



Travel Warning: Burundi

Political Violence; Religious Violence

11/8/2012

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of traveling to Burundi. This Travel Warning replaces the Travel Warning for Burundi dated April 18, 2012, to reiterate existing security concerns and to note that security restrictions on travel for Embassy personnel remain in place.

Because Burundi participates in peacekeeping operations in Somalia, the terrorist organization al-Shabaab, based in Somalia, has threatened to conduct terror attacks in Burundi. It may also target U.S. interests in Burundi.

The Burundian civil war that lasted from 1993 to 2006 often involved non-governmental and non-combatant targets. In December 2008, the government and the last rebel group signed their final cease-fire agreement in which the rebel group agreed to demobilize and register as a political party. Burundi held general elections in 2010 which were generally considered credible. However, political tensions ran high and there were incidents of violence during the campaign period. Low-level political violence persists; the areas of Bujumbura Rural, Makamba, Rumonge, and the area neighboring the Kibira forest are of particular concern.

There are no known armed militia groups operating in Burundi; however, weapons are easy to obtain and some ex-combatants have turned to crime or political violence. Crime, often committed by groups of armed bandits or street children, poses the highest risk for foreign visitors to both Bujumbura and Burundi in general. Exchanges of gunfire and grenade attacks are common even in densely populated urban areas. You should stay indoors, in a ground floor interior room, if gunfire or explosions occur nearby. Common crimes include muggings, burglaries, and robberies. Visitors should keep vehicle doors locked and windows up, and be careful when stopped in heavy traffic, due to the threat of robbery and theft. The U.S.

Embassy has received reports of armed criminals ambushing vehicles, particularly on the roads leading out of Bujumbura. The U.S. Embassy prohibits U.S. government personnel from walking on the streets after dark and from using local public transportation at any time.

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Due to a lack of resources, local authorities in any part of Burundi are often unable to provide timely assistance during an emergency.

U.S. citizens should be aware that even gatherings and demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn violent. U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to Burundi are reminded to maintain a high level of security awareness at all times and avoid political rallies, demonstrations, and crowds of any kind. Even seemingly peaceful sporting events can become politicized and turn violent. U.S. citizens should routinely monitor local media sources and the internet for reports of demonstrations and unrest.

The U.S. Embassy continues to caution U.S. citizens that travel outside the capital, Bujumbura, presents significant risks, especially after nightfall. The U.S. Embassy restricts the travel of its personnel in Burundi. Within 30 km/18 miles of the city, Embassy employees may travel in single vehicles, but are advised to check in and out with the Embassy. The Embassy's Regional Security Officer (RSO) must pre-approve all Embassy personnel travel outside this approximately 30-km radius of Bujumbura, and employees must travel via an approved itinerary in two-vehicle convoys equipped with satellite phones, GPS, and emergency equipment. All employee movement outside the city after dark is forbidden; the Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens not travel on national highways from dusk to dawn. U.S. citizens are also encouraged to avoid traveling within the city of Bujumbura after midnight.

Corruption is endemic in Burundi and contributes to an environment where the rule of law is not respected. Government officials may ask for bribes for providing routine services. Travelers are frequently stopped, questioned, and asked for bribes by security forces at numerous official and unofficial road blocks throughout the country. Likewise, criminals who have paid off local officials may operate without fear of prosecution.

U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Burundi despite this Travel Warning are urged to contact the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura for information on the latest Embassy security guidance, and to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) so they can receive the most up-to-date security information. Please keep all of your information in STEP current. It is important when enrolling or updating information to include multiple phone numbers and email addresses to facilitate communication in the event of an emergency.

U.S. citizens without Internet access may register directly with the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura at Avenue des Etats-Unis. The hours for non-emergency American Citizens Services are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays, and 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Fridays. The Embassy Consular section can be reached by

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telephone, including for after-hours emergencies, at +257-22-20-7000, or by fax at +257-22-22-2926. Security information for U.S. citizens in Burundi is posted at Embassy Bujumbura's website.

For further information, consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for Burundi and the current Worldwide Caution, available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet website. Current information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444 for callers from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Stay up to date by bookmarking our Bureau of Consular Affairs website, which contains the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts as well as the Worldwide Caution. Follow us on Twitter and the Bureau of Consular Affairs page on Facebook as well. You can also download our free Smart Traveler App, available through iTunes and the Android market to have travel information at your fingertips.

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