June 2018)

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## Introduction

This country report is a collation of documents based around [Open Doors World Watch List \(WWL\)](#)<sup>1</sup> including statistical information on world religions, Christian denominations, and people groups prepared by the World Christian Database ([WCD](#))<sup>2</sup>. Further news and analysis is supplied by [World Watch Monitor](#)<sup>3</sup> and WWR staff.

BURUNDI		
World Watch List	Score	Rank
WWL 2018	No published details	-
WWL 2017	No published details	-
WWL 2016	No published details	-
WWL 2015	No published details	-
WWL 2014	No published details	-

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/countries/>

<sup>2</sup> WCD website: <http://www.brill.com/publications/online-resources/world-christian-database>

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

# WWL 2018: Keys to understanding BURUNDI

## Link for general background information:

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13085064>

## Recent country history

Since its independence from Belgium in 1962, the country has been facing an intractable conflict between the two main tribes, Hutu and Tutsi.

In 1993, there had been a glimmer of hope that the country was entering a new era following the first democratically elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye. However, the hope was dashed when the president was assassinated within months of his election. In 1994, parliament elected Cyprien Ntaryamira (also Hutu) as president of the country. He was killed along with the Rwandan president in Kigali in the same year. As the situation in the neighboring Rwanda was spinning out of control, parliament again elected another Hutu president, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya. The mainly Tutsi party, Union for National Progress (UPRONA), decided to withdraw from the government which marked the start of a period of ethnic conflict which led to the deaths of more than 300,000 people, mainly civilians. The civil war destroyed the economy of the country.

The international community tried to help Burundi during the crisis, with the UN taking over from the African Union forces in 2004. The mission ended in 2007 and the country was gradually put on track following some dialogue among different factions as well as some legal and political changes. Following the 2005 constitutional vote, which favored power-sharing constitution, Pierre Nkurunziza, the current president, was elected by both houses of the parliament. He is from the Hutu rebel Forces for Defense of Democracy (FDD). Currently, he is accused by many human rights groups for being responsible for serious human rights violations.

## The religious landscape

Burundi has a majority Christian population of 93.9%. The US State Department 2016 Religious Freedom report states: “62 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, 21.6 Protestant, 2.5 Muslim ...”.<sup>4</sup>

## The political landscape

As a country that has been through various devastating conflicts, Burundi has struggled to maintain rule of law. Even though the Constitution guarantees independence of the judiciary, the judges are not free in practice - state interference and intimidation have been common.

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<sup>4</sup> See: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, last accessed 4 March 2018.

Corruption has been one of the main problems. Rights that are constitutionally guaranteed are often restricted by subordinate laws. Opposition political parties usually face abuses. According to Reporters without Borders, Burundi is one of the top 40 countries where freedom of press is restricted in its World Press Freedom Index.

The 2015 crisis finally erupted when the president decided to run for another term. In May 2015, the Constitutional Court ruled in favor of President Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a third term. There were reports that the judges were intimidated. That was followed by protests in the country, especially in the capital city, Bujumbura. A failed coup attempt further showed how the country is divided, and at the same time showed that the country's president has staunch supporters in the army and the security apparatus that aborted the coup. The general human rights record of the country also deteriorated especially after the 2015 general and presidential elections held during the crisis.

## The socio-economic landscape

Burundi is a small landlocked country located in the Great Lakes Region, one of the most volatile regions on the African continent. Some of the opposition parties in the country were among the factions that fought in Eastern Congo. Poverty is widespread and many attempts were made to address the issue of the country's economy during the post-conflict transition. Yet, according to the World Bank: "Over the last decade, economic growth in Burundi has oscillated between 4 and 5%."<sup>5</sup> The agriculture and service sectors are the main contributors to the GDP, and 90% of the population are small-scale farmers. Industry contributes less than 20% to the GDP. The economic freedom of the country is rated as "mostly unfree" by Heritage Foundation. The general socio economic situation does not have any unique impact on Christians as all are equally affected.

## Concluding remarks

The unrest that the country faced in 2015 started during the 2010 presidential election. As the authoritarian attitude of the ruling party became visible, the opposition parties boycotted the 2010 presidential election. That meant the ruling party won the 2010 election without any contest. Following that, there were widespread unlawful detentions and death-sentences for opposition members, together with restrictions on the freedom of press and media. The international community called for an election postponement. However, the election commission allowed the elections to be conducted and the incumbent president won in the election that many boycotted. As it stands, many Burundians live in fear. The assassination of some senior government officials and the killings of protestors has put the country on the edge. There is a danger that the Church might be either caught in the crossfire or forced to be part of the conflict in various ways. This could already be seen when the Catholic Church denounced the election process of 2015. In February 2018, the UN special envoy to the country said that the country is not yet ready to hold fresh elections.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/burundi/overview>, last accessed 4 March 2018.

<sup>6</sup> See: <http://static.un.org/press/en/2018/sc13224.doc.htm>, last accessed 4 March 2018.

## WWL 2018: Church History and Facts

### How many Christians?

Pop 2017	Christians	Chr%
11,936,000	11,204,000	93.9

Source: WCD, May 2017

### How did Christians get there?

The Great Lakes Region of Africa is an area where Christian mission arrived very late on the scene. During the second half of the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church made many attempts to introduce Christianity into the deep mainland of Africa.

In 1879, the White Fathers were sent to Burundi to launch a mission but were unsuccessful when two priests were killed within the first few years. In 1899 further attempts were made following the reorganization of the country as a German colony. In 1907, German Lutherans started working in the country, but following the conclusion of the First World War, in which Germany was defeated, Burundi was made part of the Belgian protectorate by the League of Nations. All the German mission stations were closed and French missionaries took over. Danish Baptists came in 1928 and Anglicans in 1934.

### What church networks exist today? <sup>7</sup>

Orthodox	Catholic	Protestant	Independent	Unaffiliated	Double-aff	Evangelical	Renewalist
2,400	7,102,000	2,825,000	315,000	985,000	-25,400	1,799,000	1,708,000

Source: WCD, May 2017

<sup>7</sup> **Orthodox:** Eastern (Chalcedonian), Oriental (Pre-Chalcedonian, Non-Chalcedonian, Monophysite), Nestorian (Assyrian), and non-historical Orthodox. **Roman Catholics:** All Christians in communion with the Church of Rome. **Protestants:** Christians in churches originating in or in communion with the Western world's 16th-century Protestant Reformation. Includes Anglicans, Lutherans and Baptists (any of whom may be Charismatic) and denominational Pentecostals, but not Independent traditions such as Independent Baptists nor independent Charismatics. **Independents:** Believers who do not identify with the major Christian traditions (Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant). **Unaffiliated Christians:** Persons professing publicly to be Christians but who are not affiliated to churches. **Doubly-affiliated Christians:** Persons affiliated to or claimed by 2 denominations at once. **Evangelicals:** Churches, denominations, and individuals who identify themselves as evangelicals by membership in denominations linked to evangelical alliances (e.g., World Evangelical Alliance) or by self-identification in polls. **Renewalists:** Church members involved in Pentecostal/Charismatic renewal movements.

## Religious context (selection)

Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Ethno-religionist	Jewish	Bahai	Atheist & others <sup>8</sup>
11,204,000	245,000	9,300	0	462,000	0	9,000	6,680

Source: WCD, May 2017

## Notes on the current situation

One of the main challenges that Christians face in the country is that the government is very hostile towards any group that does not support it.

## WWL 2018: Short & Simple Persecution Profile

Reporting period: 1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017

### Where persecution comes from

Christians are under pressure to support the government. During the 2015 crisis<sup>9</sup>, the Roman Catholic Church was at odds with the president and some Protestant pastors were also under pressure not to criticize any government action they observed in the country. There is also an attempt to limit Christian denominations in the country. A country expert reports: “The government offers moral education classes based on the two main Christian denominations in the country, Catholics and Protestants. Although students have the right to select freely from the two subjects it does not allow them to learn classes based on other Christian denominations. It also implies that the government is attempting to impose the two denominations on the education system. This is contrary to the principles of secularism.” The government wants to have all churches supporting its agenda.

### How Christians are suffering

Christians have to make sure that they do not say things that criticize the government. The state law also imposes many restrictions, for example, it does not give churches tax exemption.

### Examples

Minority Christian groups face hinderances in preaching, teaching and publishing materials. Even though it is difficult give an exact number, it has been reported that some Christians were forced to leave the country due to pressure from the government.

<sup>8</sup> This category includes Atheists, Agnostics and New religionists.

<sup>9</sup> See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35087894>, last accessed 27 February 2018.

# WWL 2018: Persecution Dynamics

Reporting period: 1 November 2016 - 31 October 2017

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## Position on World Watch List (WWL)

Score and rank are not available for publication. The crisis that came to a head in 2015 has created unfavorable conditions for Christians.

## Persecution engines

Persecution engines in Burundi <sup>10</sup>	Level of influence
Islamic oppression	Not at all
Religious nationalism	Not at all
Ethnic antagonism	Weak
Denominational protectionism	Weak
Communist and post-Communist oppression	Not at all
Secular intolerance	Not at all
Dictatorial paranoia	Medium
Organized corruption and crime	Not at all

### **Dictatorial paranoia (Medium):**

The government restricts citizens' freedom in many ways. As a country that has been through various devastating conflicts, Burundi has struggled to maintain rule of law. Even though the Constitution guarantees independence of the judiciary, the judges are not free in practice and state interference and intimidation have been common. Corruption has also been one of the

<sup>10</sup> The scale for the level of influence of Persecution engines and Drivers in society is: Not at all / Very weak / Weak / Medium / Strong / Very strong.



main problems. Rights that are constitutionally guaranteed are often restricted by subordinate laws. Opposition political parties have been facing serious abuses of their rights. According to Reporters without Borders in its World Press Freedom Index, Burundi is one of the top 40 countries where freedom of press is restricted. The general human rights record of the country is also deteriorating, especially after the 2015 general and presidential elections which held during the crisis. Christians are being pressured into supporting the government.

## Drivers of persecution

Drivers of persecution in Burundi	Level of influence
Government officials at any level from local to national	Medium
Ethnic group leaders	Very weak
Non-Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national	Not at all
Christian religious leaders at any level from local to national	Weak
Violent religious groups	Not at all
Ideological pressure groups	Not at all
Normal citizens (people from the general public), including mobs	Very weak
Own (extended) family	Very weak
Political parties at any level from local to national	Medium
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups	Not at all
Organized crime cartels or networks	Not at all
Multilateral organizations (e.g. UN) and embassies	Not at all

The persecution of Christians in Burundi is mainly driven by government officials. To a lesser extent, there are also some church leaders putting pressure on smaller churches (mainly the non-traditional ones). In the case of converts, families also participate, but the level of pressure there is low.

## Context

As a country that has been plagued by ethnic violence since independence in 1962, Burundi has struggled to maintain rule of law. The unrest that the country has been facing since 2015 mainly started during the 2010 presidential election. Human rights groups and analysts could see that the ruling party was putting the country in a wrong direction in terms of citizen participation, space for civil society and rule of law. As the authoritarian attitude of the ruling party became increasingly apparent, the opposition parties boycotted the 2010 presidential election. That meant the ruling party won the 2010 election without any contest. Following that, unlawful detentions, killings of opposition members, sentencing opposition members to death, and restrictions on freedom of the press and the media became commonplace.

Protests followed, especially in the capital city, Bujumbura. A failed coup attempt in May 2015 further showed how the country is divided, and at the same time showed that the country's president has staunch supporters in the army and the security apparatus that aborted the coup. There have been responses to the challenges. Despite warnings from the international community, the election commission allowed the elections to be conducted and the

incumbent president won the 2015 election that many boycotted. As things stand, many Burundians live in fear. The assassinations of some of senior government officials and the killings of protestors put the country on the edge. This means the Church might be either caught in the crossfire or forced to be part of the conflict at various levels. This was already seen when the Catholic Church denounced the election process of 2015. In 2017, UN investigators found that crimes against humanity had been committed in the country and that the leaders of the country were responsible.<sup>11</sup>

There are various religious groups in the country, but at present it is difficult to know the levels of persecution they may be facing.

## Christian communities and how they are affected

### **Communities of expatriate Christians:**

Expatriate Christians in the country are not regarded as a separate WWL-category.

### **Historical Christian Communities:**

This group, which includes the Roman Catholic Church, faces persecution especially due to the fact that some of its leaders are outspoken in opposing the actions of the government.

### **Communities of converts to Christianity:**

The converts in this group are mainly “cross-denominational” converts. They face challenges from the churches to which they originally belonged and from the government.

### **Non-traditional Christian communities:**

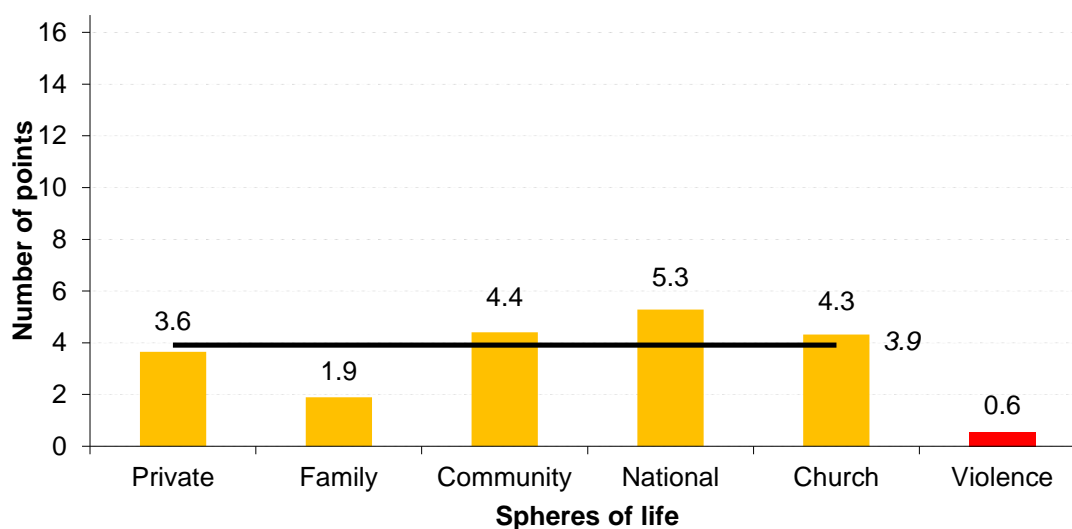
The Christian groups in this category are known for fearless preaching and standing up for Christian values. This often puts them on collision course with the government.

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<sup>11</sup> See: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41147688>, last accessed 5 March 2018.

## Pressure in the 5 spheres of life and violence

### WWL 2018 Persecution Pattern for Burundi



(Maximum score per block is 16.7)

The WWL 2018 Persecution pattern for Burundi shows:

- The average pressure on Christians is 3.9 points.
- Pressure is strongest in *National sphere* (5.3), a clear indication that the main source of persecution is the government.
- Despite the fact that violence has become common in the country since 2015, the score for violent incidents targeting Christians for their faith in the WWL 2018 reporting period is 0.6. In the context of Burundi it is difficult to distinguish between faith-based and political violence.

#### Private sphere:

“Cross-denominational converts” can experience difficulties if discovered praying or reading the Bible in their homes.

#### Family sphere:

In a family (or community) dominated by Roman Catholics, “cross-denominational” converts to non-traditional Christian churches may face problems when it comes to weddings and raising children.

**Community sphere:** The current political climate has led to a situation whereby some Christians are being targeted for not supporting the government.

#### National sphere:

The government puts pressure on churches to speak publicly to support it. A country researcher noted: “There are several types of discrimination on all Christians who are not vocal in supporting the government. The new Christian denominations also face this while they are engaging with the authorities.”

**Church sphere:**

The law does not give tax exemption to churches unless they agree to participate in government infrastructure building. Secondly, government security agents monitor churches to identify who are supporting and who are opposing the government.

**Violence:**

There were a number of Christians who fled the country due to persecution in the WWL 2018 reporting period.

## Gender profile of persecution

**Female / Male:** No data currently available.

## Future outlook

The president has maintained his grip on power. The country is under pressure to hold elections, but the UN Special envoy to the country has said that the country is not yet ready due to the political tension.<sup>12</sup> As it stands, a likely scenario is:

- If the country holds elections amid the current political tension, more chaos would ensue, which would almost certainly put many churches and Christians at risk.
- Political violence is likely to continue.

## Policy considerations

Burundi has been in a deep political crisis since 2015. Unless critical steps are now taken, the country might descend into a civil war. Open Doors suggests the following recommendations:

- The international community must find a way of assisting Burundi in solving the political crisis.
- The international community should urge a reconciliation process to begin in the country as soon as possible in order to overcome the political impasse.

## WWR in-depth reports

In-depth reports are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/reports/> (password: freedom).

- [Burundi – Country Brief – 2015](#)  
July 2015  
6-page report on the current unrest surrounding President's Nkurunziza's decision to stand for a third term and failed coup in 2015.

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/02/1003622>, last accessed 5 March 2018.

## Open Doors articles from the region

There are currently no Open Doors articles on Angola available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/articles/> (password freedom).

## World Watch Monitor news articles

At the time of publishing, there were no WWM news articles on Burundi available. Any recent updates will be found at: <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/>

## Recent country developments

Up-to-date items are available at: <http://opendoorsanalytical.org/?s=Angola> (password: freedom).

- [Burundi: Referendum result could trigger fresh waves of violence](#)  
28 May 2018  
According to Reuters reporting on 21 May 2018, voters in Burundi have approved a new constitution extending the presidential term limit. Just days before voting, 26 villagers were brutally killed when an armed group crossed from the Democratic Republic of Congo to cause added disruption.

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