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ORAL STATEMENT
ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

SUSTAINED ATTENTION NEEDED TO ADDRESS HUMAN RIGHTS CRISIS IN BURUNDI

UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-eighth session
18 June – 6 July 2018

Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the oral update of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, and their vital work to document the ongoing human rights crisis in the country.

Given the commitments made by Burundi at this Council last September, we are disappointed but not surprised that the team of experts set up by this Council was expelled from Burundi last month, and have since been barred access to the country. We join the High Commissioner in urging the Government to re-establish engagement with all the regional and international human rights bodies, including by allowing access to the Commission of Inquiry and the team of experts.

Mr. President,

Last month's referendum took place in a context of continuing repression. Less than two weeks before the vote, the National Communications Council suspended radio broadcasts by the Voice of America and the BBC. During the official campaign period, there were frequent reports of arrests, beatings and intimidation of those campaigning for a "No" vote.

While President Nkurunziza has recently indicated that he will not run in 2020, concerted action is required to ensure that the authorities fully respect the human rights of everyone, including the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, in the context of the 2020 elections. A good start would be the immediate and unconditional release of the five human rights defenders currently imprisoned solely because of their human rights work, including Germain Rukuki, who was sentenced to 32 years imprisonment on 26 April. We also urge the authorities to ensure Mr. Rukuki gets the medical care he needs following a recent injury sustained while in custody.

Journalist Jean Bigirimana has now been missing for almost two years, and is one of many

victims of enforced disappearances during this crisis. There is a total lack of accountability. Victims and survivors of grave human rights violations in Burundi and their families, deserve reparation and justice.

What steps would the Commission of Inquiry recommend to restore confidence in the justice system, and what must be done by the Government and the international community to ensure accountability for human rights violations?

Thank you, Mr. President.