



# DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 43<sup>rd</sup> regular session

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

Oral statement

*Delivered by: Pierre Claver Mbonimpa*

Madam President, dear members of the Commission of Inquiry,

In September 2019, the Human Rights Council decided to renew the mandate of the Commission and maintain a high-level of scrutiny of Burundi. Since then, and as the May 2020 presidential election approaches, the human rights situation in the country has not improved.

The pre-electoral period is characterised by ongoing grave violations of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights (including arbitrary arrests (particularly of CNL members) and extrajudicial killings) and a full-fledged civic space crisis. The government, the ruling CNDD-FDD party, and members of the *Imbonerakure* continue to exercise intimidation, hampering the prospects for a free and fair election. We are also worried about violence in refugee camps outside of Burundi. Regarding human rights, the “risk factor” approach outlined by the Commission remains a key tool to analyse the situation.

DefendDefenders reiterates its call on Burundian authorities to bring the repression to an end, ensure accountability and hold perpetrators of grave violations to account, open the civic and democratic space, and immediately and unconditionally release prisoners of conscience, including human rights defenders Germain Rukuki and Nestor Nibitanga, and Iwacu journalists Agnès Ndirubusa, Christine Kamikazi, Egide Harerimana, and Téreence Mpozenzi, whose condemnation was strongly [criticised](#) by two UN experts.

We once again urge Burundi to change course and cooperate with OHCHR, allow the Office to operate in the country again, and engage with the CoI.

Commissioners: At this point, and building on the risk factors and indicators you identified, what more can be done to encourage regional and international actors to continue dedicating their utmost attention to Burundi’s human rights situation?

Thank you.