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# Press Release

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## ARMED VIOLENCE IN BURUNDI STILL CLAIMS THOUSANDS OF VICTIMS EVERY YEAR—NEW REPORT

### More than 1,000 people killed and 1,300 wounded in 2008

In 2008, more than 1,000 people were killed and nearly 1,300 injured by armed violence in Burundi, where the homicide rate is relatively high at 12.3 for 100,000 inhabitants. These and other findings are revealed in *Insecurity Is Also a War: An Assessment of Armed Violence in Burundi*, a new study by the Small Arms Survey on behalf of the Geneva Declaration.

The report concludes that young men are the main victims of armed violence. Women are more affected by sexual violence, which has reached worrying levels in Burundi; nearly 15 per cent of rapes are reportedly committed under the threat of a weapon. The consequences of violence are aggravated by limited access to health care and by the high medical and legal expenses involved.

The majority of perpetrators of armed violence are men under the age of 30, a profile consistent with most other countries. Bandits were identified as the principal source of insecurity by about three-quarters of all survey respondents, followed by rebels, police officers, and ex-combatants. The boundaries between these categories are fluid. Armed bandits sometimes wear army or police uniforms in order to deceive their victims.

Burundi is home to various types of armed violence common in post-conflict countries. The most common type of armed violence is linked to banditry. Violence related to land disputes comes a distant second, followed by domestic violence, acts involving the only remaining rebel group, and violence resulting from police blunders.

The provinces most affected by armed violence are the capital Bujumbura-Mairie, Bubanza, and Bujumbura Rural. Contrary to findings in other African countries, armed violence in Burundi takes place mainly at night inside victims' homes. In 2008, firearms were used in almost 60 per cent of acts of armed violence, while grenades were used in 22 per cent of cases, an unusually high rate.

The report relies mainly on a survey of 1,500 households in six provinces, which was supplemented with other methodological tools, such as hospital, crime, and media records. It shows the evolution of perceptions of security since 2005 (the year of the first survey administered by the Small Arms Survey). Since 2005, a certain number of positive changes have occurred. For example, more people now see weapons as a source of danger rather than a means of protection. Likewise, people remain willing to take part in a voluntary disarmament programme.

The report also sheds light on remaining challenges, and on new problems that have appeared in the last three years. While both surveys suggest that the population broadly supports civilian disarmament, other factors indicate that, in reality, there must be a return to legitimate security before people will be willing to participate.

In order to combat armed violence, the report highlights priority areas for action, such as increasing the capacity to provide security and administer justice, reducing the vulnerability of populations at risk, and setting up a civilian disarmament programme.

*Insecurity Is Also a War* was carried out in cooperation with the Burundian National Commission for Civilian Disarmament and Prevention of Weapons Proliferation (CDCPA) and the non-governmental organization Ligue Iteka, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swiss and British governments. 

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