

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI**PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC
Secretariat-General of the State****COMMUNIQUE FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI ON THE SITUATION OF BURUNDIAN
REFUGEES IN THE MAHAMA CAMP IN RWANDA**

1. On July 26, 2020, three hundred and thirty-one (331) Burundian refugees in the Mahama camp in Rwanda sent a letter to His Excellency the President of the Republic of Burundi to request his involvement in their repatriation into their country of origin in dignity and lawfully within the framework of voluntary repatriation, given that the cause of their exile no longer exists.
2. On August 05, 2020, five (5) Burundian refugees signatories of the letter of July 26, 2020 seized the Diplomatic Mission of Burundi in Kigali, also by letter, by which they denounce the threats by Madame Marguerite BARANKITSE, founder of the NGO Maison Shalom, a refugee herself in Rwanda, and request their physical protection.
3. It should be recalled that the said refugees are recognized and assisted within the framework of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. They are therefore in the hands of the host country and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who have the obligation, in accordance with International Law, to remove any artificial obstacle aimed at keeping refugees in refugee camps against their will.
4. The UNHCR has the role of guardian of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol and is therefore the keystone of refugee protection.
5. In accordance with this legislation, member states must cooperate with UNHCR to ensure that the rights of refugees are fully respected and protected, and to prevent refugees from being held hostage for political reasons.

6. From the foregoing, the Government of the Republic of Burundi calls on the UNHCR and the host Government to ensure that the Burundian refugees in Rwanda who have expressed their desire to return to their country are protected as well as their families, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the said Convention.
7. The Government of the Republic of Burundi is naturally disposed to warmly and worthily welcome its daughters and sons who wish to return to their homeland.
8. The Government of the Republic of Burundi would like to take this opportunity to thank the UNHCR and the host countries which facilitated the voluntary return of Burundian refugees to their country and invites those who are not yet cooperating in this movement of return of refugees to do the same.
9. The Government of the Republic of Burundi reiterates its encouragement to those of the Burundian refugees still in exile to return to their homeland to bring a contribution to the socio-economic development of their country.

Done at Bujumbura, August 8th, 2020

**Prosper NTAHORWAMIYE
Secretary-General and Spokesman**