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Elections in Burundi

2015 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Burundi election authorities as of July 20, 2015, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

The Republic of Burundi currently has presidential elections scheduled for July 21, 2015 and senatorial elections projected for July 24, 2015. Elections for District and Hill Councils will be held on August 23, 2015. On June 29, 2015, Burundians voted in communal elections for 18 constituencies, in addition to voting in legislative elections for the National Assembly.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

On July 21, 2015, Burundian citizens will be electing the President for a five-year term. In the senatorial elections, Burundians will indirectly elect 36 Senators from 18 constituencies to serve five-year terms; each constituency must elect one Senator each from the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, and at least three seats must be reserved for Senators representing the Twa ethnic group.

In the National Assembly elections, Burundians elected 121 legislators to serve five-year terms.

For local elections, Burundians will be directly electing Councilors to District and Hill Councils, for which each constituency is represented by five Councilors. On June 29, 2015 Burundians elected Councilors representing local constituencies in Communal Councils.

Who can vote in the country?

According to the Burundian Electoral Code of June 3, 2014, all Burundian citizens aged 18 or older on the date of the elections are eligible to vote, excepting those who are deemed ineligible due to criminal history, mental illness or other extenuating circumstances.

How many registered voters are there?

Approximately 3.8 million Burundians have been registered for the presidential, legislative, senatorial, and local elections.

What is the structure of the government?

The Republic of Burundi consists of an executive, a legislative and a judicial branch. The executive branch is led by the President, who serves as both head of State and head of government. Burundi has a bicameral legislature; the upper house, the Senate, is indirectly elected by an electoral college consisting of members of Municipal Councils, while the lower house, the National Assembly, is directly elected. Both houses of the legislature reflect a Hutu-Tutsi ethnic balance. The judicial branch's highest authority is the Supreme Court.

Are there reserved seats for women? What is the gender balance within the candidate list?

Yes, there are reserved seats for women in both houses of Parliament and at the local level. At least 30 percent of elected officials in both the National Assembly and the Senate must be women, and no less than one out of four candidates on a party's list must be women. In the local Communal Councils, women must comprise at least 30 percent of each 15-member council.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

The National Independent Electoral Commission (*Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante* [CENI]) serves as the lead election management body of Burundi. It is composed of five members appointed by presidential decree, each of whom serves five-year terms that are nonrenewable. The CENI is responsible for overseeing the registration of both voters and candidates, as well as polling processes, counting of votes and electoral dispute resolution.

The CENI is assisted at the regional level by the Provincial Independent Electoral Commissions (*Commission Electorale Provinciale Indépendante*) and the Communal Independent Electoral Commissions (*Commission Electorale Communale Indépendante*).

What is the electoral system?

The President is directly elected through a two-round absolute majority system; if no candidate wins an absolute majority in the first round of voting, a second round run-off election is held.

The Senate is elected indirectly through an electoral college; candidates are selected through a super-majority three-round system in which candidates must win a minimum of two-thirds of the vote in the first two rounds. If these fail to produce a winner, a third round run-off is held for the top two candidates, determining the winner through a plurality vote.

The National Assembly is elected through a closed-list proportional representation system in which seats are allocated according to the D'Hondt method of seat distribution with a two percent threshold.¹

Elections for Councilors in Hill and District Councils are conducted through universal direct suffrage. Candidates are not elected through political party lists; rather, each must present himself or herself as an independent candidate.

¹ The D'Hondt method uses a calculation of highest averages to allocate seats in list proportional representation electoral systems. Only whole seats can be allocated to winning parties, but in an attempt to maintain proportionality, the D'Hondt method is used to convert fractions of seats into whole allocations. A two percent threshold stipulates that any party which fails to receive at least two percent of the total vote will not be eligible to receive any seats.

Communal Councils are comprised of at least 15 members, but no more than 30 members per commune. They are elected through universal direct suffrage through a block-list system for political parties or by proportional representation for independent candidates.

How many polling places are set up on Election Day?

There are 11,500 polling places throughout the country on Election Day.

Is out-of-country voting allowed?

Yes, on June 29, 2015 registered Burundian voters living abroad were able to vote by casting their ballot at Burundian diplomatic missions or consulates in their host countries. It is expected that they will also be granted this right for the upcoming elections.

How will voters with disabilities cast their ballots?

The Electoral Code states that any voters who are unable to place his or her fingerprint on the designated insignia of their chosen party or candidate may have a qualified person assist.

Which political parties have candidates in the election?

The following parties participated in the National Assembly elections: *Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (CNDD-FDD), *Union pour le Progrès national* (UPRONA), *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL), and *Coalition des Partis Politiques pour Une Opposition participative* (Coalition COPA).

The following parties boycotted the legislative elections: *Abigenga Mizero Y'Abarundi*, *Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie* (MSD), *Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement au Burundi* (Coalition ADC-IKIBIRI), *Sahwanya Frodebu Iragi Rya Ndadaye*, *Union pour la Paix et la Démocratie-Zigamibanga* (UPD-Zigamibanga), *Mouvement pour la Réhabilitation du Citoyen-Rurenzangemero* (MRC-Rurenzangemero), *Rassemblement National pour le Changement* (Coalition RANAC), *Parti Libérateur du Peuple Burundais* (PALIPE-Agakiza), independent list under Isidore Rufyikiri, *Rassemblement des Démocrates Burundais* (RDB), *Parti Social Démocrate-Dusabikanye* (PSD-Dusabikanye) and *Sangwe Pader*.

Incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza will be running for re-election under his party, the CNDD-FDD. Although the opposition parties initially intended to field a joint candidate, a decision not to participate in the presidential elections has removed their bid for President.

The parties that will be participating in future elections are undetermined due to electoral disputes over the results of the legislative and communal elections. Many parties have yet to issue official statements on their participation or abstention from future elections.

Where is voting, counting and tabulation held?

Voting, counting and tabulation are all conducted in local polling stations.

Who will observe during Election Day?

The United Nations has agreed to send an observation mission for the legislative, local, and presidential elections, in addition to several local observer groups, such as ONELOPE.

When will official results be announced?

Preliminary results for legislative and local elections were announced on July 7, 2015, and results for the presidential and senatorial elections will be available a few days after the election. The National Independent Electoral Commission is in charge of the results and intends to publish them upon finalization.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

According to the Article 84 of the Electoral Code, the Constitutional Court is responsible for managing and resolving appeals regarding the presidential and legislative elections.

How will Election Day security be ensured?

The Burundian Army and police secure polling stations both before the elections – to guard electoral equipment – and during the elections to ensure voter and poll worker safety.

Resources

- “Burundi – Opening polling stations in a very tense atmosphere,” *Notre Afrik* ([French](#))
- Constitution of Burundi ([French](#))
- Decree No. 100/76 of March 12, 2012 on the Organization and Function of the National Independent Electoral Commission ([French](#))
- Electoral Code ([French](#))
- IFES Proposed Countdown: Electoral Calendar ([English](#), [French](#))
- Inter-Parliamentary Union Country Profile: Burundi ([English](#))
- Quota Project : Burundi ([English](#))