



AI Index: AFR 16/4759/2021
23 September 2021

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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

BURUNDI: CONTINUED MONITORING ESSENTIAL IN ABSENCE OF DURABLE REFORMS

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-eighth session
13 September – 8 October 2021

Madam President,

Amnesty International thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its vital work since 2016. As the continuing grave violations it has documented demonstrate, a handful of symbolic gestures cannot compensate for the deeper, more durable reforms required to meaningfully improve the human rights situation in Burundi.

We warmly welcome the release of human rights defender Germain Rukuki in June. However, in the same month lawyer Tony Germain Nkina was convicted on trumped-up charges in all likelihood because of his previous human rights work – a chilling reminder of the risks facing even those no longer actively involved in civil society.

While space to speak out remains severely limited inside Burundi, the government has also sought to repress the work of HRDs and journalists in exile. Last month, President Ndayishimiye launched a personal attack against journalist Esdras Ndikumana for his reporting on the impact of Covid-19 in the country, accusing him of “hating the country in which he was raised.”

Similarly, both the President and the Prosecutor General of the Republic have dismissed and minimised reports of enforced disappearances, despite credible investigations by NGOs and, as the Commission has noted, more than 250 open cases before the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances.

The government refuses to acknowledge the scale of the human rights challenges facing the country or to meaningfully cooperate with this Council and its mechanisms. We urge the Council to keep in place monitoring and reporting of the level that has been provided by the Commission of Inquiry.

Thank you, Madam President.