

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Burundi: Amnesty International outlines key human rights concerns in Burundi

At the 10th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland held on 18 March Amnesty International urged the Government of Burundi not to pass a law criminalizing same-sex relations and to release all prisoners of conscience.

The Human Rights Council under its Universal Periodic Review mechanism was considering human rights situations of several countries, including Burundi.

In its presentation to the Human Rights Council, Amnesty International asked the Burundian government to reconsider a provision of its draft penal code which makes it a criminal offence to engage in same-sex sexual relations.

Amnesty International called on the Burundian government not to pass a law, which results in people being arrested, tried, imprisoned or discriminated against on the basis of their actual or suspected sexual orientation.

The organisation also informed the Council that prisoners of conscience remain in prison in Burundi, including Juvénal Rududura.

The government of Burundi must release from prison all people imprisoned solely for peacefully expressing criticism.

Amnesty International welcomed the initiative taken by the Burundian government to establish an independent national human rights commission. However, the organization is concerned about the draft bill which will create the commission. If passed into law in its current state, there is a risk that the commission will have severely limited powers of enquiry, restricted jurisdiction, and it will not be sufficiently independent from the authority of the government; all of which would seriously limit its effectiveness as a human rights watch dog. The Burundian government should revise the draft bill to address these concerns, which Amnesty International has also raised with the government in a letter.

Background:

The Human Rights Council was created by the General Assembly in 2006 as the principal human rights body of the UN. The Council is composed of 47 elected Member States. These member states are expected to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council meets in sessions throughout the year and can address both thematic and country-based human rights issues and make recommendations to States. The Council also undertakes a review of the fulfilment of the human rights obligations of every UN Member State through the Universal Periodic Review.

Juvénal Rududura, the Vice-President of the trade union of non magistrate staff at the Department of Justice, (le Vice-président du Syndicat du personnel non-magistrat) was

arrested on 15 September 2008 for making accusations on radio that staff at the Ministry of Justice were providing positions in acceptance for bribes.
Journalist and prisoner of conscience Jean-Claude Kavumbagu was arrested on 11 September 2008 and charged with defamation. He was acquitted of the charges on Wednesday 18 March 2009.

Public Document

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