

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Burundi: Amnesty International statement during the Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Burundi

Amnesty International delivered the following statement during the interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Burundi, Dr Fatsah Ouguergouz, at the 17th session of the UN Human Rights Council (Geneva, 30 May - 17 June 2011).

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Seventeenth Session
30 May – 17 June 2011

Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building
Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Burundi

Thank you Madame President

Amnesty International welcomes the report of the Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Burundi and the specific attention it draws to the link between impunity for past crimes under international law and human rights violations during last year's elections. We also share the Independent Expert's concerns regarding restrictions on the right to freedom of expression and association and, in particular, the persistent harassment of human rights defenders.

Dr. Ouguergouz,

Amnesty International notes that in your report you highlight the role of the security forces in human rights violations ranging from extrajudicial executions to torture, as documented by UN observers in Burundi. We support your recommendation that investigations into these cases should be opened or expedited resulting in the prosecution of those responsible. We regret delays in the work of the national commission of inquiry to investigate extrajudicial executions, as well as the government's failure to follow through on their commitment to open a judicial investigation into allegations of torture.

Amnesty International shares your considered opinion that the absence of justice for past crimes under international law contributes to continued human rights violations. We welcome President Nkurunziza's commitment to move forward with the creation of transitional justice mechanisms. As you note, Burundians endorsed the creation of both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Tribunal during the national consultations.

Amnesty International is concerned, however, that recent statements by President Nkurunziza focusing on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission make no specific mention of when a Special Tribunal will be established. The victims of human rights violations and their relatives are entitled to justice, truth and reparations.

In this regard, Dr Ouguergouz, could you elaborate on additional steps you have recently taken to encourage the Government of Burundi to demonstrate their commitment to justice for past crimes under international law, including by establishing a Special Tribunal?