



Burundi: A Fragile State on the Precipice

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At
The Council on Foreign Relations
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Forum Details:

Despite problematic elections, many observers were still optimistic that violence would not return to Burundi. However, during the last couple of months, violent clashes between security forces and armed groups as well as kidnappings and fatal attacks against civilians have sparked fears of a renewed civil war. Groups of armed men carried out deadly raids in Rukoko and in the Kibira forest, forcing the population to flee. The current political context is marked by the spread of rumors that at least two groups disgruntled with election process have set up bases north of Bujumbura and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The authorities have blamed "unidentified armed bandits" for the incidents and played down rumors that the former rebellion is reforming. Although the ruling party, CNDD-FDD, claims to have full legitimacy, the political situation remains extremely fragile. According to Amnesty International, intelligence services tortured 12 people in late June and early July. Most parties have now fully withdrawn from the political institutions, including parliament. Will civil war resume in Burundi? Has it already resumed? Is Burundi in danger of lapsing into civil war? What would be the regional implications of Burundi's fragility and how can the international community respond?

Moderator:

Howard Wolpe
Former Special Advisor on the Great Lakes Region to the Obama Administration

Speakers:

Dave Peterson
Senior Director, Africa Program, National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

Adrien Sindayigaya
Director, Search for Common Ground, Burundi

Lena Slachmuislder
Director, Search for Common Ground, DRC

Narcisse Kalisa
Director, Search for Common Ground, Rwanda

Bios

Howard Wolpe
Howard Wolpe is a former seven-term member of Congress, and recently retired from a position as the Obama Administration's special advisor for Africa's Great Lakes region, a position similar to one he previously held under the Clinton administration. Before his

appointment he was director of both the Africa Program and the Project on Leadership and Building State Capacity at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. A specialist in African politics, for ten of his fourteen years in the Congress Wolpe chaired the Subcommittee on Africa of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He also chaired the Investigations and Oversight Subcommittee of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee. His other roles in the Congress included the co-chairmanship of the bipartisan Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition and the Congressional Energy and Environmental Study Conference.

Prior to entering the Congress, Wolpe served in the Michigan House of Representatives and as a member of the Kalamazoo City Commission. Wolpe has taught at the Political Science Department of Western Michigan University and at the Institute of Public Policy Studies of the University of Michigan, and has served as a visiting fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program of the Brookings Institution, as a Woodrow Wilson Center public policy scholar, and as a consultant to the World Bank and to the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. State Department. Wolpe received his BA degree from Reed College, and his PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Dave Peterson

Dave Peterson is the Senior Director of the Africa Program of the National Endowment for Democracy, a privately-incorporated, publicly-funded grant-making organization in Washington, DC. Since 1988, he has been responsible for NED's program to identify and assist hundreds of African non-governmental organizations and activists working for democracy, human rights, free press, justice and peace. He was formerly executive director of Project South Africa of the A. Philip Randolph Educational Fund, and a freelance journalist in Africa and Turkey. He has a BA from Columbia College and an MA from the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism in New York, as well as an MA in African Studies and International Economics from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington DC. He has visited more than 40 African countries since 1984, and has published numerous articles on African politics.

Adrien Sindayigaya

Mr. Sindayigaya currently serves as the SFCG Burundi Country Director. Previous to starting this position in 1997, Adrien served as the Media Program Director of the SFCG Burundi office. He has worked with Studio Ijambo, a SFCG media project, for the past 12 years. After beginning as a journalist-producer he was promoted to the studio's Deputy Director and Director. After these positions he was hired in the spring of 2006 as the Program Director; coordinating a variety of media productions and appropriate community activities focused on similar themes as those presented in the media productions. In his current position, Adrien directly supervises SFCG's various interventions in Burundi. Also lending technical expertise on a regional level, Adrien recently joined the DRC SFCG Country Director in leading an assessment mission in Rwanda, to establish SFCG as an NGO there.

Lena Slachmuisjlder

Ms. Lena Slachmuisjlder has a diverse background in media production, training, conflict transformation, human rights and arts and culture. A graduate in International Relations from Stanford University, Lena has lived and worked in various African countries for the last 20 years. Since 2001 Lena has worked with Search for Common Ground in the Great Lakes region, first as Director of Studio Ijambo at Search for Common Ground in Burundi, and since 2005 as the Director of Search for Common Ground's largest program in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Narcisse Kalisa

Mr Narcisse Kalisa is the acting Country Director of the SFCG Rwanda. He is a journalist by profession. He joined Radio UNAMIR (United Nations for Assistance Mission in Rwanda) just after the 1994 tragedy in the country as a radio reporter. In 1996, he worked with the United Nations World Food Programme as the Information Officer and as a Radio Producer for Human Rights Local Organisations. Mr Narcisse Kalisa has worked as the Executive Producer and then the Managing Director Urunana Development Communication, an organization producing a Rwandan popular radio soap opera and a linked magazine programme and other outreach activities aimed at behavior Change Communication for 12 years. The programme is still running on the BBC Great Lakes Service.

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