



DEFEND DEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

UN Human Rights Council – 45th regular session

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

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Madam President, dear Commissioners,

Four years after the creation of the Commission of Inquiry (CoI), investigations, monitoring, reporting, and public debates on Burundi are still direly needed. Ahead of this session, more than 40 NGOs called on the Council to extend the Commission's mandate, as it provides the best opportunity to prompt meaningful human rights progress in the country.

The [letter](#) outlines the grave violations and abuses committed in Burundi since 2015 in a context of near-complete impunity. Despite calls on the new President, Évariste Ndayishimiye, to demonstrate his openness to reconciliation by releasing all detained human rights defenders (HRDs), Germain Rukuki, Nestor Nibitanga, and Iwacu reporters Egide Harerimana, Christine Kamikazi, Terence Mpozenzi and Agnès Ndirubusa, remain in detention.

In Burundi, violations continue. Outside the country, Burundian refugees, including women refugees, exiled HRDs and women HRDs, particularly those who have been subjected to sexual violence before fleeing, face ongoing challenges, including pressure to return home in conditions that are not safe, dignified, and in some cases, voluntary. They first need to rebuild their lives in order to prepare their future whether they return home or chose to integrate in their host country.

The civil society letter also outlines a path forward for Burundi and its people. As the country is in a period of potential transition, there are signs of promise as well as of significant concern. Tangible progress is yet to be registered regarding priority areas for action, including the fight against poverty, the fight against impunity, reform of the judicial system, the re-opening of the democratic and civic space, and cooperation with UN and African human rights mechanisms.

We urge the Burundian authorities to re-initiate dialogue with the international community and to make measurable progress on key human rights indicators.

Thank you for your attention.