



AI Index: AFR 16/2695/2020
14 July 2020

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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

BURUNDI: CONCRETE ACTION NEEDED BY NEW GOVERNMENT

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-fourth session
30 June – 17 July 2020

Madam President,

Amnesty International thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its oral update.

Burundi is in a period of transition. Following elections in May, the inauguration of President Evariste Ndayishimiye was brought forward after the death of outgoing President Pierre Nkurunziza. We urge the new government to make concrete improvements to the country's human rights situation. The Council must remain actively engaged on the situation in Burundi, including pressing for meaningful improvements at this important moment.

As the Commission has reported, the election campaign period was marked by acts of violence and human rights violations. There were clashes between supporters of the ruling party and the opposition National Congress for Freedom (CNL). The CNL reported that more than 600 members were arrested before and during election day, including some candidates. President Ndayishimiye emphasised during his inauguration that dialogue holds an important place in Burundian tradition and that all Burundians should be able to express themselves without fear or constraint. As demonstrated during the electoral period, concrete action is needed to make these promises a reality.

Respect for freedom of expression requires that government opponents and supporters alike can voice unpopular or controversial opinions without fear of reprisals. Robust reporting by journalists and human rights defenders helps ensure timely and accurate access to information and contributes to meaningful debate on issues of national importance. Amnesty International calls on Burundi's new government to demonstrate that it values freedom of expression by immediately and unconditionally freeing the journalists and HRDs serving jail time solely for exercising their human rights.

Finally, a question for the Commission of Inquiry: what measures should the new government prioritize to concretely improve the human rights situation in Burundi?

Thank you, Madam President.