



# DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

**UN Human Rights Council – 42<sup>nd</sup> regular session**

**Item 4: Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi**

**Oral statement**

*Delivered by: Pierre Claver Mbonimpa*

Mr. President, dear Members of the Commission of Inquiry,

DefendDefenders thanks you for your report, which once again demonstrates the need for continued attention to Burundi's human rights situation. The Commission of Inquiry is the only existing mechanism to monitor and publicly report on the situation, and its mandate should be extended to allow it to pursue its important work.

As this Council meets in Geneva, in Burundi, violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights – including possible crimes against humanity – continue to be committed with impunity. Independent and critical voices, including civil society members, human rights defenders and journalists, have been particularly targeted. In July, the Ntahangwa Court of Appeal upheld the outrageous 32-year prison sentence against Germain Rukuki. With 2020 elections approaching, as the limited civic and democratic space in the country and the intimidation exercised by the Government, the ruling party, and members of the *Imbonerakure* hamper the prospects for a free and fair election, the scrutiny provided by the Commission remains vitally important.

As Burundi's crisis was triggered by the 2015 presidential election and most violations, in the words of the Commission, are essentially "political in nature," Council Members and Observers should dedicate specific attention to elections and risk factors of human rights violations and abuses.

Dear Commissioners,

What more can be done to promote the risk factors and indicators identified in your report, as well as a holistic prevention and early warning approach, within the UN system and beyond?

Thank you for your attention.