

Armed Conflict

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MAY
12:09 UTC

Burundi Alert (UPDATE): At least two killed in simultaneous grenade attacks in Bujumbura on evening hours of May 25

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Please be advised

- Reports indicate that four grenade attacks took place approximately at the same time around 19:00 (local time) on May 25 in different bus parking lots in Bujumbura.
- The attacks reportedly took place in Bujumbura's Musaga, Bwiza, and Buterere districts, as well as near the Cotebu market.
- Sources noted that six individuals died, while the Ministry of Interior stated that two had died and that multiple individuals were injured, including one of the assailants, who was subsequently arrested. An investigation was launched to identify the perpetrators.



Assessments & Forecast

1. This follows a relative lull in such attacks, with the latest grenade attacks in Bujumbura recorded in May 2020 in the context of a highly tense electoral period. While no group has claimed responsibility for previous similar attacks, such attacks are often politically motivated and are conducted by individuals sympathetic to the opposition as well as to rebel groups that are largely based in eastern DRC. In this context, it is noteworthy that the Burundian Resistance for the Rule of Law in Burundi (RED-Tabara) rebel group had recently issued a statement on May 20 to mark a year since President Evariste Ndayishimiye's election. The group denounced continued repressive policies of the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) and called on the public to continue the struggle for Burundi's "liberation".
2. While this statement does not include a direct threat for renewed attacks, it may have been perceived by sympathizers of the group or other dissentive elements as an encouragement to take action, particularly to capitalize on the symbolism associated with the anniversary of Ndayishimiye's election. Regardless of the perpetrators's identity, the infrequency of such attacks may reflect the largely successful security efforts in Burundi's economic capital. **FORECAST:** This incident is poised to trigger enhanced security measures in Bujumbura, with the security forces intensifying their presence across the city through checkpoints and patrols. Additionally, this is also likely to trigger mass arrests, including arbitrary arrests of political opponents, with the authorities expected to accuse the detainees of alleged links to rebels.
3. – : Given the precedent, combined with the fact that the latest attack included the targeting of four different locations and as the assailants have not been apprehended, there remains the possibility that involved assailants are still able to conduct additional attacks in Bujumbura in the near future. While sporadic in nature given the enhanced security presence across the city, the attacks may target bus stations, government-associated buildings and bars frequented by government personnel. Meanwhile, these latest developments may also encourage other dissidents in Burundi's rural areas. Sporadic rebel presence is known to remain in rural areas including Cibitoke, Bubanza and Kayanza provinces along the Rwandan border, as well as Rumonge and Bururi provinces along the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Thus, encouraged rebels or local dissidents may engage in armed clashes with security forces or targeting ruling party officials in the coming weeks.

Recommendations

1. Travel to Bujumbura should be restricted to essential purposes only given the volatile security situation, while avoiding all travel to outlying areas of Burundi.
2. Avoid areas of Bujumbura that are prone to opposition unrest, including Cibitoke, Bwiza, Mutakura, Kamenge, Musaga, Kanyosha, Nyakabiga, Gatumbua, and Ngagara.
3. Those operating in Burundi are advised to carry necessary personal identification when traveling due to the potential for increased security checks. If approached by security forces, we advise to be compliant and not take any actions that could increase tensions or trigger suspicion.