

## Tanzanian deportation operation kicks off

Nearly 600 Burundian refugees have been sent home from Tanzania, the first of a planned mass deportation. Nestor Bimenyimana, who is running the operation, said the refugees are returning voluntarily because the country's security and political conditions have improved dramatically ahead of Burundi's May 2020 Presidential election. Conflict erupted in Burundi in 2015 over President Pierre Nkurunziza's efforts to secure a third term. A report on the [allAfrica](#) site notes that the human rights abuses and persecution of political opponents that followed caused hundreds of thousands of Burundians to flee to Tanzania. In March 2018, the UN refugee agency UNHCR, Tanzania and Burundi signed a trilateral treaty making it easier for refugees to return home voluntarily. **In August, the countries signed a bilateral deal agreeing to return 200 000 Burundian refugees home by the end of the year.** However, the UNHCR is calling on Dar es Salaam to refrain from deporting the refugees against their will, saying their lives may be in danger when they get home. UNHCR spokesperson Kate Pond said at least 175 000 Burundian refugees have voluntarily left Tanzania since 2017.