



UN Security Council should authorize robust UN Police Deployment to Protect the Burundian Population

As Burundian, African and International NGOs deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Burundi, we strongly urge the UN Security Council to authorize the deployment of a robust police protection and monitoring presence as soon as possible.

Today marks one year since violence broke out in Burundi. Since April 2015, some 700 people have been killed, approximately 4,300 have been arbitrarily detained and at least 800 people have been forcibly disappeared. Furthermore, more than 250,000 Burundians have fled the country – giving a clear indication of the seriousness of the crisis. In recent months the situation has deteriorated further. Mass graves have been unearthed; secret detention facilities have been discovered; and there is credible evidence of torture inside detention facilities.

On January 15, 2016, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said that “all the alarm signals, including the increasing ethnic dimension of the crisis, are flashing red.” Targeted and extra-judicial killings, daily arbitrary arrests and detention, and enforced disappearances continue to be documented. Many abuses are now taking place under the radar, with security forces secretly taking people away and refusing to account for them. We have also seen an increase in attacks by unidentified armed men, reportedly linked to rebel groups.

The ongoing crimes could already qualify as crimes against humanity. A strong response is needed from the UN, especially through the deployment of police to protect people from ongoing grave human rights violations.

The UN Secretary General has given the Security Council three options for a police contribution to the United Nations presence in Burundi. The report notes that only the first of these options “could provide some degree of physical protection to the population against increased threats.”

We therefore call on Council Members to support this option – or a variation thereof that is similarly able to provide protection – in order to respond to the urgent protection threats on the ground, prevent mass atrocities, and contribute to a broader effort to create a more conducive environment for political dialogue. Effective coordination with the AU and particularly with the AU human rights observers and military experts will be essential. We also urge Council members to support an increased OHCHR presence on the ground to step up coordinated efforts to monitor, report and follow up on human rights violations.

The crisis in Burundi continues to have regional ramifications and poses an ongoing threat to international peace and security. This is exacerbated by the Burundian government’s inability or unwillingness to protect its own population. As Burundians face increased threats, it is incumbent upon the Security Council to finally take action to protect the Burundian population. The swift deployment of a sizeable UN police presence capable of providing protection is a much-needed step.

Signed:

Africa Peace Forum (APF)

Association Burundais pour la Protection des Droits Humains et des Personnes Detenus (APRODH)

CCFD - Terre Solidaire : Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement

Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE)

European Network for Central Africa (EurAC)

Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH)

Forum pour la Conscience et le Développement (FOCODE)

Forum pour la Renforcement de la Societe Civile au Burundi (FORSC)

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)

International Center for Policy and Conflict

International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)

Ligue des Droits de la Personne dans la Region des Grands Lacs (LDGL)

Ligue Iteka: Ligue Burundaise des Droits de l'Homme

Mouvement des Femmes et des Filles pour la Paix et la Sécurité au Burundi (MFFPS)

Mensen Met Een Missie

Ökumenisches Netz Zentralafrika

STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities

Tearfund