

KEY POINT SUMMARY

I. Main theme: The peace process in Burundi is technically over, but 2010 elections will test stability.

II. Background: • Palipehutu-FNL was the last rebel party to negotiate with the CNDD-FDD, the then newly elected ruling party of Burundi.

- CNDD-FDD made peace a priority and talks began in 2006. However, such talks remained complex and protracted until the 2008 invasion of Burundi by Palipehutu-FNL. Following this, the rebels were expelled from Tanzania and returned to Burundi where they signed a cessation of hostilities.
- The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process was first marred due to distrust between the ruling party and Palipehutu-FNL.
- DDR eventually fell under the wings of a multi-pronged approach with all major partners participating (GoB, FNL, South Africa, and UN, among others); this consensual approach greatly speeded up the process. The DDR program was completed in 2009.
- The author notes an important lesson from the peace process: over-emphasis on FNL integration might have sidelined important steps towards building intra-party democracy in Burundi as a whole.

III. Electoral Issues: • Internal FNL struggles have intensified since 2009. The author notes that the lack of strong leadership in a political party is not favourable in the democratization process.

- The establishment of a Permanent National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) by CNDD-FDD without the consultation of opposition parties on CENI's leading members created tension. While the ruling party agreed to consultations on this issue in March 2009, it highlighted increasing concerns over elections.
- The ruling party initially did not invite external observers/organizers for coming elections which made it seem as if they were trying to retain control over the electoral process. CNDD-FDD eventually asked the UN to assist.
- There was a long debate over the electoral process itself. When it was finally agreed upon, the code was seen as favouring the CNDD-FDD. For example, it was determined that presidential candidates had to deposit \$12,000 in order to run.
- Parties have also begun negotiations over potential coalitions. The ruling party dreads a Hutu-party coalition whereas the Tutsi parties are vying for vice-presidency.

IV. Signs of unrest: • 200 civil society organizations (CSOs) released a statement on intimidation of their members in 2008.

- The Minister of the Interior, headed by a ruling party member, imposed new and more restrictive terms for freedom of assembly. They were later reversed.
- A leaked EU document shows that the EU anticipates unfair and even chaotic elections.
- Between June 2008 and April 2009, Human Rights Watch reported the arrests of over a hundred opposition party representatives.
- Possible militarization of youth parties is a big issue, particularly as some may be receiving basic military training.
- Political parties continue to believe that armed groups and voter intimidation is necessary to have a chance at winning elections.
- Burundian society in general is still highly armed; civilians are unlikely to agree to further disarmament until after elections.
- Tensions between FNL and CNDD-FD need to be addressed. The ruling party sees FNL as an electoral threat.
- Elections are in a region where other elections will be taking place over two years in several countries.

V. Action Points: • Establish facts about militarization of youth parties as rumour mongering is a threat.

- All political parties must be made aware of the need to avoid using violence during the elections.
- There is a need to build public trust and mediation capacities, particularly in urban areas where there are a large number of ex-combatants.

- The elections should be seen as an opportunity for the African Union, and South Africa in particular, to continue in their role as peacemakers.