



**UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND (INC)**

Te Roopu Whakakotahi Whenua o Aotearoa

The Peoples Movement for the United Nations

Member of the World Federation of United Nations Associations

**NORTHERN REGION BRANCH**

PO Box 5816, Wellesley St, Auckland, [www.unanz.org.nz](http://www.unanz.org.nz)

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

**UNHCR Tanzania  
18 Kalenga Street, Upanga  
PO Box 2666 Dar-es-Salam  
Tanzania, Africa**

Cc: UNHCR Australia / Kenya/ Geneva  
Immigration New Zealand /Refugee Quota Branch  
Burundian Community in New Zealand Inc.  
US Committee for Refugees (USCR)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Burundian Refugees in Kanembwa/Mtabila refugee camps**

I am writing to you regarding the current hardships facing Burundian refugees in Mtabila and Kanembwa Refugee Camps.

You may perhaps remember my writing to you three years ago with regard to the upload resettlement cases that had been pending for a long time.

Unfortunately it has become known that these refugees' basic rights have been violated. The denial of basic services in refugee camps such as education is a violation of the July 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Protection and Article VIII 10<sup>th</sup> September 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

Schools for young children should not be closed in camps under the pretext of pushing refugees to repatriate. Article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that, "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages".

It is known that UNHCR has three durable solutions: voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement. We also acknowledge the kindness of the Tanzanian Government to

integrate Burundians as well as the efforts of UNHCR to repatriate refugees to their country of origin.

A few months ago UNHCR Tanzania relocated some Burundian resettlement cases to Kanembwa Refugee Camp while waiting for their cases to be finalized. Some refugees expected to be interviewed by immigration officers from the country to which their cases were referred. Instead of finalizing their cases, UNHCR Tanzania started warehousing those refugees and now is planning to return them to the camp where some report they have been abused (raped). These vulnerable refugees are left in limbo, suffering trauma and stress

Example: **Case: UNHCR ref: UN877-97H36393, UNHCR Ration Token: No: 049868.** This traumatized woman was raped in the camp and now has been taken to Kanembwa Camp. More than 12 months later she experienced difficulty in contacting you and has not received any follow-up to her case. Her daughter has been refused to be reunited with the child of her husband while it is one family. Please refer to **UN 877-94H18030, UNHCR Ration Token no: 096051.**

There are other cases that need to be investigated and I am happy to provide other documentation.

It is inhumane to allow this situation to continue. It would also be shameful for these families to return to the places where they faced such horrible incidents.

I have found great difficulty trying to ascertain what actions have been taken with regard to these cases.

Unless some decisive action is taken in these cases, the present state of uncertainty will continue indefinitely. Protecting refugees with dignity is the responsibility of UNHCR.

Refugees are not criminals; they are human beings and victims who fled from brutal war. Therefore they need clear communication and understanding. Refugee's rights should not be violated nor should they suffer through ignorance of their rights, or through an inability to express their needs effectively.

We request UNHCR Tanzania to take immediate action to:

- Find appropriate durable solutions to the refugee cases above that are still pending
- Protect with dignity those refugees who have been forgotten in Kanembwa Camp
- Reopen the refugees' basic education classes in Mtabila Refugee Camp.

We also request that the New Zealand, USA, Canada and European countries that have shown kindness to refugees continue their programmes of resettlement of Burundian and other refugees who are struggling to survive.

We hope you will seriously look at the cases in the Kanembwa/Mtabila camp, as I know that they will be glad to hear from you.

Kindest regards,

Jean-Paul Bizoza

**National Special Officer / Humanitarian Affairs**

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Northern Region Branch, Auckland

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