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MCO-4318-10

10/15/2022

Written Report of Burundi

On July 1st, 1962, Burundi claimed its independence from Belgium. The leader of Burundi, Mwami Mwambutsa IV, was motivated to help his country achieve its autonomy through the Rwandan Revolution that was simultaneously occurring. Later in the year, on September 18th, 1962, Burundi secured itself a place among the United Nations. However, tensions among the ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, would lead to Mwambutsa fleeing the country. This turmoil would then wreak havoc on the stability of the newly independent country.

Several coup attempts would happen, with the most notable ones occurring in October 1965 and July 1966. By then, Mwambutsa was out of power and deposed by the coup. In April 1972, the First Burundian Genocide occurred. That was the starting point for an abundance of Civil Wars between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups, culminating in the Burundian Civil War. The war occurred between 1993 and 2005 and saw over 250,000 individuals killed. Hutus and Tutsis would trade their authority in the government depending on who overthrew who and when. Reconstruction efforts had begun post-civil war and are still ongoing today, even with civil unrest occurring in 2015.

The government that exists in Burundi is a Democracy to that of a multi-party state. A constitution was constructed in 1992 by the Tutsi leader Pierre Buyoya. However, it saw many

changes and ratifications from 1998 to 2004 when the government instituted a bicameral assembly. The assembly consists of the Transitional National Assembly and the Transitional National Senate. Each position is voted on through the popular vote. In addition, the constitution mandates a 60/40 percentage split between the populations of Hutus and Tutsis, as well as needing to have a female population percentage of 30 %. These inequalities within the government have tended to change based on regime change and have contributed to the unrest in Burundi today.

Burundi has also seen much criticism over its practices on human rights issues. This uproar stems from accusations of extrajudicial killings, torture, and sexual violence, specifically by the United Nations. Specific incidents include the detainments and trials of Jean-Claude Kavumbagu. Kavumbagu was a journalist who had published an article alleging that wages were delayed payment to workers because of the cost of President Pierre Nkurunziza's trip to attend the Beijing Olympics in 2008, as well as criticizing the Burundi government's ability to protect its country following the bombing in Uganda. As a result, Kavumbagu was named a "prisoner of conscience" by Amnesty International and was ordered to be released. Kavumbagu ended up serving eight months in prison for an original life sentence. In addition, Burundi criminalized homosexuality in 2009, where individuals found guilty of participating in same-sex relations risked hefty fines or prison time of 2-3 years.

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world. It is a landlocked country that has poor manufacturing sectors and isn't rich in resources. Burundi has an agriculture-based economy. The GDP reported in 2021 was 2.092 billion USD. Agriculture accounted for around 50 % of the GDP. The source also said that 90% of the agriculture in Burundi is subsistence

agriculture. Burundi's primary exports are gold, coffee, and tea at a combined 157.7 million. The primary imports are refined petroleum, packaged medicaments, and phosphatic fertilizers at a collective 204.7 million. The most vital trade partners currently trading with Burundi are the United Arab Emirates and Tanzania.

Culturally, there is a lot of diversity in Burundi. However, the most common religion in Burundi is Christianity, with Roman Catholicism being the most common denomination. The minority religions include Islam (Sunni) and traditional indigenous beliefs. The official languages of Burundi are Kirundi (Bantu), French, and English. Music and crafting are different and vital parts of the culture that exists in Burundi. Drumming, specifically, is a very integral part of traditional music. Unfortunately, civil unrest and conflict populate much of the headlines rather than Burundi's exciting culture and history.

Moreover, it is vital to understand how the media works in Burundi. It is not a free press. The government owns the press, and much silencing occurs to stifle whistleblowers. These issues include corruption, murder, and racketeering. Burundi requires that all journalists be fully licensed to limit the amount of press that occurs. Corruption runs rampant through its government, so its media system is unreliable. As seen with journalist Jean-Claude Kavumbagu, the government will punish journalists criticizing or questioning government policies, actions, or officials. Most citizens in Burundi will receive their news through television, the internet, radio, or printed newspapers and magazines. The only television service offered in Burundi is Télévision Nationale du Burundi. Burundi's most prominent online news websites are AllAfrica, Radio-Télé Isanganiro, Bonesha FM, and the Iwacu press group.

Furthermore, AllAfrica, Yahoo News, and Deutsche Welle were all news websites that I saw that covered the same story. The story was of the dozens of Burundi Rebels killed in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. AllAfrica covered the story from the perspective of being a news source for Burundi and all of Africa. Yahoo News took the air of the United States, and Deutsche Welle serves as a news source for primarily Germany and other European Countries. Collectively, the news organizations covered the stories very accurately and fairly. The main differences I see are that yahoo news reports the death toll at exactly 40 Burundi rebels, whereas AllAfrica and Deutsche Welle reported that the casualties are “dozens” or “over 40.” In addition, the dates of all the articles match. The pieces are dated November 27th, 2022.

Finally, with a regime change in 2020, newly elected President Ndayishimiye made promises to regulate media relations in Burundi. Burundi had a considerable influence in the Great Lakes Region in Africa, but failed attempts at coups and civil unrest had destroyed the main news stations. Under the previous regime in power, the government monitored the media very closely. For example, the CNC (National Communication Council) would ensure that Burundi journalists were accompanied by a subservient state journalist or had the proper permit and paperwork to proceed. The regime under President Nkurunziza tolerated no dissent or negative media coverage of the Burundi government or its officials. Fear is a common theme among the media and news outlets. There is an apparent effort to keep any negative discourse involving the government stifled. It is done in an attempt to re-educate or push the citizens of Burundi to a pro-government stance. Sadly, the public lives in fear, and the press cannot communicate important information and opinions without imprisonment and death threats.

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