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ORAL STATEMENT
ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Burundi

BURUNDI:
UN Human Rights Council
Fifty-seventh session
9 September – 11 October 2024

Mr President,

Amnesty International thanks the Special Rapporteur for his report. In light of the upcoming elections and the continued serious rights violations in the country, it is essential that the Human Rights Council continues to pay close attention to the situation in Burundi. We reiterate our call, along with 38 other NGOs, on the Council to renew the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

We welcome the release of journalist Floriane Irangabiye from prison last month. She had been serving a ten-year sentence on account of comments she made in an online radio show and should never have spent one night behind bars. While her release is a positive development, a change in practice is needed to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is protected in Burundi. Over recent years, we have witnessed a troubling revolving door effect – when one journalist or human rights defender is released from detention, new arrests tend to follow soon after.

In order to break with such repressive practices, the Burundian authorities should commit to ending the arbitrary arrest, detention, and prosecution of human rights defenders and journalists. In particular, the authorities should end the use of questionable state security charges – such as “rebellion” or “threatening internal state security” – to silence peaceful dissent.

In advance of next year's elections, what further measures does the Special Rapporteur recommend to protect freedom of expression and civic space in Burundi?

Thank you.