January: On New Year’s Eve Burundi’s environmental minister, Emmanuel Niyonkuru was shot dead while on his way home. And this is just one of many hundreds of people killed in the unrest since President Nkurunziza’s third term commenced. However, this is the first time a serving government minister has been killed, the prior victims were civilians and high-ranking army officials. The President has since stated that the crime will not be overlooked.

February: UNHCR released a regional update, which featured several figures regarding Burundi and its refugees. There are 404,226 Burundian refugees in asylum countries in the time frame since April 2015 through February 2017. And for the overall situation, the UNHCR has requested 214.5 million. Thus far, the organization is keeping up with their monitoring activities in return areas, as well as starting preparations for potential voluntary returns. This report also mentions the actions of neighboring countries in regards to Burundian refugees, such as Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

March: As of March 2017 there has been reports of renewed mineral smuggling attempts out of Burundi. Though this increase has been of failed attempts, the police and Burundi’s Mining Office (OBM) have noted a vast decrease in illicit mineral traffic. They accredit such a decrease to dissuasive actions i.e. heavy prison sentences and fines, and the change of the people’s mentality. OBM has also discouraged illicit activities through workshop with the civil administration, security forces, secret services, and the population to raise awareness on the prevention of illicit traffic.

Smugglers here primarily deal with cassiterite and coltan, though the country is rich in minerals such as gold, coltan, cassiterite, woldramite, valium, and nickel mines. The natural resources and the decrease in smuggling are important because the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the European Union have acknowledged that the mining sector can potentially contribute to economic growth in the country. Currently the mining sector contributes less than 1% to the national economy, but that is due to mismanagement and corruption in the sectors of energy and mining. And there has been great improvement in the mining sector since the OBM began operations in 2016, and such positive developments has been recognized by the international NGO PACT. Also in the works, Burundi is trying to become a member of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI). This initiative is a global standard created to promote open and accountable management of extractive resources; which can either greatly help the country or renew illicit practices or go against national interests.

Special points of interest:
- How has the international community approached similar issues of political instability in the past? In what areas were they successful, and how have they been lacking?
- What are the most prevalent concerns of the UNSC, and what actions have they already taken on this matter?
- Are there any IGO’s or NGO’s involves in this situation, and if so to what extent?
- How effective has Resolution 2320 (2016) been at addressing the issue, and what further action needs to be taken?
- How will the committee address the concerns of the refugees and political prisoners in Burundi amidst the security situation?

Sources: