

Burundi

By Claudia Wiehler

After gaining independence in 1962, Burundi was governed for around 30 years by the Tutsi minority while the Hutu majority remained excluded from power. The exclusion and violent repression of the Hutu led to the emergence of several armed insurgent groups challenging the Tutsi government. From early on, these groups were characterised by a high level of fragmentation, with the armed wings of the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (Palipehutu) and the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) breaking away from their political mother organisations. Subsequently, these armed wings – Palipehutu-FNL and CNDD-FDD – continued splintering.

The conflict became increasingly violent from 1996 on, being closely intertwined with violent conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda until 2001. Battlefield violence reached its peak in 2000 and remained on a high level for the following three years until the major rebel group CNDD-FDD led by Pierre Nkurunziza reached a negotiated settlement with the government.

However, it took up to 2008 until the last violent faction signed a peace agreement. In the following five years, no battlefield violence was recorded by UCDP.

Ceasefires in the Burundi Peace Process

The peace process in Burundi can be analytically divided into four phases, each aiming on reaching a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement with one or more of the various factions active in this conflict (cf. Figure 1). This said, the course of the first phase remarkably differs from the other three phases.

The first phase involved the CNDD, FROLINA, and Palipehutu. In June 1998, the three armed groups and the government agreed on a preliminary ceasefire and the

Overview Box

- Between 1989 and 2017, there were 31 ceasefires, all related to conflict fought over the government incompatibility.
- 27 ceasefires were related to the peace process.
- 9 ceasefires were declared unilaterally, 18 were bilateral, and 4 multilateral.
- 20 of the 31 ceasefires involved external mediators, mainly Tanzania and South Africa.
- The high fragmentation of the non-state armed groups resulted in several phases of ceasefire negotiations and separate negotiated settlements.

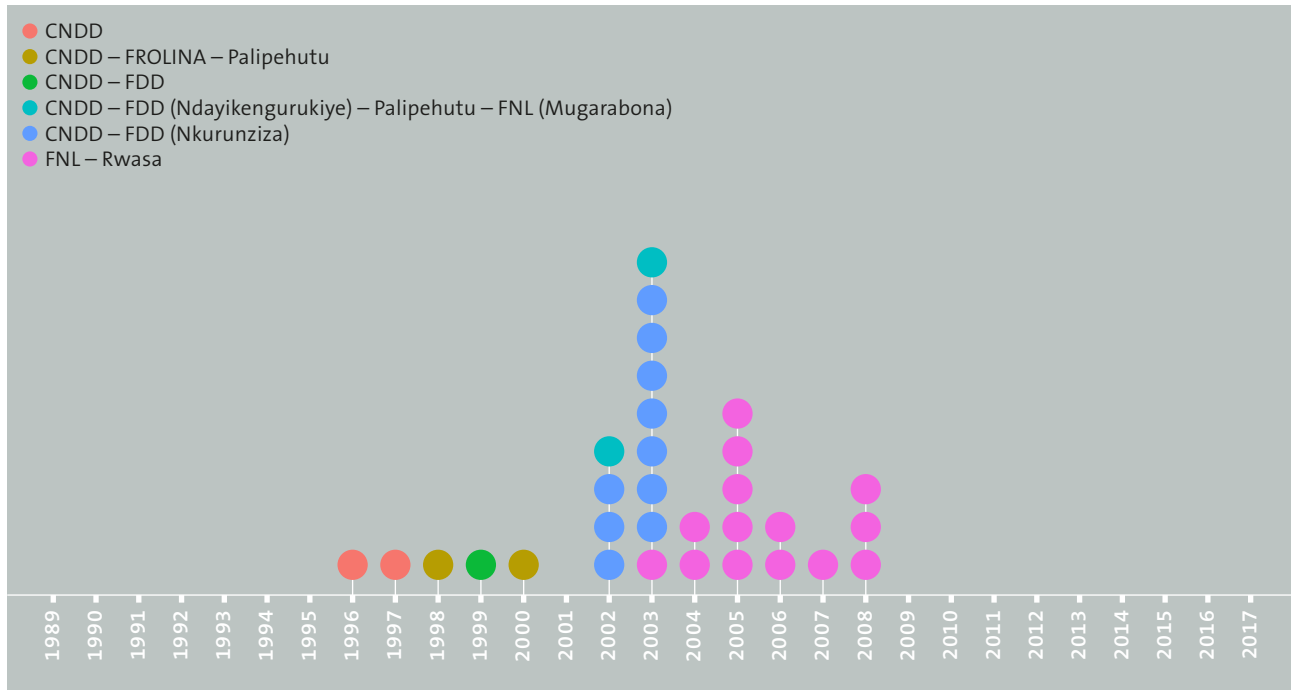


Figure 1: Ceasefire declarations in the Burundi civil conflict

start of negotiations. Yet, the ceasefire collapsed shortly after. It took another two years until the Arusha Agreement was reached in 2000, including a negotiated settlement of the government incompatibility and a definitive ceasefire. With the Arusha Agreement, the armed struggle of these three groups ended.

In contrast, definitive ceasefires were concluded relatively quickly during the three other phases of the peace process. Yet, these ceasefires were, first, not able to fully stop the violence and, second, faced major problems concerning their implementation. Against this background, the conflict parties were pushed by third parties to reiterate their commitment to these agreements several times: nearly half of the ceasefire declarations during these three phases (13 out of 27) were recommitments or extensions to earlier agreements.

In the second phase of the peace process, two minor factions of the CNDD-FDD and the Palipehutu-FNL agreed on a definitive ceasefire with the government in October 2002, regulating their integration into the army and transitional institutions. After one more recommitment, the conflict between these factions and the government ended with their integration into the transitional government in May 2003.

During the third phase of the peace process, the CNDD-FDD faction led by Nkurunziza agreed on ten ceasefires (including recommitments) between October 2002 and November 2003 (cf. Figure 3). As early as December 2002, the two sides agreed on a definitive ceasefire including DDR, implementation provisions and an enforcement mission by the African Union. Yet, four partial settlements including ceasefires had to be concluded until a final agreement was reached in November 2003.

At that point in time, only the Palipehutu-FNL faction led by Rwasa continued its armed struggle and it took another five years, 13 ceasefire declarations and allegedly a lot of third party pressure to reach a final settlement. First attempts to end the violence with preliminary ceasefires in 2005 failed and another year passed until a definitive ceasefire was reached. Rwasa, however, criticised the slow pace of its implementation and recommitments in June 2007 as well as in May and June 2008 were supposed to prevent the collapse of the agreement. The final ceasefire ending the conflict with Rwasa’s faction was reached in December 2008.

Notably, only five ceasefires were declared unilaterally across all phases of the peace process. Four of these

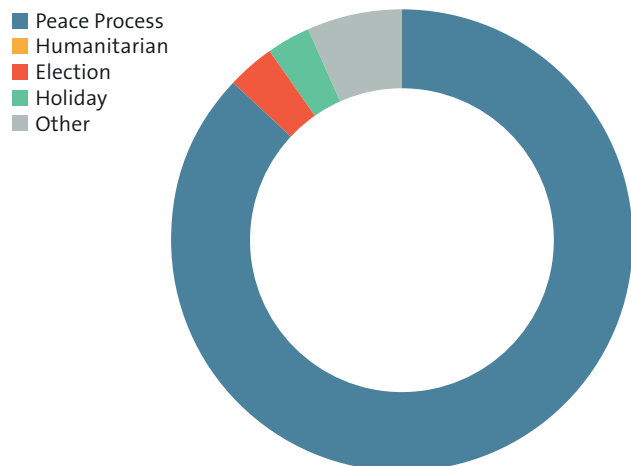


Figure 2: Ceasefires by purpose

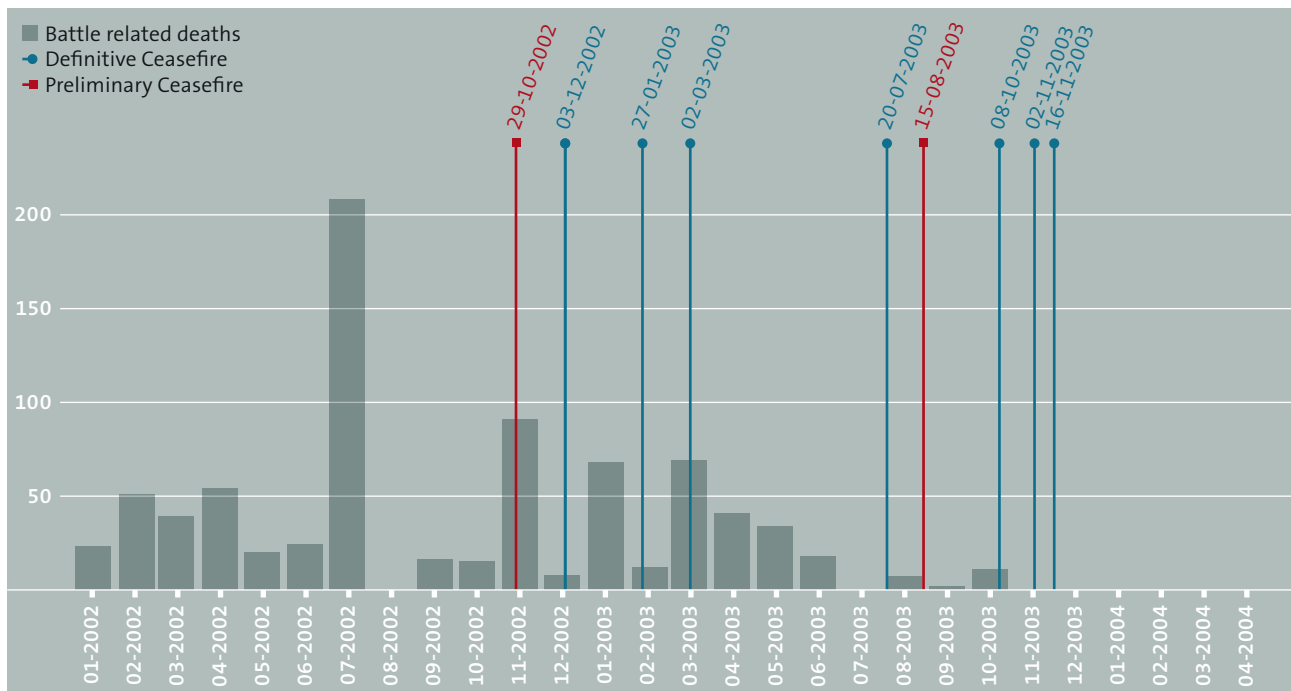


Figure 3: Ceasefire declarations and battle related deaths for the CNDD-FDD-government dyad¹

were declared at the beginning of the respective peace talks in order to facilitate the negotiations.

Ceasefires Outside the Peace Process

Four ceasefires were not related to the described peace processes but had other (stated) objectives (cf. Figure 2). All of them were declared unilaterally. Interestingly, not a single ceasefire was declared to enable humanitarian action. The only holiday related ceasefire was declared by the CNDD for the Christmas and New Year holidays in 1996/1997. Noteworthy, this was the very first ceasefire recorded for this conflict. One ceasefire was announced after the death of Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, to honour

his engagement as a mediator in Burundi by the CNDD-FDD in October 1999.

The FNL-Rwasa declared two ceasefires unrelated to the peace process: One followed the UN appeal to observe the world peace day; the other should enable the constitutional referendum that resulted from the peace process between the CNDD-FDD led by Nkurunziza and the government.

Endnote

1. The Figure displays only nine declaration events because two ceasefires were declared on the 3rd of December 2002: One definitive ceasefire and one preliminary ceasefire to be in effect until the definitive one starts.

Ceasefire Country Reports are part of the Ceasefire Project, a collaboration between the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich, and the Peace Research Institute in Oslo. They provide short summaries of the role played by ceasefires in civil conflict. All analyses are based on the ETH/PRIO Ceasefire Dataset.

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