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## **Human Rights Violations and the Roles of African Union in Burundi: An Appraisal of Burundi Post-Civil War**

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### **Abstract**

*Human Rights Violations have become a consistent trend in Burundi following the end of the Burundi civil war which plagued the East African country between 1993 and 2005, and the civil unrest which began in 2015. Among the objectives of the African Union (AU) is the protection and promotion of human rights in Africa. This study seeks to investigate the exacerbation of conflicts in Burundi leading to violence and gross violation of human rights during which thousands of Burundians fled the country as Asylum seekers and refugees. The study sets out to interrogate efforts made by the African Union to restore human rights in Burundi, with a view to determining if the African Union has been playing its roles effectively. To realize the set objectives, the study adopted the qualitative research method; the data were mainly sourced from documents and related publications. This study was equally guided by the collective security theory. In conclusion, the study revealed that the African Union's adherence to the sovereignty of Burundi has allowed the Humanitarian crisis and abuse of Human Rights in Burundi to go unchecked, and therefore recommends that; The African Union must implore critical solutions to critical conditions by applying force where required. While observing the sovereignty of Burundi, the African Union should coerce and enforce the negotiation and mediation process between the Burundi government and opposition forces to put an end to the crisis in the country.*

**Keywords:** *African Union, Human Rights, Burundi, Civil War, Collective Security.*

### **Introduction**

In 2021, The United Nation reported that 'the people of Burundi continue to endure serious human rights violations including possible crimes against humanity enabled by those with access to the government,' This exposes the height of human rights abuse and the Humanitarian Crisis in Burundi. Human right constitutes the natural Rights of every human being such rights include; the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery, freedom of expression, and the right to education. Violation of these rights amounts to infringement of basic fundamental human rights. In the Sirte declaration that led to the formation of the African Union in 2002, the organization reiterated its position on preventing armed conflicts and protecting Human Rights in Africa.

The Burundi civil war can be remotely traced to the ethnic rivalry between the two dominant ethnic groups; the Tutsi and the Hutu in Burundi whose political rivalry ignited the Burundi civil war that lasted from 1993-to 2005. This ethnic violence became a Civil Strife following the assassination of the Hutu president Melchior Ndadaye in October 1993 by the Tutsi soldiers, and thus, unleashed a ten-year Civil War in which over 300,000 people were killed. (Obulutsa & Heinrich, 2020). Burundi is one of the countries in East Africa and a historical kingdom that gained independence alongside Rwanda in 1963.

The African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) was the first AU-mandated armed peace operation. AMIB's deployment was authorized in 2003 before the inauguration of the AU's Peace and Security Council. (Badmus, 2015). This intervention was aimed at restoring peace between the warring parties and instituting the process of a democratic government in Burundi. The intervention of the African Union in the Burundi crisis could be seen in three aspects, the aspect of mediation, the aspect, and the aspect of deployment of security forces. However, in achieving these tactics in Burundi, the African Union was faced with many challenges that prevented the proper execution of these tactics (Bouka, 2016). The role of the African Union includes maintenance of peace and security in Africa, instituting democratic governance among member-states, Human rights protections, and healthy economic and bilateral relations, among others. Burundi as an independent nation from July 1962 has experienced a deadly civil war, 5 successful and two failed coups. This political violence instigated by the differences between the Tutsi and the Hutu has greatly affected the economy and the violation of human rights in Burundi despite the consummation of the Arusha Agreement (Chigudu, 2021). What efforts has the African Union played towards addressing the Human Rights Violations in Burundi? The lackluster attitude of the African Union to intervene in Burundi despite clear evidence of human rights abuse and killing of her citizens by the Burundian government can be properly understood within the failure of the invocation of the doctrine of the responsibility to protect (R2P) which is clearly stated in its constitutive Act (Aja, Onuh,& Ohazuruike).

The African Union was established to replace the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 2002. As the highest regional organ in Africa, the African Union is saddled with the protection of Human Rights in Africa, settlement of conflicts, and promoting unity amongst member states among other objectives. Just like the United Nations, the African Union is responsible for protecting the sovereignty and economic development of African

states. Over the years, the African Union has intervened in so many conflicts and facilitated peace enthroned democratic governments in some African states. Notable among the major African states where the African Union has intervened include Sudan, South-Sudan Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Mali, and Mozambique, among others. The African Union is made up of fifty-five member states represented by the Head of States and their representatives. The African union over the years has sworn to promote peace in countries in warfares. This is evident in her interventions in armed conflicts that occurred in many African states such as Burundi, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo among other African Countries. The role of the African Union as the highest regional organization in Africa includes the protection of the lives and properties of civilians, especially in times of armed conflict. The Burundi civil war from 1993-to 2003 and the political unrest in Burundi which began in 2015 following the declaration of President Nkurunziza to run for a third term, witnessed a large-scale humanitarian crisis, and an increase in the number of Burundian refugees scattered all over east Africa.

This study investigates the roles of the African Union as the highest body in Africa in the face of Human rights violations and the high-level Humanitarian Crisis in Burundi.

This paper is structured into five sections, the background, Methodology, the Data Presentation and analysis, the Conclusion and Recommendation

### **Methodology**

This study adopts the Collective Security theory. This theory can be traced to the 17th century from the propositions of Immanuel Kant, and William Penn who advocated for lasting peace in Europe through the coming together of organizations and institutions in one accord, a Balance of Power. This theory was established to unite the European powers together to foster peace and to collectively defend their states or any member states under internal and external aggression. Rappard (1946) saw collective security as "the protection which so-called 'sovereign states' have sought to attain in their alliances against internal or external aggression". The meaning of concepts such as collective security and alliances are often misused and distorted, especially by scholars and political leaders (Booth 1987: p. 259). Booth (1987) argued that such distortion of concepts often occurs when an impression of cohesion is created for very loose agreements for cooperation. He went further to argue that 'Alliances are a form of collective defense and involve formal agreements between states to work together in the pursuance of their national security goals and focus on enhancing

military power and coordinating deployments (Booth 1987: p. 258). Alliances can also be used to pursue common norms and interests, as well as to achieve a balance of power for a stable international system (Chenoweth 2008).

For the African Union to tackle the security challenges facing the African Continent, it must unite its military, political, and economic strengths to be reckoned as a force. The collective security theory demonstrates collective efforts by independent states, institutions, and Organizations toward bringing peace and stability to a given region. This is very evident in the roles of the African Union and in ensuring peace and security in Africa. The African union member-states through collective efforts have thrived in restoring nascent democracy, peace, and security in Africa through Peacekeeping missions, Diplomatic Interventions, and negotiations. This is evident in its effort at peace in Burundi which has been ravaged by civil war from 1993 to 2005. The efforts of the African union resulted in bringing about the first democratic government in Burundi headed by Pierre Nkurunziza.

However, the upsurge in Human Rights violations and the dire Humanitarian crisis in Burundi have questioned the collective effort and ability of the AU in protecting Human rights as enshrined in its objectives.

To properly investigate the identified questions, the study adopts Qualitative research methods. This is because of the nature of the research questions raised; this approach effectively enabled the research to have a focus using the case study design, as well as investigate and understand the variables under study. Data used in this study were generated from related documents, scholarly publications, and press releases to explore and extract relevant data analyzed in this paper. This paper, therefore, adopted Content Analysis as a qualitative approach to analyzing data. This method guided the paper to effectively explore, and analyze the generated data.

### **African Union and the Challenges of Enforcement of Human Rights in Africa**

In the analysis of the roles of the African Union, Zewudie (2019) posited that “The effectiveness and even survival of the African Human Rights are to a large extent dependent on the African Union as a collective of States.” This is because the African Union as the highest body is mandated in its constitutive act to secure the protection of human rights among member states. Khadiagala (2020) on his part argued that: The AU has innovated by articulating and defining policies to underwrite Peace-building initiatives, notably the African

Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD) policy. Also, through the AU’s Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the AU has intervened in some post-conflict countries to help contribute to sustainable peace, Human Rights, and development (Khadiagala 2020, p.4) this reflects the many intervention missions the African union has undertaken to promote peace in Africa. However, many of the African countries where the African Union has intervened are still witnessing humanitarian crises and abuse of human rights.

Tasamba, (2021) in his study on Human Rights Violation in Burundi concludes that the human rights situation in Burundi remains grave, and the absence of international bodies has made the authorities hide the abuse from sight. This exposes the weakness and the inability of the African Union which is the highest regional Organization to effectively registered its presence in the Burundi civil unrest

**Table 1: African Union major Intervention Missions in African States**

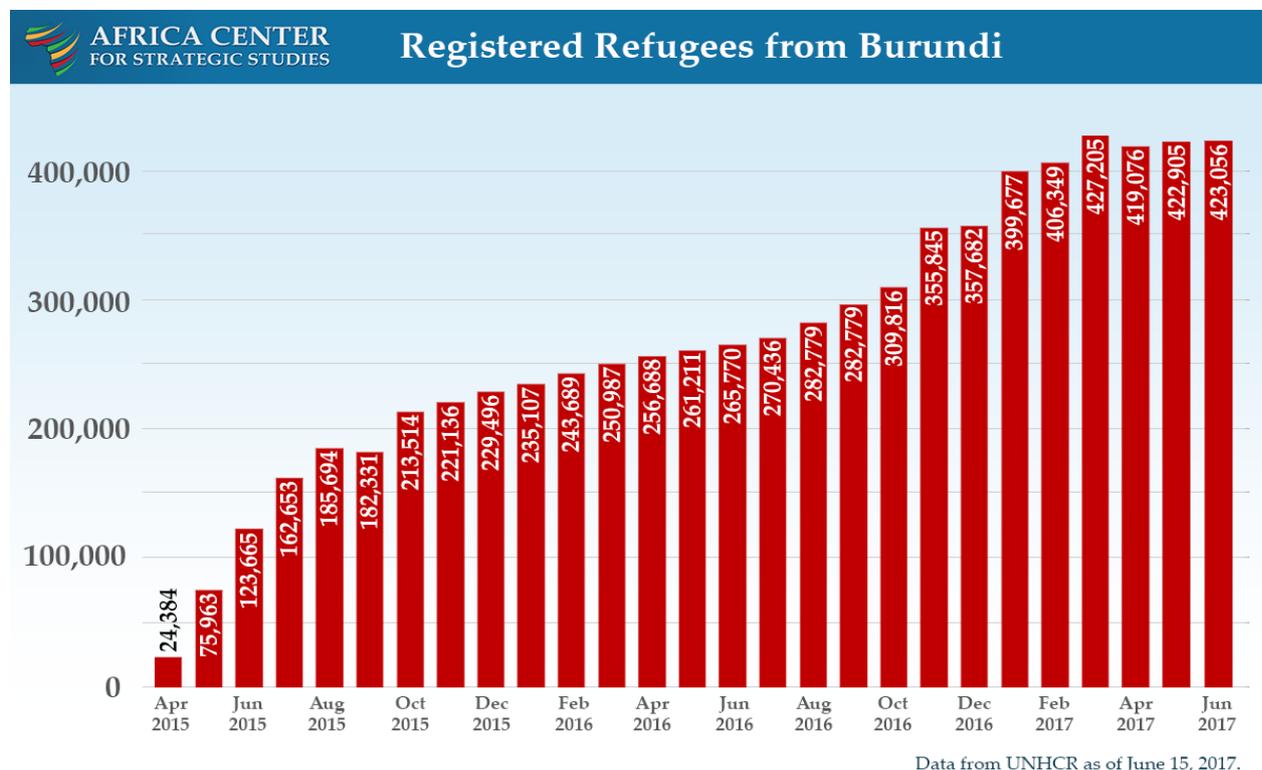
YEAR	MISSIONS	TROOP DEPLOYED	NATURE OF CRISIS	DEATHS
2003-present	African Union Mission in Burundi (AMIB)	2,870	Civil War, Civil Unrest	301,700
2004-2007	African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS)	150-7000	Rebel Conflict	400,000
2007-Present	African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.	19,555	Rebel Conflict	400,000
2007-present	African Union Mission in Somalia. (AMISOM)	19626	Militants Vs Government	300,000
2008-2008	Operation Democracy in Comoros.	1500	Electoral Violence	
2011-present	Fight against the Lord’s Army in Insurgency in Uganda, Congo, Sudan and Central African Republic	5000	Guerilla war	100,000+ 430,000 displaced
2013-Present	African led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)	7,464	Rebel Conflict	65
2013-Present	Mission to Central African Republic	4000	Military coup political Violence	2000

**Data compiled by Alita Emmanuel Chinagorom, 2022.**

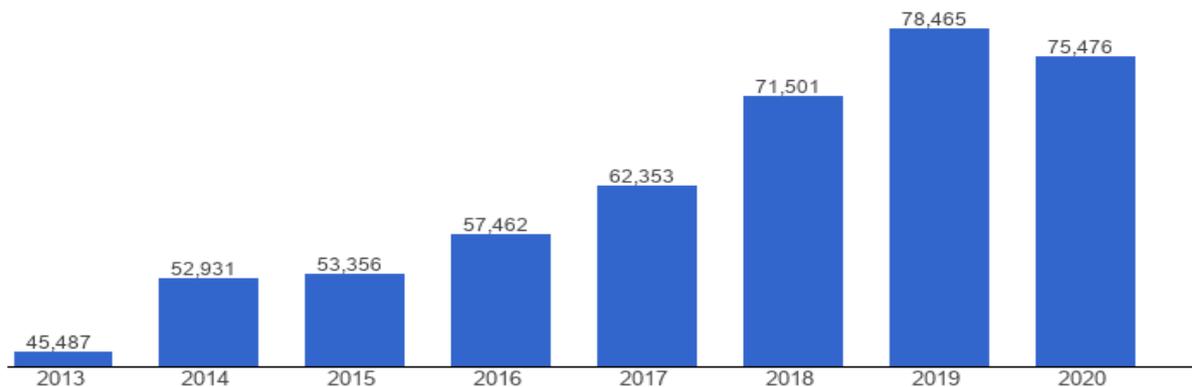
The table shows the number of peacekeeping Missions in major conflict zones in Africa. This illustrates the number of ongoing intervention Missions by the African Union, and the number of estimated deaths recorded. Burundi tops the list of countries currently in a conflict situation, followed by Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Congo, and the Central African Republic. This table in two ways demonstrates the efforts of the African Union to combat conflict in Africa and on the other hand exposes the weakness of the Union to effectively restore peace in warring states.

Despite the years of the African Union Mission in Burundi, humanitarian crisis and abuse of Human Rights have escalated the more; citizens have fled to neighboring African countries to seek refuge raising questions on the competence of the African Union to negotiate peace through its African Peace and Security Architecture program.

**Figure 1: Registered Refugees from Burundi, 2015-2017**



The figure above shows the number of registered refugees between April 2015 and June 2017. The civil unrest in Burundi and increased human rights violations witnessed a massive migration of Burundians into neighboring states like Tanzania Congo and Rwanda.

**Figure 2. Burundi Refugee Population 2013-2020**

**Source: The GlobalEconomy.com 2020**

The above data shows that the number of refugees in Burundi has remarkably increased from 2013-to 2020, the data however indicated that 2019 has the highest number of Burundi refugees which explains the upsurge in Humanitarian crisis and Human rights abuse in Burundi.

Bouka (2016) in his analysis observed that the African Union interventions in Burundi were categorized into three types which are; Human rights monitoring, mediation, and deployment of forces to restore peace in Burundi. However, in these three categories, the African Union faced major challenges in executing them due to the resistance of the Burundi government which reiterated the importance to respect the sovereignty of Burundi. Ani (2021) believed that the African Union is hampered by the dilemma of ensuring the safety of peaceful protesters in Africa due to the sovereignty of such states. This has made the African Union assume the role of Observers in conflict zones. During the 2015 civil unrest in Burundi, the African Union's efforts were limited by the Burundi government who made it known to the African union that Burundi as an independent state can handle its internal crisis. Notwithstanding, the Union was only able to send delegations and Human right observers. ani (2021), therefore, suggested that the African Union must adopt stringent and proactive measures to ensure that the lives of peaceful protesters are protected in Africa. Going by what happened in Burundi in the 2015 civil unrest where security forces were seen attacking protesters in Burundi's capital Bujumbura which eventually led to the loss of lives and properties, the African Union needs proactive measures to secure the lives of people in war zones.

According to Ncube (2020), following the inauguration of the parliamentarian back in 2004, the body of the committee on justice and Human Rights of the AU, have entertained so many debates and discussions on issues of Human Rights in the African continent. From a broad perspective, the issue of Human Rights Violation is almost applicable to all African States where political leaders apply the use of force to threaten the rights and privileges of the masses, forcing them to live in fear. The post-colonial Africa was characterized by violence, ethnic conflicts, and coups, which are currently affecting the leadership style in Africa. Government tends to use force to scare the people into submission to their wills. This has highlighted the high level of militia groups in Africa fighting the government to gain political control. In countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, the activities of Boko Haram are evident through their terrorist acts that have killed thousands of lives and displaced more than ten thousand others. Sudan and South Sudan are other countries ravaged by the Humanitarian Crisis due to the conflicts between the rebels and the government. Just like Sudan, the Burundi crisis has lasted for so many decades due to the intractable rivalry between the Tutsi and Hutu tribes which have witnessed one of the deadliest civil wars in Africa. Since the democratic government was restored in Burundi in 2005, the East African nation has been in constant internal conflicts, resulting in large-scale migration and Humanitarian crises. Efforts made by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the African Union in terms of provision of financial aid, troops, and intervention envoys are partly successful and partly a failure as the conflict lingers.

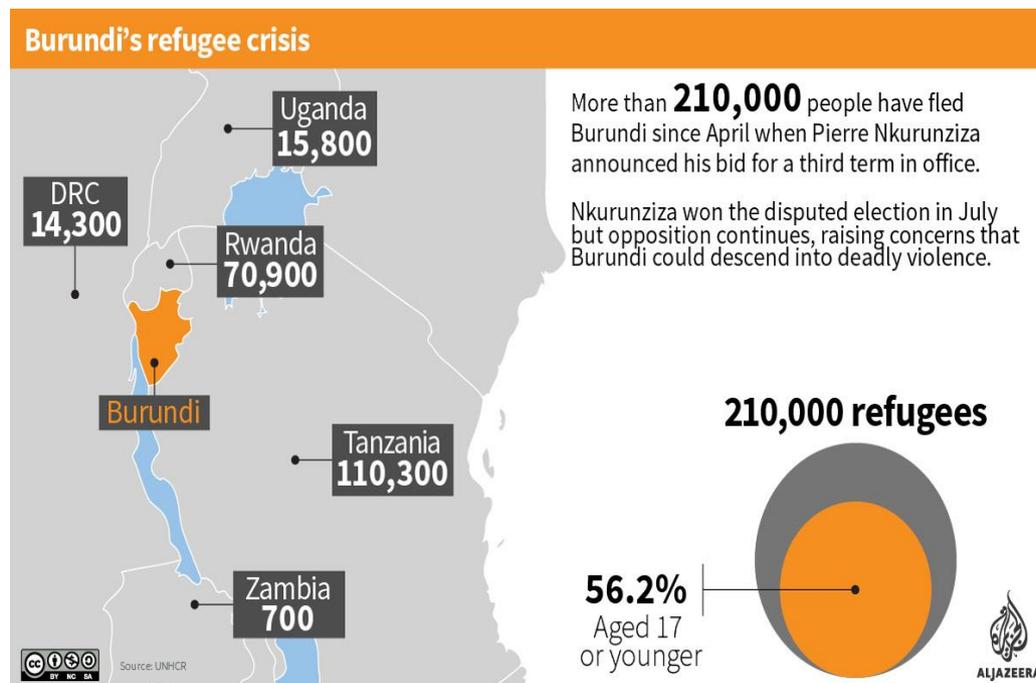
In his study, Nhimana (2019) argued that Under pressure exerted by the international community and the regional embargo, an arrangement between the parties to the Burundi conflict namely the G10 and G7 was reached, and a peace agreement was signed on the 28th of August 2000, in Arusha (McClintock & Nhimana 2008, p.79; Vandeginste, 2009, p.72). The parties to the conflict highly recognized the ethnic and political character of the Burundian conflict. In Protocol, I, Chapter I, Article 4 of the Arusha Agreement, the ethnic conflicts in Burundi was seen as deliberate and intentional tactics of retaining power by the two major ethnic groups in Burundi (Arusha Agreement, 2002) To redress the ethnic inequalities and ensure equal participation of both ethnic segments of the population in the political institution and army, Arusha Agreement proposed a power-sharing system between

the two main ethnic groups, Hutu and Tutsi. The Agreement guaranteed the adequate representation and participation of both ethnic segments of the population in the political institution and ethnic parity in the army and the security forces (Le Marchand 2006: 8; Vandeginste 2009:74-75). With this power-sharing deal, the president was to be supported by two-vice presidents that come from different ethnic groups. Regarding the composition of the government, the agreement stipulated that no more than 60% of Hutu and no more than 40% of Tutsi shall take part in the government with a minimum of 30 % of women. The Minister of National Defense and the Minister in charge of National Police shall belong to different ethnic groups. Regarding the National Assembly, it must consist of 60% of Hutu and 40% of Tutsi, and 3 members are Twa. A benchmark of 30% of MPs must be women. In the Senate, it requires equal participation of Hutu and Tutsi with each province represented by two senators belonging to different ethnic groups. In addition, three senators must belong to the Twa community and former heads of 22 States. At the communal level, no more than 67 percent of the commune administrators are of the same ethnic group (Le Marchand 2006:8; Schraml 2011:57; Vandeginste 2009:75,)

As predicted, the national congress of CNDD FDD that took place on the 25th of April 2015 designated Pierre Nkurunziza as its candidate for the June presidential election. Subsequently to the announcement of the candidacy of Pierre Nkurunziza for a third term, civil society organizations grouped in the campaigns 'Halte au troisième mandat' called people to the street to protest against this illegal candidacy. Demonstrations broke out in Bujumbura on the 26th of April 2015 and were spread to several parts of the country. It should be noted that before the protest started, the Minister of Interior issued a ban on all kinds of demonstrations on the 24th of April (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017: 23) arguing that any demonstrations during this electoral period will be considered an attempt to undermine the security of the country. The protest movement was considered by the government as an insurgency that authorized the government agents to use all means to stop it. Following the orders received from the government and the ruling party CNDD FDD, the security forces in collaboration with Imbonerakure used extreme violence toward protesters and didn't shy away to open fire on protestors with reel bullets. After more than two weeks of demonstrations in several neighborhoods in the capital Bujumbura, a group of militaries attempted a coup while the president was in a regional summit that aimed to find a solution to the Burundi crisis (Van Acker 2015). This failed attempt coup resumed the protests movements as the government

warned that the demonstrators will be considered supporters of the coup (Nshimirimana & Gatavu 2017: 25). Following the failed attempt coup, civil society activists that took the lead during the protest movement were targeted by security forces and the secret services. They were victims of harassment, intimidation, and even killing. For instance, on the 3rd of August, the leading human rights activists Pierre Claver Mbonimpa survived an attempted killing by unidentified persons (Amnesty national report 2015/2016). Many activists reported to have received unknown calls and were victims of surveillance by the secret services. In August 2015, a report of a commission established by the Attorney General to investigate the damage of the protest was released. Based on the conclusion of that report, 11 civil society organizations that took the lead in the protest were suspended from operating in Burundi and an arrest warrant was issued against the leaders of these organizations. Nhimana(2019) observed that the African Union due to the sovereignty of Burundi did not do much to protect the rights of Burundians against the violation and abuse of power by the government of Burundi during the 2015 protest.

**Figure 3 Burundi Refugee Crises**



**Source: UNHCR 2016**

The figure shows the number of Burundi refugees that fled the country to neighboring countries like Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Tanzania,

due to violence and violation of Human Rights in Burundi. These figures hence question the presence of the African Union in Burundi.

### **African Union intervention programs and Humanitarian Crisis in Burundi**

The International Crisis Group (2019), reports that the Burundian government has consistently declared its openness to dialogue with regional bodies, but its behavior throughout the past three years has demonstrated a reluctance to negotiate in good faith. These reports revealed that the Burundi government has employed tactics designed to slow down and disrupt talks while arguing, since 2016, that the crisis in the country has passed and with it any need for mediation with the exiled opposition.

Nhimana (2019), in his study, observed that the African Union in trying to recognize the sovereignty of Burundi did not do much to protect the rights of Burundians against the violation and abuse of power by the government of Burundi during the 2015 protest. Ani (2021) argued that the most competitive and uncertain aspects of African integration revolve around the objective roles and obligations of the African Union (AU) and sub-regional bodies that are operating within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The ambiguities motivated recent attempts to develop a division of labor between the African Union and the sub-regions in the context of the ongoing African Union reform. In the past five years, the direct intervention of the African Union (AU) in crises has declined significantly compared to its roles in the first decade of its establishment. When it was formed in 2001, the AU initiated several peace initiatives in member states including Burundi, Comoro Islands, Sudan, and Somalia between 2003 and 2007 (Ani,2021). In 2013 and 2014, the AU also took over missions initiated by sub-regional organizations in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR). These interventions alongside the continental body's central role in setting the norms of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) highlighted the AU's leadership role in Africa's peace and security landscape.

However, the recent decline in AU's role is not due to the reduction of conflicts in Africa. Rather, an emerging trend shows that sub-regional organizations and coalitions are increasingly overtaking the bureaucracies at the continental level by relying on their capacities to lead peace initiatives in their respective regions. This is evident in the roles of sub-regional bodies and alliances in security cases in the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel as well as the situations in South Sudan, Congo, the Gambia, and Guinea Bissau. As such, the

African Union, which exhibited robust agency in the first decade of its establishment, seems to be shifting towards norm-setting while sub-regional arrangements spearhead the interventions in their regions (PSC Report 2017).

Undoubtedly, the role of sub-regional organizations in resolving sub-regional threats is a goal envisaged within the pan-African ideals of a subsidiary in the context of the African Economic Community (AEC), Constitutive Act of the AU, and the APSA. However, the sticking point is the limited clarity on what subsidiary means within the existing legal documents which place greater emphasis on collaboration between the APSA institutions (AU & RECs/RMs MoU 2008). Additionally, the MoU between the AU and sub-regional organizations does not provide guidance on which conflict situations or stages will be addressed either by the AU or the sub-regions. Hence, when conflicts occur, the AU and RECs/RMs lay similar claims to primary roles in peace processes (AU PSD, 2010). The situation is compounded by the blurred lines in the primacy of the AU and concerns around what role the continental body should play in African security initiatives going forward. This is further complicated by the lack of consistency among heads of state who envision a stronger AU that leads continental initiatives. But when presented with practical issues, African states take a pragmatic stance often favoring solutions at the sub-regional level and sometimes forming ad hoc arrangements where their interest could be better considered than at the continental level where multiple bureaucracies and interests are at play. While interventions by sub-regions are in line with the principle of subsidiarity, there is no effective policy direction on how to address occasions where sub-regions face challenges. There is also limited guidance on how to provide checks and balances, especially when sub-regional roles become an impediment to peace (Franke, 2006). The overlapping roles between the AU and sub-regions have not only engendered competition, but it has also fostered duplicity and halfhearted measures by African institutions working within the APSA framework (Momodu 2016).

Rufyikiri (2021), stated that the diverse nature of peacekeeping missions entails sharing functions and responsibilities among the actors involved in the peacekeeping mission. This will give room for efficient intervention and effective results through the use of division of labor and specializations. The Arusha Convention approved the Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi in 2000, but the implementation of this Convention was delayed due to a lack of willing countries to participate in the mission. The approach through which the African

Union has handled the Burundi conflicts is rather a mockery of the significance of the organization in Africa. This lackluster attitude helped in the escalation of the Burundi civil war until when it was finally brought to an end in 2005. After the Burundi civil war, the African Union's roles in Burundi became limited even when it was obvious that the level of Humanitarian crisis was still high.

The 2015 civil unrest in Burundi was another incident that witnessed the inefficient roles of the African Union to curtail and restore absolute peace in conflict zones. The civil unrest broke out when the then President refused to step down and instead, sought reelection for a third term in office. This move didn't go down well with the opposition who immediately staged protests around the state. To quell this protest, the government unleashed the soldiers on the protesters which resulted in a violent crisis that led to the loss of lives and properties. Burundi's postcolonial experience has been saddled with political violence and ethnic hatred which have resulted in making Burundians easy targets in times of conflict (Alusala, 2005:1). Rene Lemarchand has gone to lengths to assert in a 1988 testimony to the US Congress, that 'nowhere else in Africa have human rights been violated on a more massive scale, and with more brutal consistency, than in Burundi' (Lemarchand, 1989: 22). The long history of the Burundi conflict, such as the genocide of 1972, the ethnic tension observed in 1988, the civil war of 1993, and the civil unrest in 2015 demonstrate the inability of the AU to institute peace democracy devoid of political and ethnic rifts in Burundi.

**Figure 4. People Fleeing from Burundi to Rwanda due to Fear of Imminent Violence in the Upcoming Election**



Source: Culled from Edmund Kagire Fri., April 24, 2015

This image shows people fleeing from Burundi to Rwanda due to fear of imminent violence in the upcoming election.

**Figure5 illegal Torture of citizens by Burundi Police**



**Source: Human Right Watch, 2016.**

This image presents illegal torture in Burundi by soldiers. Perceived enemies of the government are usually apprehended by soldiers and tortured without following the due process of law.

**Figure 6, Burundi Refugees Stranded in Tanzania Camp**



**Source: Aljazeera America, August 10, 2015.**

The image shows Burundi refugees stranded in a Tanzania camp waiting to be registered having been forced to flee the country due to violence escalations and abuse of human rights by soldiers.

The Human Right Watch(2020) revealed the level of human rights abuse in Burundi to Include: unlawful or arbitrary killings, extrajudicial killings initiated by the government; torture, and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment on behalf of the government; harsh and sometimes life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners or detainees; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including violence, threats of violence, and unjustified arrests of journalists, censorship, site blocking, and the existence of criminal libel and The slander laws. (Human Right Watch, 2020 p.1-2)

Francis (2020) observed that the AU does not have adequate funds to carry out its tasks to the fullest, hence the increase in human rights abuse. The fact that the AU depends immensely on donors has drastically weakened the organization's ownership in this critical area of its mandate. In that light, the current financing arrangements for peace support operations are neither dependable nor foreseeable, especially in the framework of high-tempo combat operations. In his study, Jeng (2010) argued when the African Mission in Burundi (AMIB) was initiated in 2003, it provided a legal background for the deployment of troops in Burundi

in line with the objectives of the African Union, however, implementing these rules became a problem to the African Union. This further reflects why the recent uprising in Burundi has persisted even with the meager presence of the African Union. According to Conolly (2016), the African Union failed to send its representatives during the Burundi election in July 2015. It was after the election which was characterized by conflicts and violence in most parts of the country that the Union sent a handful of troops and observers. This has further reiterated the inability of the African Union to sustain relative peace in Burundi leading to a Humanitarian Crisis and mass exodus of refugees to neighboring African states.

To date, Burundi is still faced with violent uprisings from different parts of the country, and abuse of human rights by soldiers in Burundi's capital Bujumbura is on the rise. The promises made by the incumbent president Evariste Ndashimiye to support the mediation efforts of the African Union have been faulted; the African Union has become mere observers amid the crisis in Burundi.

### **Conclusion**

This study reveals that the African Union's adherence to the sovereignty of Burundi has allowed the Humanitarian crisis and abuse of Human Rights in Burundi to go unchecked. That has highlighted the high flow of refugees fleeing Burundi to other African countries leaving thousands of people, especially women and children displaced. Subsequently, the African Union's inefficiency to intervene and negotiate peace between the government and various rebel parties in Burundi is largely down to corruption, partisan politics, and duplication of roles by the organization hence the inefficiency to apply active measures to restore peace and true democracy in Burundi. Furthermore, the African Union has cited a lack of proper funds and insubordination of member-states to support the mission in Burundi. The regional Organ has become a mere spectator in the Burundi crisis to the detriment of civilian human rights abuse and arbitrary use of power by the government forces.

The African Union, according to some scholars, has made efforts to restore peace and security in Burundi through the African Union Peace and Security Council by sending a handful of troops and mediators, yet the upsurge in Human rights abuses and Humanitarian crises keep going higher by the day.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends that:

1. The African Union must implore critical solutions to critical conditions by applying force where required. While observing the sovereignty of Burundi, the African Union should coerce and enforce the negotiation and mediation process between the Burundi government and opposition forces to put an end to the crisis in the country.
2. The African Union must stand as a full force without duplication of roles which rather than strengthen, weakens their impact as witnessed in the case of Burundi were the African Union cited lack of funds and unwillingness of members to support the mission. This will enhance, credibility, Unity, and removal of the blame-game within the Organ, and thus make them very active in responding to conflict situations in Africa.

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