UN Human Rights Council  
Thirty-first session: 29 February – 24 March 2016  

Item 10:  
Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on Burundi

Mr President,

Since the beginning of the political crisis in April 2015, the situation in Burundi has deteriorated dramatically. Urgent action continues to be required to end pervasive human rights abuses and to establish trust in the justice system and the rule of law, to avoid much worse.

Over the last year, Amnesty International has documented excessive use of force by security forces against protesters, large-scale arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions, as well as an increased use of torture and other ill-treatment in detention. Independent investigations into and prosecutions for these violations are essential, and we urge the government to cooperate fully with the Independent Investigation on Burundi.

Our analysis of satellite imagery, video footage and witness testimony strongly indicates that the Burundian authorities buried people killed by police on 11 December 2015 in mass graves, specifically in five graves at a site in Buringa. The Prosecutor General stated that a Commission of Inquiry had found no mass graves in the locations cited in NGO reports. Further investigations by independent international and regional investigators should be carried out at Buringa and other suspected mass grave sites. When suspected grave sites are opened up by the authorities, as has been the case in recent weeks, independent observers and forensics experts must be present. Authorities must ensure that any bodies found are exhumed and examined by independent forensic experts to determine the causes of death and establish the victims’ identities, and that families of victims are treated with dignity and respect.

Mr President,

While some positive steps have been taken, such as the provisional release last week of 41 youths arrested during the protests, much more is needed. We urge the Council to: a) remind the Government of Burundi of the pledges and commitments it made, as a candidate for membership of the Council, to advance human rights; b) take effective measures to ensure Burundi cooperates fully with independent investigations; and c) urge all sides to commit to inclusive talks to bring an end to the crisis.

Thank you Mr. President.