

Burundi

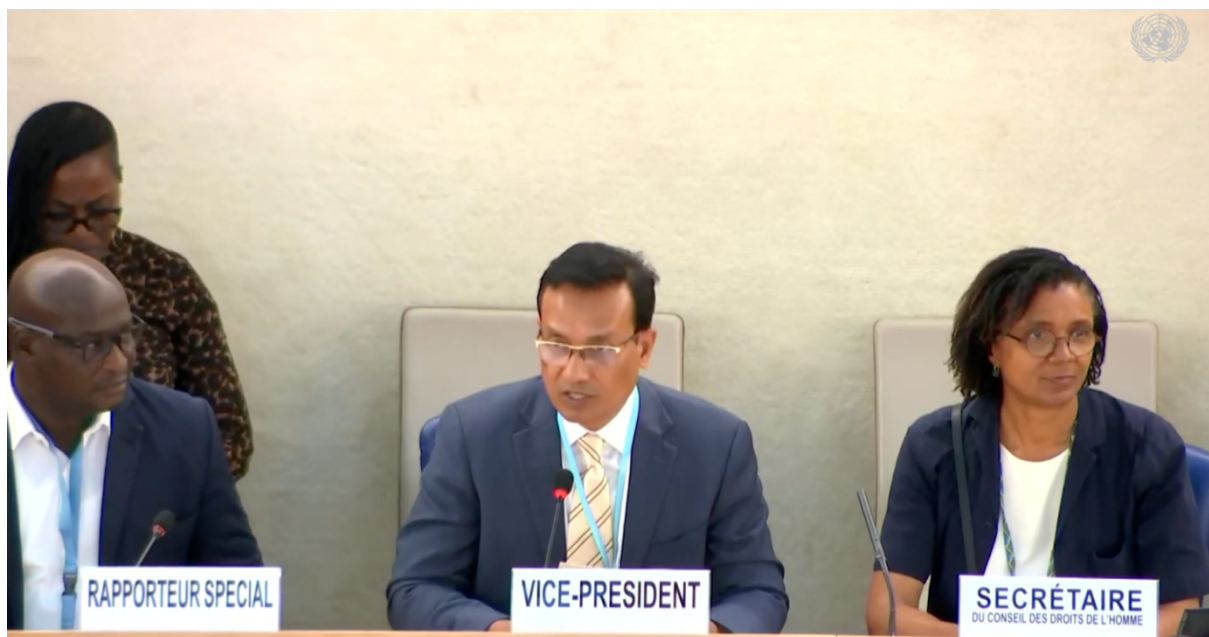
Burundi's Human Rights Crisis: 10 Years After the 2015 Crisis

By Teboho Mosebo / GICJ

Background

The Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) participated in the 18th meeting, on 27 June 2025, of the 59th session Human Rights Council, that covered the Interactive dialogue on the oral update of the Special Rapporteur on Burundi. This pivotal discussion sought to present the current human rights crisis in Burundi 10 years after the beginning of the crisis. In 2015, Burundi faced a severe political crisis triggered by the late President Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial third term, which led to the brutal repression, targeted killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and sexual violence of civilians.

Introduction



The Special Rapporteur opened his update by interrogating the country's situation 10 years after the 2015 crisis, highlighting concerns about the independence and impartiality of the judicial system, abusive land practices, and restrictions on civic space. The recent June 2025 elections, although conducted peacefully, were criticised for irregularities. During the dialogue, views on Burundi were varied, with some delegates criticizing the country for its human rights

record, while others commended Burundi for its efforts and progress. Some delegates also expressed concerns about the spread of inaccurate information about Burundi.

Here are some of the key concerns discussed that persist in Burundi:

Extrajudicial Killings and Impunity

Extrajudicial killings remain a major concern in Burundi. Continued impunity after the 2015 crisis has emboldened authorities to continue these killings with little consequence. This has led to unhealed wounds from trauma and undermined trust in national and regional institutions, due to the failure to ensure justice for victims. According to insights from **Tigere Chagutah**, Regional Director for East and Southern Africa at Amnesty International, failure to bring justice to victims has had lasting impacts. Clearly, this issue persists, with recent incidents underscoring the need for accountability and justice.

Enforced Disappearances

Enforced disappearances are a critical concern in Burundi. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have documented numerous cases which contribute to a culture of fear. The Forum for Consciousness and Development, a Burundian NGO, reported 34 cases in 2024, with 24 cases still unaccounted for. Over 400,000 Burundians have fled the country since the 2015 crisis, primarily to Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The International Criminal Court records from 2023 to March 2025 show 65 enforced disappearances, 137 arbitrary detentions, 28 torture cases, and 11 extrajudicial killings. Enforced disappearances require urgent attention and action.

Shrinking Civic Space

The civic space in Burundi continues to face serious challenges. According to CIVICUS Global Alliance's statement, serious human rights violations and abuses continue in Burundi with impunity. The law on foreign NGOs restricts Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and activists face arbitrary arrests, detentions, threats, and attacks. There is an upsurge in violence against journalists, including Willy Kwizera, who was

kidnapped for reporting on the living conditions of students, and Ahmed Masudi Mugiraneza, who was arrested but later released. This trend is particularly concerning in the run-up to local elections. CIVICUS Global Alliance and independent Burundian CSOs urged the Government of Burundi to provide space for citizens to enjoy human rights and cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. They also emphasised the need for the government to grant the Special Rapporteur access to the country.

Judicial Independence

Burundi's judiciary faces significant challenges to its independence. The judiciary is susceptible to political influence in appointments and decisions, undermining the separation of powers. Corruption is a persistent issue, hindering access to justice. Restrictions on the judiciary's ability to operate independently exist. International bodies, including the UN and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, have expressed concerns and called for judicial reforms and promotion of a more independent judiciary. All these challenges impact the rule of law and human rights in Burundi.

Conclusion

Other key human rights concerns in Burundi that require urgent attention include women's rights against injustice, the state of governance, the lack of political competition, and unsustainable land reforms. The GICJ urges the Government of Burundi to take immediate action to address these concerns to ensure accountability, protection of human rights defenders, and promote judicial reforms. The HRC59 was a crucial opportunity to shed light on the silent human rights crisis in Burundi. To move forward, we recommend:

- **Government Accountability:** The Government of Burundi must ensure accountability for human rights violations and promote judicial reforms

-**International Cooperation:** The scrutiny from the international community against Burundi's human rights crisis and provide support to civil society and human rights defenders should continue.

It's time for stakeholders to come together to promote human rights, justice, and equality for all in Burundi

[Click here to read the full discussion report on Burundi.](#)

Kenya:

Life after the Finance Bill 2024 proposal: The continued struggle of freedom of expression and assembly in Kenya

It has been over one year since the people of Kenya took to the streets to protest the Finance Bill and over one year since the president of Kenya, William Ruto, openly proclaimed Kenyan citizens as traitors of the country. On June 18, 2024, the government of Kenya conveyed to the world that freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are merely concepts and not a reality in the Nation of Kenya.

The Finance Bill 2024 proposed a significantly large increase in taxes such as a 16% tax on bread, increased tax on support for cancer patients and increase tax on sanitary towels and products. Additionally, the bill proposed a tax on the income from digital content and a 16% tax on financial services. This follows the ongoing financial crisis in the country which has burdened the country especially as Kenya has a large population living below the poverty line and had already struggled to make ends meet. The overall aim of the bill was to increase national revenue in which a record breaking 302 billion Kenya Shillings was proposed during this year.

As a result of the proposal of the finance bill, the Kenyan youth took to the streets to exercise their right to assembly and peacefully protest this bill. These protests were met with brutal retaliation from the police such as beating of protesters, disposition of teargas on the crowds, shooting at protesters directions and much more. This resulted in the loss of over 18 lives and the abduction of at least 15 people in the month of June alone.

Following the 2024 protests, there continues to be enforced disappearances, extra judicial killings especially during protests.



Freedom of Press and freedom of expression

Freedom of the expression is a fundamental human right that should be extended to all journalists and reporters in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). However, this is not the reality of the current situation in Kenya. Many cases of citizens forcibly disappeared for simply expressing their opinions have been reported, with one of the most prominent cases of 2025 being that of Albert Ojwang. A teacher from Homa Bay who was murdered for merely speaking out on the socio-political issues in Kenya. He was transported 350km from his hometown to Nairobi and upon arrival, he was found dead with police citing the death because of self-inflicted wounds, but an autopsy later revealed the wounds were consisted with torture.

Over the period of a year, Kenya has had a series of protests concerning different issues such as the concern over the abductions and extrajudicial killings by the police. The saba saba (7/7) protests being the most notable. These protests, inspired by the pro-democracy protests held in 1960, championed the same ideology of freedom such as they pushed for freedom of expression.

Although the protest presented various challenges, the government responded in its usual manner: deploying the police on the protesters, using tear gas and police beating protesters in the streets. However, the situation escalated further, firstly when the police revealed they had orders to shoot protesters “in the leg” and additionally when they ordered a complete media blackout.

These examples present the reality of the situation in Kenya showing that freedom of the press and expression remain on paper but is not a reality for the citizens of Kenya.

Freedom of Assembly

Freedom of assembly and of association are also a human right under article 20 of the UDHR stating that everyone has the right to peacefully assemble. Furthermore, these rights are guaranteed in the Kenyan constitution. However, although ratified through the law, these freedoms remain merely words with the rights not fully extended to citizens of the country. The exercising of this right has often been met with the use of excessive force by the police which

often results in the death of civilians. As previously highlighted, the Finance Bill sparked mass protests across the country which resulted in the death of multiples people.

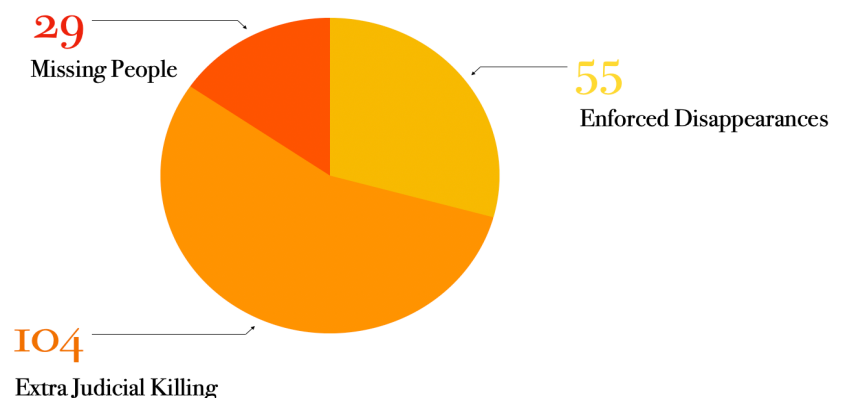
Civil societies are working to establish this reality by helping advocate for the families of those who have lost their lives at the hands of the government and aiding in helping police officers being held accountable for their actions.

Conclusion

The Kenyan government continues to struggle with enforcement of human rights law and thus it is up to civil society to continue to advocate and amplify the voices of the people of Kenya. Currently, different NGO's and citizens of Kenya have worked together not only to raise awareness but to help families gain justice by compiling the name of people who have faced injustice in the arms of the Kenyan police.

As such, here are the current data published on the crimes committed:

Recorded data of the various violations in Kenya since 2024



Geneva International Centre

for Justice condemns all extrajudicial killings, summary executions and enforced disappearances conducted by the Kenyan government and urges for the immediate release of all persons held in violation of their right to due process. Furthermore, we urged for the Kenyan government to uphold the principles of the UDHR by ensuring that Kenyans can fully exercise their rights such as their right to assembly.

GICJ Observations on Human Rights Crises in Eritrea and Sudan at the 59th Human Rights Council Session

By Patricia Jjuuko/GICJ

During the 59th regular session of the Human Rights Council, **Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)** closely followed key discussions and updates concerning critical human rights situations, worldwide. Particular attention was given to the deteriorating situations in Eritrea and Sudan, where grave and persistent violations continue to draw concern from the international community. GICJ remains committed to supporting mechanisms that aim to protect human rights, hold perpetrators accountable, and give a voice to victims who have long suffered in silence.

Eritrea: HRC 59

A focal point of GICJ's attention during this session was the oral update presented by Mr. Mohamed Abdelsalam Babiker, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea. GICJ attended this presentation and reviewed the findings with great



concern. Eritrea has been embroiled in systemic repression and authoritarian rule since achieving independence from Ethiopia in 1993, following a brutal 30-year armed struggle. The subsequent border war with Ethiopia, which erupted in 1998, intensified the already militarized nature of Eritrean society. Under the regime of President Isaias Afwerki and the ruling party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the country has experienced decades of widespread political repression and human rights violations.

Mr. Babiker's oral update painted a grim picture of the human rights landscape in Eritrea. The Special Rapporteur emphasized the government's continued use of national service as a tool of control, noting that Eritrean citizens are subjected to indefinite military service, often beginning in their teenage years. This practice has been consistently condemned as a form of forced labor and modern-day slavery. The militarization extends into the education system, where high

school students are required to undergo military training as a prerequisite for graduation, thereby normalizing military indoctrination at a young age.

The Special Rapporteur also highlighted severe restrictions on freedom of religion, expression, and assembly. Religious minorities, journalists, and political dissidents face arbitrary arrests, harassment, and prolonged detention without due process. Many detainees are held incommunicado in secret detention centers, under inhumane and degrading conditions, with no access to legal representation or family contact. These practices violate numerous international human rights norms, including those enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Eritrea is a party.

Another major concern raised was the humanitarian crisis resulting from these abuses. Eritrea continues to suffer from mass emigration, with over 18% of its population reportedly having fled the country. Many of these individuals undertake perilous journeys across borders, often falling victim to human trafficking, abuse, or exploitation. The ongoing exodus is a direct consequence of the Eritrean government's repressive policies, lack of economic opportunities, and systematic violation of civil liberties.

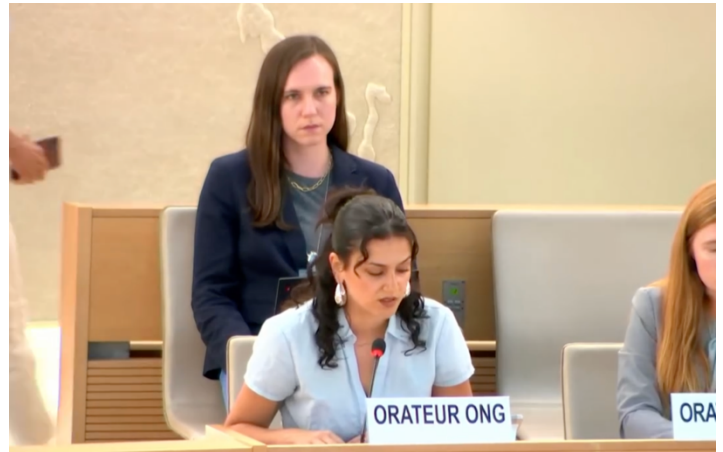
GICJ strongly supports the continued mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea and commends his unwavering efforts to document and expose human rights abuses in the country. The organization fully aligns with his call for robust international action to hold the Eritrean government accountable. GICJ urges the UN Human Rights Council and the wider international community to adopt a more assertive stance, including the application of targeted sanctions against those responsible for abuses, and to increase pressure on Eritrea to undertake meaningful reforms.

Furthermore, GICJ emphasizes the urgent need for mechanisms to support victims, facilitate access to justice, and provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum seekers fleeing Eritrea. Ensuring accountability and justice is crucial to breaking the cycle of impunity and restoring hope for the Eritrean people.

[Click Here for GICJ Discussion Report on Eritrea](#)

Sudan

Geneva International Centre for Justice also closely monitored the oral update delivered by the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan (FFM Sudan) during the 59th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Additionally, one of our interns, Stefania Plougarli, delivered a joint statement on the genocidal violence taking place. The



Mission was established pursuant to Resolution 54/2, in direct response to the outbreak of conflict in Sudan on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). As the war now enters its third year, it has evolved into one of the most severe humanitarian and human rights crises in the world today.

The update delivered by all three members of the Fact-Finding Mission, Mr. Mohamed Chande Othman (Chair), Ms. Mona Rishmwawi, and Ms. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo noted that Sudan is currently facing a catastrophic situation that has reached unimaginable levels of suffering for the civilian population. Over 25 million people, more than half the total population now require urgent humanitarian assistance, while more than 10 million have been forcibly displaced from their homes. This displacement crisis is currently the largest of its kind in the world, underscoring the gravity of the situation and the need for immediate and coordinated international action.

The Mission's oral update revealed deeply disturbing findings. Investigators have documented a growing pattern of mass atrocities, which include extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate aerial bombardments, ethnically targeted attacks, and widespread incidents of conflict-related sexual violence. There have also been credible reports of the forced recruitment and use of child soldiers by both parties to the conflict, in clear violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. Such actions not only constitute war crimes but also threaten the long-term recovery and social cohesion of Sudanese society.

One of the most troubling aspects highlighted by the Fact-Finding Mission is the weaponization of humanitarian aid. The deliberate obstruction of food, water, and medical assistance is being used as a method of warfare, particularly in regions where access to basic supplies is already critically limited. This strategy has resulted in worsening famine conditions, with reports of child malnutrition and starvation-related deaths becoming increasingly common. In some areas, entire communities are on the brink of collapse due to the inability of humanitarian actors to reach those in need. The systematic denial of aid represents a blatant violation of international law and further compounds the suffering of innocent civilians.

About the GICJ Africa Group

The Africa group at the Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) is a coalition dedicated to advocating for human rights, justice, and peace across the African continent and for people of African descent. Operating within the framework of GICJ, the group provides expert analysis and policy recommendations to international bodies, governments, and civil society organisations.

Through research, advocacy, and engagement with the United Nations mechanisms, the GICJ Africa Group works to amplify African voices in global discussions on peace, security, and development.

The Africa Group, is actively engaged in addressing the ongoing issues of racism, racial discrimination, and slavery, with a strong focus on supporting the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Recognising the deep historical and structural roots of racial injustice, the team works to expose contemporary forms of discrimination, advocate for reparative justice, and amplify the voices of affected community. The Africa team continues to push for accountability, equality, and the dismantling of systemic racism in line with the principles of the Durban Declaration & Programme of Action (DPPA)

Despite claims by the Sudanese government that more than 120,000 legal cases have been reviewed and over 1,000 verdicts issued, the Fact-Finding Mission has emphasized that impunity remains deeply entrenched. Victims and survivors of atrocities are often denied access to justice, while perpetrators, particularly those with ties to armed groups or political elites continue to operate without fear of accountability. The absence of a functional judicial system, combined with the breakdown of state institutions and the ongoing conflict, has created an environment in which human rights abuses can be committed with near-total impunity.

GICJ fully supports the work of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan and commends its ongoing efforts to document violations, raise international awareness, and advocate for justice and accountability. GICJ stresses that any response to the crisis in Sudan must prioritize the rights and dignity of victims, and place justice, truth, and reparations at the center of all international efforts.

To this end, GICJ urges the international community to take concrete steps to enforce arms embargoes, ensure unimpeded humanitarian access, and establish mechanisms for holding those responsible for atrocities accountable under international law. The protection of civilians must remain a priority, and all actors involved in the conflict must be reminded that violations of international humanitarian law carry consequences. The situation in Sudan demands urgent and sustained attention from the global community. The human cost of this conflict is staggering, and without decisive international intervention, the crisis will continue to deepen. GICJ reiterates its call for coordinated multilateral action to bring an end to the suffering, restore the rule of law, and help Sudan embark on a path toward peace, justice, and long-term stability.

[Click Here for GICJ Oral Statement on Sudan](#)

Angola: A Nation in Transition

by Skye Visser/ GICJ

Background

Angola, has recently come under the spotlight during the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sessions due to ongoing concerns surrounding human rights and democratic freedoms.. However, like many post-conflict societies, it continues to grapple with complex challenges related to governance, institutional reform, and social equity.



Over the past two decades, Angola has undertaken a significant journey of reconstruction and development. Under the leadership of President João Lourenço, the government has expressed a strong commitment to fighting corruption and strengthening public institutions. Notably, Angola has shown a willingness to engage with international human rights mechanisms, particularly through its participation in the UPR process. While these efforts are

commendable and signal a commitment to reform, recent developments have raised questions about the pace and consistency of progress.

Civil society organizations, including the Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ), encourage the government to deepen its efforts to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms are fully respected and protected across the country.

Human Rights Concerns in Angola

In September 2023, four activists were arrested ahead of a planned protest regarding restrictions on motorcycle taxi drivers. They were charged with “disobedience and resisting orders” and sentenced to two years and five months in prison. Reports from Amnesty International suggest that the activists have faced difficulties accessing medical treatment while in detention, and in some cases, their health has significantly deteriorated. For example, Adolfo Campos, a social media figure living with HIV, was reportedly denied essential medication, leading to a serious decline in his condition.

The management of protests by security forces has also been a subject of international attention. In June 2023, during demonstrations in the city of Huambo over fuel subsidy reforms, law enforcement authorities reportedly used live ammunition, resulting in the deaths of several individuals, including both protesters and bystanders. While the government has taken steps in the past to reform the security sector, incidents like these demonstrate the need for continued efforts to promote restraint, accountability, and dialogue in the handling of public demonstrations.

Another area that continues to require attention is the treatment of migrants. Angola has a significant migrant population, including many individuals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some of these migrants, particularly women, are reported to have faced exploitation and harsh working conditions, especially in informal mining sectors. Angola has acknowledged recommendations to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. While the government has expressed openness to this idea, a firm commitment to ratification would signal a strong step forward in protecting vulnerable populations.

Encouraging Signs of Progress

At the 59th session of the Human Rights Council on 1 July 2025, Skye Visser delivered a compelling statement on Angola's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on behalf of the Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) and the Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration. She welcomed Angola's constructive engagement with the UPR process and acknowledged several positive developments, including the decriminalization of same-sex relationships and improved representation of women in public life. These steps reflect Angola's broader efforts to strengthen its human rights framework. Visser also highlighted promising legal reforms currently underway, such as the ongoing review of the Family Code, a key legal instrument that regulates issues like marriage.

However, she noted that Angola has not yet committed to a full ban on exceptions for underage marriage, an important measure for protecting the rights of girls and securing the well-being of future generations. In addition, Visser reiterated the importance of ratifying the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. While the government has expressed openness to this step, its ratification remains pending.

Recommendations for the Future

The Geneva International Centre for Justice encourages Angola to continue building on the progress it has made. This includes taking firm action on recommendations that have already been acknowledged by the government. Ratifying the conventions on migrant rights and enforced disappearances would be two meaningful steps that reflect Angola's growing leadership on human rights issues in the region. In parallel, ensuring that the rights to freedom of assembly and expression are protected in law and in practice will reinforce Angola's image as a nation committed to inclusive development and good governance.

As Angola moves forward, the international community remains supportive of its efforts, while also hopeful that further progress will be made.

[Click Here for GICJ Oral Statement on Angola UPR](#)

Summary of the Oral update with the Independent Expert on the Central African Republic

By Mildred Asiimwe

The 59th Human Rights Council session (June 16 - July 9, 2025) discussed the oral update by UN Independent Expert on human rights in the Central African Republic (CAR) Mr. Yao Agbetse. He highlighted the following as major concerns regarding security in the country. The spillover effects of neighboring conflicts, especially in Sudan, which hinder trade, cause refugee influxes, and increase cross-border crime. Human rights violations were also noted, including arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and child recruitment, persist, largely attributed to armed groups despite peace agreements.

The Independent Expert called for capacity building for the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), continued support for the Special Criminal Court to fight impunity, and the effective functioning of the Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Reconciliation Commission. He also emphasized the importance of cooperation with international mechanisms, and addressing regional conflicts to stabilize the country.

The security situation in the Central African Republic remains fragile and challenging. Despite ongoing peace efforts, violence persists, including attacks on peacekeepers and civilians; armed groups such as the 3R and UPC continue to operate, engaging in factional violence, which undermines peace processes and further endangers the lives of civilians. Cross-border instability, particularly related to neighboring Sudan, exacerbates security issues by facilitating cross-border crime, refugee movements, and trade disruptions. The Central African Armed Forces (FACA) are being strengthened to better address these threats, but security challenges remain significant. Overall, the situation requires sustained international support and coordinated efforts to restore stability and protect human rights.

About GICJ

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the promotion and reinforcement of commitments to the principles and norms of human rights. GICJ is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and is governed by the Swiss Civil Code and its statutes

GICJ's mission is to improve lives by tackling violations and all forms of violence and degrading or inhumane treatment through the strengthening of respect for human rights: reinforcing the independence of lawyers and judiciaries ; consolidation the principles of equality and non-discrimination; ensuring rule of law is upheld ; promoting a culture of awareness human right; and combating impunity

GICJ works with a coalition of NGOs on the ground and around the world, which provide accurate, up to date information on violations. GICJ also works with networks of academics, lawyers and experts who contribute their knowledge and expertise on relevant issues and cases.



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