

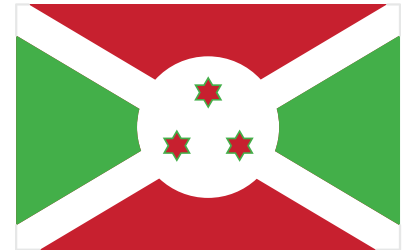
RELEASE DATE
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ELECTORAL VULNERABILITY INDEX 2026-2027

COUNTRY ANALYSIS

BURUNDI

EVI RISK INDEX: 84.6 | PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF ANY ELECTORAL VIOLENCE: 98.4%
REGIONAL RISK INDEX BASELINE (SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, EXCL. COUNTRY): 51.1



GENERAL ELECTIONS: EXPECTED IN 2027

BACKGROUND

Burundi remains one of the highest-risk electoral environments in sub-Saharan Africa. The 2026-2027 EVI Risk Index of 84.6 reflects repeated severe electoral violence, a highly dominant ruling party, weak institutional checks, and a political environment in which opposition space has narrowed significantly. Since the end of the civil war, elections have been central to Burundi's post-conflict settlement, but they have also repeatedly served as moments of intimidation, displacement and confrontation.

The ruling CNDD-FDD has dominated national politics since 2005. President Évariste Ndayishimiye, who succeeded Pierre Nkurunziza in 2020, initially signaled a less confrontational style, but core structures of ruling-party control have remained.

Human rights organizations have repeatedly identified the Imbonerakure youth league as a source of intimidation, harassment and coercive mobilization, while the security apparatus remains closely tied to the ruling system.

The EVI model is driven by a four-election streak of severe electoral violence, high government intimidation, a lack of autonomy for the electoral management body, and extremely weak rule-of-law indicators.

The June 2025 legislative and communal elections reinforced concerns about the competitiveness of the political environment.

Public reporting and electoral data indicated an overwhelming CNDD-FDD victory, with the ruling party taking more than 96 percent of the vote, leaving no meaningful parliamentary counterweight. The CNL, which had been the main opposition force, entered the cycle weakened by leadership disputes, administrative decisions and internal fragmentation. Economic stress adds to vulnerability. Burundi faces fuel shortages, inflation, foreign exchange constraints and pressure on household livelihoods.

These grievances may not translate automatically into organized opposition. Still, they can increase the volatility of campaign periods, especially if state or ruling-party structures seek to mobilize or discipline communities through coercion.

The regional context is also relevant. Tensions in the Great Lakes region, including insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and sensitive relations with Rwanda, can affect elite narratives, security deployments and suspicion toward domestic opponents. Election-related conflict could therefore intersect with cross-border security concerns.

UPCOMING ELECTIONS

Presidential elections are expected in 2027. The contest will be a test of whether Burundi can move beyond the patterns that marked 2015, 2020 and the 2025 legislative cycle. The president is elected for a seven-year term under a two-round system. Still, the effective competitiveness of the election will depend less on formal rules than on candidate access, party registration, media space, security behavior and the ability of voters to campaign freely.

The main political question concerns the CNDD-FDD's internal selection process and President Ndayishimiye's position. Any visible split inside the ruling party could be destabilizing, particularly if factions mobilize youth networks or local administrators. Conversely, a tightly controlled nomination may reduce elite uncertainty but increase opposition and civic perceptions that the election has been settled before voting begins.

Opposition participation remains uncertain. The CNL's weakening has left opposition forces fragmented, while smaller parties may struggle to campaign independently. If credible opposition figures are excluded, coerced or prevented from organizing, the election may reproduce a low-competition model marked by high intimidation rather than open contestation. Human rights reporting in previous cycles, including allegations involving local administrators, security actors, and the Imbonerakure youth league, underscores the importance of monitoring for coercion well before the formal campaign begins.

The electoral commission's perceived independence will be central. Voter registration, polling-station access, accreditation of observers, security presence around polling stations and the publication of results should be monitored closely. The period before candidate registration and the weeks following results may be more sensitive than election day itself, because intimidation and reprisals often occur outside the formal polling window.

The management of returning refugees and politically active diaspora communities may also affect the process. If exiled opponents are unable to participate safely or if returnees are subject to administrative pressure, the election could reinforce patterns of exclusion that extend beyond the formal campaign period.

POTENTIAL DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

According to the Electoral Vulnerability Index (EVI), these are the factors that contribute most to the increased potential for violence:

Ruling-party coercion and youth mobilization: The Imbonerakure and local administrative structures could become instruments of pressure on voters, opposition activists and civil society. Allegations of harassment, surveillance, forced mobilization or intimidation related to registration and campaigning would be early warning signals. Risk is highest during voter registration, campaign rallies and post-result enforcement of loyalty.

Opposition exclusion: If opposition parties are prevented from organizing or if leadership disputes are manipulated administratively, frustration may build without a legal outlet. This can increase the likelihood of protests, localized clashes or the flight of activists into exile.

POTENTIAL DRIVERS OF CONFLICT, CONT.

Economic grievances: Shortages, inflation and declining living standards could interact with electoral mobilization. Communities dependent on local officials for access to services or resources may be particularly vulnerable to coercion.

Regional security narratives: The government may frame domestic dissent through a security lens, linking it to external enemies or regional instability. Such narratives can justify repression and reduce space for mediation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTORAL REFORM AND ADMINISTRATION

- The electoral commission should provide clear, public information on voter registration, candidate nomination, observer accreditation and results transmission. Transparent procedures would not eliminate structural mistrust but could reduce immediate triggers for rumor and confrontation.

NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

- Civil society organizations and journalists should be supported to document intimidation, provide civic education and promote nonviolent participation. Protection mechanisms are needed for local monitors, especially outside Bujumbura and Gitega, and documentation should distinguish clearly between official security conduct, local administrative pressure and ruling-party youth mobilization.

SECURITY ACTORS

- Security forces and local administrators should receive clear instructions prohibiting partisan activity, intimidation and interference with campaigning. Accountability for abuses by youth groups or local officials is essential to reduce impunity.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- Regional and international partners should engage early with government and opposition actors on minimum conditions for participation. Preventive diplomacy should focus on candidate access, youth-group restraint, and safe channels for complaints before grievances escalate.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Independent National Electoral Commission of Burundi; Constitution of Burundi; African Union election observation materials; UN human rights reporting; Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International; Burundi Human Rights Initiative; International Crisis Group; V-Dem country data; Deutsche Welle; Reuters; Associated Press.