



GENEVA CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS  
ADVANCEMENT AND GLOBAL DIALOGUE

## UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

### Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burundi

#HRC59 • 26 June 2025



#### PRESENTATION OF THE ORAL UPDATE

#### Mr. Fortuné Gaetan ZONGO, Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burundi

The SR recalls that ten years ago, **Burundi slid into a serious political crisis** linked to the whole issue of a third presidential mandate. That crisis triggered mass violations of human rights, murders, disappearances, violent crackdowns and exile affecting almost half a million people. It was in reaction to that deplorable state of affairs that the UNHRC established the Commission of Inquiry and then, in October 2021, followed that up by creating the mandate of the SR on the Human Rights Situation in Burundi. Ten years down the line, where do we stand? Has the crisis been resolved? The response to this is concerning. It is troubling.

In May of 2025, more than 257,000 Burundians were still outside the country in exile. The economy remains fragile, characterised by soaring levels of inflation, standing at around 40.9% in March of this year, as well as chronic shortages, particularly of fuel, and a property and land crisis exacerbated by poor governance. One striking fact illustrates the political stitch-up in the country, that is the 96% vote share obtained by the party in power in the elections of June 2025.



This against the fact that they only obtained 68% of the vote in 2020 and 60% in 2015. Those figures, in the SR's view, reflect a lack of genuine political competition and political opposition.

The period covered by the SR's report is one in which he saw tensions surrounding the elections in June of this year. Despite the absence of any open violence, the **elections were characterised by tension, intimidation, and severe and harsh restrictions on civic space**. Serious irregularities in the voting process were documented by the Observation Mission of the Justice and Peace Commission and other observers. They focused on the fact that some individuals were able to cast more than one vote, there was pressure on voters, and that there were hindrances on observers. The judicial system lacks independence and appeals are ineffective for those candidates who feel that they were not treated fairly. Such circumstances undermines the credibility of the elections, accentuates social divides, and expands distrust in institutions.

Moreover, **impunity is a major stumbling block to reconciliation**. Very few independent enquiries have been carried out into the serious allegations, particularly serious allegations against the security forces and the *Imbonerakure* (CNDD-FDD Youth). Justice has been exploited as a weapon targeting political opposition, journalists, and human rights defenders. The SR is also deeply concerned by **abusive land dispossession practises**, particularly those impacting widows, orphans, and vulnerable families. Documented cases of the stripping of land indicate a predatory trend of stripping land to the benefit of influential members of the party in power, senior army officers or influential businessmen, without adequate compensation.

These **structural violations fuel injustice and social tension**. The situation of women in particular constitutes a major challenge in terms of access to property and inheritance rights. The SR has taken careful note of the note circulated by the President of the Supreme Court on 24 March 2025, which called upon the Court to apply the rules of customary law in inheritance cases. In practise, this guidance from the President of the Supreme Court will serve to exclude women from their property and land inheritance rights, a flagrant violation of Burundi's international obligations in terms of non-discrimination and gender equality. That measure institutionalises and further anchors what was already broad inequality and further undermines and weakens the economic and social rights of women, particularly rural women.

Around a **quarter of a million Burundians live outside the country**, many of them in precarious circumstances, without adequate security and safety guarantees that would allow them to return voluntarily and in dignity. Some of them are victims of enforced disappearances or reprisals. The socioeconomic situation in the country remains deeply troubling, marked by inflation, a lack of essential goods, high levels of unemployment of young people and backsliding in terms of economic and social rights.

Against that backdrop, **civic space is almost non-existent**. Civil society is subject to pressure, suspension of licences and smear campaigns. The independent press is muzzled. Journalists have been regularly arrested or forced to flee abroad. The SR points in particular to the case of Ms. Sandra Muhoza who remains in detention, as an illustration of these abuses. If no credible criminal charges can be brought against Ms. Muhoza, then she has to be released.

Finally, the SR is deeply troubled by the dysfunctional nature of Burundi's National Human Rights Commission, further exacerbated by the flight of its former President, and the irregular



nomination of the new members of the NHRI. Such a situation is a violation of the Paris Principles, and therefore, it requires a **review of the Burundian NHRI's A-status by GANHRI**.

In May 2025, during the SR's participation at the meeting of the African Human and People's Rights Commission, the exchanges at that meeting underscored the need for a coordinated response to the deterioration of the human rights situation in Burundi. By way of conclusion, the SR addresses to the government of Burundi the following **recommendations**:

- Convene a fresh set of genuinely inclusive and credible elections.
- Reopen civic space, the protection of journalists and human rights defenders.
- Put an immediate end to land seizures and confiscations and respect for the rights of vulnerable members of society, in particular women.
- Create genuinely independent judicial mechanisms to tackle impunity.
- Get active support by regional and international partners to ensure a sustainable democratic transition.

### **REPLIES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The SR explains that his work covered a period from June 2024 to June 2025, but the events and trends that are commented actually began before June 2024 and are still ongoing now. The SR believes that the fundamental issue is the question of **inclusive dialogue**, without any exclusion, to include all the people of Burundi, as the only way to ensure human rights are implemented. Institutions must be strengthened over and beyond the divides that may materialise.

On the **impact of the situation in eastern DRC** on the already very brittle situation in Burundi, the SR explains that the assessments made in April reported already 60,000 to 80,000 refugees in Burundi, and obviously this entails pressure on many different fronts such as education for children, food, water, and also security. These are issues to which the SR will be paying attention throughout his monitoring efforts.

Turning to **cooperation with the government**, the SR explains it is minimal or even non-existent. Despite this, monitoring does take place, not through the government, but through other channels which allow for monitoring to be done in actually quite a satisfactory way. In order to **support the SR's mandate**, the international community can publicly and politically support the renewal of the mandate in order to ensure the continuity of independent monitoring, because right now there is no credible organisational mechanism in the country to carry out that function. The international community can also ensure constant and coordinated attention is paid in order to encourage the government to cooperate with UN mechanisms overall, not just the SR's mandate. Furthermore, **greater technical and financial support** for documentation activities and for protecting sources are needed, and finally, fostering dialogue between the Burundian institutions, civil society, and international stakeholders.

On how to **strengthen engagement with national players** in order to try and promote human rights in Burundi, the SR reiterates that there is no cooperation in terms of monitoring, while explaining that there are two components to his mandate, namely monitoring and assistance. The SR does provide assistance to civil society and human rights defenders, and offers potential



solutions to try and focus attention on Burundi in order to get the government to make efforts to strengthen human rights and to reduce violence against citizens.

On how the international community can help Burundi **resume a constructive dialogue with the international human rights mechanisms**, the SR indicates four pathways. First of all, states can provide technical support to Burundi's institutions so that they can respect their international commitments, especially as regards their reporting duties before the treaty bodies. Secondly, states can encourage positive diplomacy and engagement by promoting or highlighting the political and economic advantages that stem from genuine cooperation with UN mechanisms. Thirdly, certain forms of assistance, such as budgetary assistance or sector-based assistance or institutional assistance, could be made conditional upon specific acts of cooperation. Finally, there should be opportunities for South-South dialogue, and these should be promoted with other African states who have resumed their cooperation with human rights mechanisms.

With regard to specific measures to **foster an enabling environment for civil society** in Burundi, the international community could facilitate the creation of a constructive framework for dialogue between the government, civil society and also the media. Then there should be financial support and political support for Burundian civil society organisations, including those that are active outside of the country, and in particular those that are active on documentation advocacy. The adoption and implementation of laws that are compliant with international standards on freedom of association and assembly should be encouraged, and there should be physical and digital protection programmes for human rights defenders and at-risk journalists. Some forms of institutional support should be made contingent upon the reopening of civic spaces. The creation of neutral platforms for dialogue should also be fostered, in particular by leveraging regional African mechanisms.

On specific mechanisms to **strengthen the protection for human rights defenders** and to promote a free and transparent electoral process, the international community can support the establishment of early warning and protection mechanisms, in particular by working in tandem with African mechanisms. Furthermore, the international community can foster a structured pre-electoral dialogue which makes the recognition of the electoral process conditional upon its inclusivity and transparency and freedom of participation. There should also be an encouragement to uphold international standards in the work of the NHRI, especially as regards transparency of nominations. Finally, the SR believes the international community should encourage and finance independent electoral observation missions, including Burundian civil society organisations.

#### **VIEWS EXPRESSED BY BURUNDI AS CONCERNED COUNTRIES**

The delegation of **Burundi** recalls that at the 2024 June and September sessions of the UNHRC, the main argument put forward by the pen holder to extend the country-specific mandate on Burundi for a further year, an argument put forward, consisted of invoking the fact that in 2025 there would be legislative and local elections in the country. Quoting *grosso modo* the words of the European Union, the conditions in Burundi in their view were likely to give rise to violations of human rights. All the conditions for that had been met, which meant there was a need for an advanced procedure to be in place during the elections and to have Burundi put under





surveillance. However, the evidence today is that Burundi has managed to carry out the elections in a peaceful climate with a strong turnout - that is, the elections of MPs and community councillors under the same conditions will prevail, that is to be believed, for the senatorial and local elections.

Burundi believes it is legitimate to ask what the relevance of the SR's mandate is. It seems to serve the interests of other countries who believe or claim that there is a need to prevent serious violations of human rights and mitigate the risk of an escalation into conflict. However, the delegation of Burundi finds this odd, given the fact that the annual report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights mentions various different security crises and violations of international law wracking the world that the UNHRC should be aware of and should respond to under its mandate, but did not mention or list Burundi among the countries of concern.

The UNHRC has been taking time to seek to reinvent itself and reflect upon the rationale of its initiatives and its mandates. It is high time that this mechanism be objectively re-evaluated and the UNHRC reverts to the fundamental underpinnings of the resolution that set up the Council with regard to agenda item 4, namely a focus on genuine crises of human rights violations where there is an urgent need for a response. It is therefore nonsensical that Burundi is still on the Council's agenda 10 years later, all the more so given that the initiative for this country mandate is based on misinformation and a deliberate manipulation of information. It is based on untruths. Burundi deplores the fact that the reports submitted to you are fallacious and they are intended to pull the wool over the eyes of the Council to alter perception of reality, to discredit, indeed to deny the republic institutions of the country that have been set up following the will of the people.

Burundi regrets and condemns in the strongest possible terms that for the last 10 years its young people, its sons and daughters, have been stigmatised, demonised and dehumanised by international bodies without any attempt to take into account their views, their reputation or how they might feel about this, and we can ask ourselves the question why? Why is that being done? For what purposes? To what ends? For 10 long years, Burundi has been given no grace and spared from no indignity. Nonetheless, during that time, Burundi has learned that they are a strong people who cherish social cohesion between its communities and is determined to pursue the socio-economic development of the country. This has been abundantly proven.

Burundi is a united and determined people, determined to demonstrate and benefit from its political maturity, which was demonstrated recently by the people's choice for continuity, peace, stability and security, which are so vital for achieving the national and development goals contained in the country's national vision, an emerging economy by 2040 and developed economy by 2060, a vision that is the initiative of the President. The observations carried out by international missions, including the African Union Observation Mission during the most recent elections, bear testimony to the unprecedented support for the existing government. More than 96% of the votes cast were for the party in power, manifesting the determination of the people, and nobody can deny that they were free to express their views and they have done so.

The Burundian people is motivated by the desire to preserve the territorial integrity of its country, particularly at a time when the Great Lakes region risks conflagration, a reality which has for a long time been swept under the carpet by this mechanism, which has chosen not to take into



account that reality. It has instead been enthralled to shadowy economic and geopolitical interests, which have decided to set themselves up as a *de facto* opposition in Burundi, without any popular support from the people of Burundi. The country delegation reiterates its commitment to working with human rights to promote and protect human rights, while robustly rejecting country specific mandates, which are unjust and contemptuous of the country's dignity.

## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

### Views Expressed by State Delegations

**Belarus** notes the efforts of the government of Burundi in terms of protecting social and economic rights as well as ensuring stability and security in the country. Belarus welcomes the Burundian authorities' policy of maintaining and developing dialogue with regional and international partners as well as their involvement in universal human rights mechanisms. Belarus believes that the UN human rights system should avoid sweeping politicised criticism. It is important to maintain objectivity and create conditions for constructive dialogue and support for current national institutions on human rights. Such an approach will allow further progress in promoting and protecting human rights, and it will also enable real improvement in the situation in the country for the interests of its people.

**Cameroon** is grateful to the SR for the oral updates on the human rights situation in Burundi and greets the ongoing efforts made by the Burundian government in peace-building, governance strengthening and human rights promotion. In a context characterised by long-term socio-economic challenges, Cameroon welcomes the peaceful conduction of the legislative elections of 5 June 2025. These elections were an opportunity to have significant citizens participation and allow progress with consolidating republican institutions. Cameroon believes that this progress deserves to be supported and consolidated by constructive support from the international community in a spirit of dialogue, technical cooperation and mutual respect in order to strengthen national capacities and support the positive dynamic underway. Welcoming the equality of the cooperation between OHCHR and Burundi, Cameroon encourages all parties to continue this reciprocal commitment in a spirit of trust and shared responsibility.

**China** noted the oral update by the SR and appreciates the positive efforts by the government of Burundi to maintain stability and promote reconciliation, as well as the progress in promoting and protecting human rights. The current peace and stability have not come easily. China reiterates that the international community should continue to respect its sovereignty and independence, support its efforts to resolve domestic issues independently, and play a constructive role in helping it achieve national stability and sustainable development. Regrettably, some countries not only fail to play a constructive role but also ignore the repeated clear requests from the government and several African countries addressed to the UNHRC to terminate this Special Procedure on Burundi. This not only hinders Burundi's stable development but also constitutes a significant waste of the valuable resources of the UNHRC and exacerbates the financial crisis of the UN. China always advocates constructive dialogue and cooperation to solve human rights issues and opposes the politicisation. In closing, China urges the relevant countries to stop using human rights as a pretext to interfere in Burundi's internal affairs and return to the correct path of dialogue and cooperation.



**Cuba** laments an interactive dialogue which has resulted from another resolution based on interference, selectivity and partiality. Cuba reiterates its rejection for politically motivated resolutions which do not have the consent of the concerned country. It continues to see pilfering of the scarce resources the UNHRC has for targeting countries like Burundi, which will not lead to any outcome. The only effective way of promoting human rights across all countries is pursuant to dialogue and constructive cooperation on the basis of impartiality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs. Attempts to undermine Burundi's sovereignty are unacceptable and incompatible with the UN Charter and international law. The UNHRC cannot be an instrument of imposition against states. Cuba reiterates its call to stick to principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectiveness.

The **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** believes that country-specific procedures are used as a means to infringe upon the sovereignty and to interfere in the internal affairs of specific countries. Some of the reports and allegations of certain countries appear to be far from the reality on the ground and biased, lacking correct reflection of the sincere effort by the government concerned for the solution of the problem. Such practise is counterproductive as it does not create a conducive environment for cooperation. The genuine willingness and preparedness of the government of Burundi for the promotion and protection of human rights and its efforts to preserve reconciliation and the stability of the country should be duly taken into account and further encouraged. The international community, including the UNHRC, should sincerely engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation when addressing the human rights issue in the country concerned, refraining from any biased and politicised approach, including attempt interference in internal affairs and pressure under the pretext of human rights.

The **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** is grateful to the SR for his oral update and supports the efforts made by the Burundian government in the sphere of human rights in a difficult socioeconomic context. The DRC appreciates recent political developments in Burundi, in particular by the organization of local and legislative elections, which were peaceful, free and transparent, with an increased participation rate, as confirmed by the African Union in its preliminary report published on 7 June 2025. The DRC also appreciates the official classification of Burundi at level 2 by the American Department responsible for monitoring and combating trafficking in persons. The DRC believes it is important that the international community continue to support Burundi in this vein, leading progress in the country in a frank, open and healthy environment of collaboration, supporting dialogue and cooperation.

**Denmark on behalf of the Nordic-Baltic states** remains deeply concerned about the widespread and serious human rights violations and abuses that continue to take place in the context of widespread impunity in Burundi. The Nordic-Baltic states are deeply concerned over reports of extrajudicial executions, torture and other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as sexual and gender-based violence. The continued punishment of human rights defenders, journalists, political opposition and civil society for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly is unacceptable and must be stopped. The Government of Burundi is responsible for protecting the human rights of all its citizens. The Nordic-Baltic countries strongly urge the Government to fulfil its responsibilities and to that end fully collaborate with the Special Rapporteur and other human rights mechanisms.



**Eritrea** categorically rejects the SR's mandate on Burundi which remains an unjustified, intrusive and politically motivated mechanism imposed against the will of the country concerned. Such country-specific mandates established without the consent of the state undermine the principles of sovereignty, equality and constructive dialogue that form the cornerstone of the UNHRC. They serve not the cause of the human rights but rather narrow political agendas that erode trust and cooperation within this council. Burundi has made commendable progress in consolidating peace, strengthening national institutions and advancing the human rights and dignity of its people. These efforts deserve support, not scrutiny. The continuation of this mandate is unwarranted and fails to reflect the realities on the ground. Eritrea reiterates its firm position that the universal paradigm remains the most appropriate and credible framework for addressing human rights situations in all countries on the basis of equality, cooperation and non-politicisation. Eritrea calls for the immediate termination of this mandate and urges the UNHRC to respect the sovereign rights of states to determine their own human rights priorities without external interference.

**Ethiopia** acknowledges the efforts of the government of Burundi in advancing peace, security, development and the promotion and protection of human rights. Ethiopia believes that the human rights situation in all countries should be assessed fairly and equally with full respect of national sovereignty, human dignity and the principles of non-interference. In this regard, Ethiopia remains convinced that the UPR and capacity-building initiatives are the most effective mechanism to support the states in fulfilling their human rights obligations and achieving meaningful progress on the ground. Ethiopia firmly believes that positive engagement, cooperation and mutual understanding are key to the effective promotion of human rights. In this context, Ethiopia welcomes the ongoing initiatives and reforms undertaken by Burundi to improve the human rights conditions for its people. Ethiopia commends Burundi's constructive engagement with the UPR mechanism, its regular cooperation with the UNHRC and its commitment to implementing accepted recommendations. In closing, Ethiopia reiterates its call on the UNHRC to prioritise technical assistance and capacity-building measures that align with Burundi's national efforts and priorities. Constructive dialogue remains the most effective and sustainable path towards lasting human rights progress.

**Ghana** echoes the call by the African Group on the UNHRC and OHCHR to commit more resources towards delivering on technical assistance and capacity-building in support of the efforts of Burundi to comply with its international human rights obligations. Burundi is at a critical crossroad and needs the broadest possible support from this Council to sustain the gains made. In this regard, Ghana encourages the governments of Burundi to take advantage of the synergies provided by institutions of the African Union and other partners to improve its civil, legal and judicial frameworks to further guarantee protection of civilians. Finally, Ghana emphasises the critical role of national reconciliation, constructive dialogue and social stability and economic transformation in addressing the persistent political and security situation in the country.

**Ghana on behalf of the African group** firmly believes in universality, objectivity, non-selectivity in addressing human rights issues worldwide as outlined in UNHRC resolution 60/251. Consequently, the African group strongly opposes politicisation and double standards and believe that the consent of the consent state remains a crucial element for the success of the implementation of the mandate of any mechanism established by the UNHRC. The African group





recognises that promotion and protection of human rights should be based on the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue and aimed at strengthening the capacity of member states to comply with their human rights obligation. All countries must be valued fairly and equally in full respect of their national sovereignty, recognising that states have the primary responsibility in promoting and protecting human rights. The African group recognises the merits of the UPR, which has already proven its worth as a unique exercise to which all states voluntarily submit to be evaluated and enriched by their peers. The African group welcomes the various initiatives undertaken by the government of Burundi in consolidating the human rights situation, including its constructive engagement with the UPR mechanism and also the treaty bodies. The African group reiterates the necessity of an objective and constructive approach in analysing the evaluation of human rights in Burundi and invites the international community to take into account the government's commitment and to support it.

**Ireland** encourages Burundi to fulfil its obligations in respect of human rights and to engage meaningfully and constructively with international human rights mechanisms. Ireland remains deeply concerned by the credible reports of continued human rights violations and abuses, including enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders, political opponents and journalists. Ireland calls on the authorities in Burundi to end impunity for perpetrators of violations committed and to ensure access to justice for victims. Ireland is also concerned at the context in which the recent parliamentary elections were held. Inclusive political participation and credible and transparent elections are key elements of democratic governments. Ireland calls on Burundi to reopen the OHCHR country office and to engage in a constructive manner with the SR and UN bodies working to improve the human rights situation, including by granting them the appropriate access and the protections and information required to fulfil their mandates.

**Luxembourg on behalf of the Benelux countries** notes with appreciation the peaceful manner in which the parliamentary and local elections took place on 5 June 2025. Nevertheless, the Benelux countries remain concerned by the allegations of several irregularities in the electoral process and at the lack of pluralism in the new National Assembly. Meaningful participation of all political actors is essential for democratic governance. They encourage Burundi to embrace the values of pluralism and freedom of expression as a heritage of the Arusha Accords and the democratic achievements of 1993 and 2005. The Benelux countries are deeply concerned about continued and persistent patterns of human rights violations and cases of impunity for its perpetrators in Burundi. They therefore urge the Burundian authorities to step up their efforts to impartially and effectively investigate all allegations of intimidation, violence, arbitrary arrest and forced disappearances of journalists, media workers, human rights defenders, opposition party members and others, and step up its effort to protect civic space.

**Russia** notes the efforts of the government of Burundi on human rights. The country's leadership continues to consistently work to stabilise the domestic political situation overall and in the area of protection and human rights in particular. Russia welcomes the Council on National Unity and efforts to prevent genocide and war crimes and crimes against humanity. Work is being carried out in the NHRI and the Ombudsperson for the Human Rights and the Commission to Restore Truth and Reconciliation. Burundi's authorities are actively engaging in dialogue with the relevant human bodies, including OHCHR. Russia welcomes the country's efforts to prevent



discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities, and notes the ongoing efforts to strengthen those rules in Parliament and other structures. Russia further welcomes the steps taken to engage in dialogue with opposition and civil society and enhancing the national systems, in particular the period of the century. All these measures deserve recognition by the international community, which should cease its practise of putting pressure on Burundi.

**South Sudan** reaffirms its steadfast position that constructive dialogue and objective cooperation represent the best feasible means for promotion and protection of human rights worldwide. Imposed human rights mechanism without prior consent of the concerned states is counterproductive. South Sudan commends Burundi for the progress made in improving its human rights situation, including taking concrete steps forward, fostering – towards fostering political dialogue and reconciliation to contribute to a more stable and peaceful environment in the country, strengthening the judicial system to enhance access to justice as well as for its increased cooperation with regional and international human rights bodies. In light of this positive development, which indicates a forward momentum in Burundi's journey towards greater respect for human rights and fundamental freedom, South Sudan calls upon the UNHRC and international community to reassess the SR's mandate within the current ongoing efforts to achieve UNHRC efficiency and operationalisation.

**Sri Lanka** welcomes the government of Burundi's continuous engagement with the Human Rights Council through its regular mechanisms. Sri Lanka recognises the government's efforts towards tackling poverty and social inequalities, as well as fighting corruption while working constructively towards protecting the human rights of the people of Burundi. Sri Lanka reiterates its position that engaging in a constructive dialogue with the concerned state to listen to their concerns and understand the domestic complexities is the best way to assist them in a meaningful manner. Provision of technical assistance and capacity building must be upon the state's request and in accordance with its needs. In conclusion, Sri Lanka encourages the UNHRC to extend all possible assistance for Burundi's national processes aimed at sustainable recovery and development in accordance with the national priorities of the government of Burundi.

**Sudan** welcomes the initiatives put forward by Burundi intended to promote and protect human rights and to bolster governance, legal reform, and social and economic development. Sudan further commends Burundi for its ongoing engagement to the process of reconciliation via dialogue and transitional justice. It congratulates the country for the holding of legislative and local elections at the beginning of June 2025 with a very high turnout, which duly reflects the attachment of the citizens of Burundi to the exercise of democracy, as well as the country's determination to respect electoral cycles and to guarantee citizens their right to freely choose their own representatives. Burundi has demonstrated its determination and willingness to actively engage with human rights mechanisms, which is further demonstrated by its UNHRC membership. The country has participated in the UPR process and received recommendations from other states. Sudan urges OHCHR to provide technical assistance to Burundi tailored to its national needs and priorities, and reiterates its categorical rejection of any mandate that is rolled out or imposed without the prior consent of the state concerned.



**Switzerland** remains concerned by the human rights situation in Burundi, in particular the area of the restrictions of the civic space, acts of intimidation and arbitrary arrests, targeting human rights defenders, journalists and opposition members. Switzerland also notes with concern the accusations concerning the irregularities during the recent legislative and local elections of 5 June 2025. Switzerland calls on the Burundian authorities to ensure the respect for civil and political rights during the elections of August 2025, presidential elections of 2027. Finally, Switzerland encourages the Burundian authorities to fully cooperate with the UN mechanisms and to implement the SR's recommendations, in particular to combat impunity.

**Tanzania** welcomes the efforts by the government of Burundi to promote and protect human rights. Tanzania urges the international community to provide the necessary assistance to complement the efforts without undermining the sovereignty of the country. As a refugee-host country, the voluntary repatriation exercise for the Burundian refugees has been a success despite severe financial constraints. The government of Tanzania is willing to engage with international actors with a view of finding durable solutions for Burundian refugees hosted in Tanzania. The latter reiterates its call on UNHCR and the international community to increase the budget for the relevant refugee programmes in order to relieve the burden on the host countries. Tanzania will continue to work together with Burundi, the international community, and all relevant stakeholders to ensure the safe and voluntary repatriation of all Burundian refugees.

The **United Kingdom** reiterates its call on Burundi to grant him full access to the country. The UK welcomes the peaceful conduct of Burundi's recent legislative elections, as reported by the African Union Observer Mission. However, the UK is concerned by reports of serious irregularities, including voter intimidation, duplicates and fraudulent registrations, and the early opening of polling stations without the presence of officials. Opposition parties must be allowed to engage meaningfully in democratic processes. The UK calls on the government of Burundi to address these issues transparently, to enable the people of Burundi to fully exercise their civil and political rights. Deeply concerned by ongoing restrictions on human rights defenders and journalists, the UK urges Burundi to take further steps to protect civic space and to ensure inclusive governance and political pluralism.

**Venezuela** recognises the efforts undertaken by the government of Burundi and its political will to protect human rights of its population. Venezuela rejects any politicisation and selectiveness within the UNHRC. Imposing mandates do not have the support of the concerned country violates flagrantly the universal principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, including respect for sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of states. Venezuela regrets that the UNHRC continues to take actions that have no positive impact on the country. They are done to the detriment of dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding, which are the only effective means to address national challenges in the sphere of human rights. Once more, Venezuela calls on the UNHRC to resume the principles of non-selectiveness, impartiality and objectivity, and to definitively eliminate those mechanisms which interfere in and instrumentalise human rights with political ends and continue to weaken the operationality and credibility of this space.



### Views Expressed by Intergovernmental Organizations and UN Entities

The **European Union** is troubled by allegations of irregularities in the elections of 5 June, limitations on participation of opposition parties and the absence of fair conditions in terms of access to media. This gives rise to questions with regard to credibility and the genuinely competitive and open nature of the recent elections. The EU also voices concern over the lack of pluralism in the new National Assembly of the country, thereby underscoring the need for inclusive political participation. The EU is equally concerned by the persistent and numerous violations of fundamental rights in Burundi, particularly arbitrary arrests, forced disappearances, acts of torture, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The EU calls upon the authorities to put an end to impunity and to guarantee access to justice for the victims of these violations and others. Furthermore, the EU is concerned by the nomination of a new NHRI, which gives rise to serious doubts with regard to the independence of the institution. It is vital that the Burundian NHRI can exercise its mandate free of any interference or meddling. The EU encourages the authorities of Burundi to envisage the reopening of the UN country office, and to cooperate with OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur, in particular by granting him authorisation to carry out a country visit in the near future.

### Views Expressed by National Human Rights Institutions

The **National Independent Human Rights Commission of Burundi** notes with satisfaction the existence of a legal and institutional human rights framework in Burundi. Since 2024, Burundi, in close cooperation with the UN system, has been implementing the joint human rights programme in Burundi. The NHRI welcomes the fact that all stakeholders behaved with calm and dignity in the recent elections for community councillors and MPs. That electoral process was characterised by respect for election related human rights, despite some minor irregularities. The NHRI encourages Burundi to cooperate further with regional and international human rights mechanisms and to continue to implement the provisions of the related human rights instruments. The NHRI notes progress that has been achieved in the judicial domain, progress intended to improve the legal and institutional framework of the judiciary, which has taken the guidance in particular by the establishment of the institutional council for rural and hill-dwelling peoples and the establishment of the single-judge format to promote access on a more accelerated basis to equitable justice. The NHRI has been following very closely the implementation of measures aimed at reducing prison overcrowding. Recent measures such as presidential pardons, release on bail and the acceleration of criminal trials have led to a decrease in the prison population in 2023-24. The NHRI further welcomes that judges have expanded recourse to non-custodial alternative measures, although they still, where appropriate, dictate prison sentences and fines. Judges have pursued alternative measures such as community service measures, which is also intended to reduce prison overcrowding. However, the NHRI deplores the persistence of cases in which persons remain in detention even though they have served their full sentence or have been acquitted. The NHRI commits to continuing to advocate with the relevant authorities in order to reverse this situation, particularly of all such pending cases. In terms of press freedom, the NHRI welcomes recent efforts undertaken by Burundi aimed at decriminalising certain press crimes. With regard to the protection of journalists, the NHRI notes with satisfaction the recent release, under a presidential pardon, of the journalist Florianne Irangabiye and the Union leader Émilienne Sibomana. Nevertheless, the NHRI still



deplore the fact that the journalists Kenny Claude Nduwimana and Sandra Muhoza remain in detention in the central prison of Bujumbura, where they very recently received the visit of the NHRI. The latter encourages Burundi to pursue all other initiatives to promote access to information and to promote and uphold the right to the search for information. It also calls upon the Burundian authorities to make sure that the cases of these two journalists are treated with humanity and rapidly. The NHRI further calls upon the government to continue to expand political spaces and to recognise the legal rights of political parties in line with the law. Concluding on the protection of human rights defenders, the NHRI encourage the government to further strengthen the protection of human rights.

### Views Expressed by Non-Governmental Organizations

**FIACAT jointly with ACAT Burundi** congratulate the SR for his presentation and reiterate their support for his mandate, which is essential to connect the voices of those deprived of their rights in Burundi. While the country has entered an intensive electoral period, which began on 5 June, with the legislature and community and local elections, FIACAT is concerned by the many human rights violations, particularly targeting political opponents. Between January and June 2025, FIACAT has documented 22 cases of enforced disappearance and 42 arbitrary arrests. More than half of these relate to political opponents. This repression undertaken by the *Imbonerakure* militia, the police and the information services is accompanied by serious irregularities. Selected distribution of ballot cards, forbidding people from accessing polling booths and obligation to take part in assemblies of the ruling party. FIACAT also denounces the injustice suffered by political prisoners who have been kept detained despite being acquitted or after having served their sentences. FIACAT calls on UNHRC members to support and strengthen the SR's mandate.

The **World Evangelical Alliance** wishes to bring to the SR's attention increasing restrictions on the right to freedom of religion or belief in Burundi. A 2014 law established by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and amended in 2022 imposes stringent requirements on religious groups such as needing to have 300 members to register, preventing one place of worship from being built too close to another and restricting where and when worship services can be held. Penalties for non-compliance include prison sentences and fines of up to 1 million Burundian francs. In April 2024, police arrested 61 members of the World's Glory Church on charges of worshipping in an unauthorised location. In February 2024, a letter was issued to all religious groups detailing further requirements, including the number of parking spaces for worship centres. There is a lack of transparency around the registration process and registration has been unexpectedly denied, hindering small and new churches from establishing a legal presence. The Alliance urges the government of Burundi to review and revise the law to align it with international human rights standard; conduct a genuine, thorough and inclusive consultation with religious leaders; and suspend the implementation of the regulation until consensus has been reached.

**East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project** greets the SR's updates and call for an renewal of his mandates. Monitoring the situation in Burundi remains essential. There are many irregularities which have undermined the legislative elections of 5 June, during which the party in power took 96% of the votes and all of the seats in the National Assembly. Those responsible for that party of the Youth League and the militia associated with them threatened youth people and prevented people from voting. Many Burundian NGOs have denounced these





irregularities and called for new elections. Having severely restricted the democratic and civic space, the government has accused those contesting the results of threatening national peace. Burundi has entered into a long electoral cycle. If history is any guide, one should fear the worst because the risk factors for violations are multiplying. There has been a statement by Catholic bishops which enumerate the various irregularities and all has also led to destabilisation. A Catholic priest who was arrested briefly and detained as a result of this. All of these violations, as well as the concerns announced by the Commission of Inquiry and the SR are underway.

The **Human Rights Research League** is seriously concerned by the electoral process and its outcome, which unfortunately confirms all of the League's fears. In previous statements, the League raised the alarm concerning the militarisation of the *Imbonerakure*, which continues to demonstrate the intensification around efforts to intimidate opponents, a behaviour which is obviously demonstrably supported and encouraged by Burundian authorities. The League has also sounded the alarm that there is a persistent lack of independence and impartiality in the justice system, and backsliding continues in the civic space. This is incompatible with the requirements for a operational democracy, guided by the rule of law. Unfortunately, the League's fears have come to bear. Clearly, a country where the President's party can take, carry rather, all of the seats in the Senate, in the National Assembly, demonstrates that there is a single party state. The failing electoral process, with intimidations and arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearance, as well as the exclusion of the principal political opponent, and the absurdly high results for the ruling President, demonstrate a lack of will of the party in power to accept democracy.

**Amnesty International (AI)** recalls that this interactive dialogue is held as we mark the 10th anniversary of a crisis sparked by the ruling party's decision to front the late President Pierre Nkurunziza for a third term in office for the 2015 presidential elections. Peaceful demonstrations that followed were violently repressed, and a once-vibrant and open civic space has since been silenced. A decade on, the country remains caught in a relentless cycle of repression and impunity. Results from the 5-June elections indicate that the ruling CNDD-FDD has secured over 96 percent of the vote, amid widespread reports from media and civil society of voter intimidation and an electoral process that denied the opposition a fair chance to compete. Since 2015, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, and attacks on civil society and media have continued. Burundi's continued denial of cooperation with regional and international human rights and judicial mechanisms is an affront to its obligations to respect and uphold human rights. In this context, the SR's mandate remains essential as it provides an independent lens on ongoing violations, gives voice to the victims, and helps ensure that Burundi's dire human rights record remains on the international agenda.

**RADDHO** remains concerned about the human rights situation, particularly in the aftermath of the June 2025 elections. The pre-electoral environment was marked by restrictions on opposition participation, widespread intimidation, and disappearances. Additionally, the presence of partisan militias has contributed to a climate of fear and suppressed political pluralism. Opposition candidates were sidelined through administrative, financial obstacles, arbitrary arrest, harassment of political activists, and civil society members during the campaign period. There has been no meaningful progress on accountability for past violations, including those from the 2015 crisis. Media freedom remains under pressure, with independent outlets and journalists



facing censorship, intimidation, and arbitrary detention. RADDHO is also deeply concerned by continued reports of sexual and gender-based violence, often committed with impunity. Survivors face limited access to social support, especially in rural areas. Voices are silenced and justice is invisible. Burundi is also experiencing a severe economic crisis with high inflation and recurring shortages in essential services. RADDHO urges the government of Burundi to ensure a truly inclusive democratic process and to fully cooperate with the UN human rights mechanisms.

**Human Rights Watch (HRW)** thanks the SR for his oral update and vital work to shine a spotlight on ongoing human rights violations in Burundi, one of the world's most neglected human rights crises. On 5 June, legislative and local elections took place in a context of severely restricted free speech in political space. In the days following the vote, HRW spoke with local activists, journalists, private citizens, and a member of the ruling party's Youth League, the *Imbonerakure*. HRW spoke of intimidation and irregularities in both the lead up to the election and during the voting. This followed the decision in December last year to bar opposition candidates from contesting the elections. Civil society and opposition figures continue to report ongoing harassment, extortion, arbitrary detention, and beatings by the *Imbonerakure* and the authorities as the government remains deeply hostile to perceived criticism. The election has further entrenched authoritarian rule and pushed Burundians further into a deeply rooted governance crisis. Despite repeated requests and a standing invitation, Burundi has refused access not only to the country-specific SR, but also to thematic Special Procedures for over a decade now as the situation has deteriorated dramatically.

**CIVICUS** and independent Burundian CSOs welcome the SR's. Serious human rights violations and abuses continue to be committed in Burundi in a context of widespread impunity. The law on foreign NGOs inconsistent with the state's human rights obligations remains in place and represents a significant restriction on the work of CSOs in Burundi. The activities of HRDs and activists were limited by numerous restrictions, including unlawful arbitrary arrests and detentions, and repeated threats and attacks, including harassment, intimidation, surveillance, and reprisals. The upsurge in violence against journalists by security forces or alleged members of the *Imbonerakure*, in Burundi is a cause for alarm. The most recent attacks targeted Willy Kwizera from the independent radio station who was kidnapped for reporting on the living conditions of students, and Ahmed Masudi Mugiraneza from the educational public radio station who was arrested while covering a peaceful rally by citizens. The past few months in the run-up to the local elections have been marked by increased pressure over civic space and severe threats against HRDs, while members of the *Imbonerakure* continue to commit human rights violations in order to prevent the dissemination of information deemed sensitive by the authorities. CIVICUS urges the government of Burundi to provide a space for every citizen to enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms; cooperate fully with the SR, including by granting him access to the country; and constructively cooperate with OHCHR and its regional Office.

The **International Organisation for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination** commends the SR for his continuous efforts in Burundi. This year marks 10 years since the beginning of the human rights crisis in Burundi, thus marking 10 years of Burundi's non-compliance to its obligations under human rights law. The ongoing human rights crisis in Burundi that greatly affected citizens is one that deserves the continued attention from the UNHRC. The



government continues to prove that freedom of expression and freedom of the press is merely a concept but not a reality for those in the country. Over the past years, there have been over 50 cases of enforced disappearances, over 100 cases of arbitrary detentions, and over 10 cases of extrajudicial killings. As the election period comes to an end in Burundi, civilians and journalists continue to live in fear of the government's silencing efforts. At a time when the world is riddled with human rights issues, we cannot afford to foster any environment that dismisses basic human rights. Thus, it is crucial to continue to speak up for those who have brutally and unjustly had their lives taken away from them for merely expressing their views. While acknowledging the steps that Burundi has taken to release individuals who have been unlawfully detained, the Organization urges the SR to continue advocating for those who remain to be released immediately. Furthermore, it calls for strengthened efforts to ensure state accountability for all the extrajudicial killings that have occurred over the years.

The **International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)** is concerned about serious human rights violations persisting in Burundi and the government's failure to hold perpetrators to account. These ongoing serious human rights violations include hostility towards independent civil society and media, the targeting of real and perceived opposition members with extrajudicial killings and false disappearances, arbitrary detention and torture, among others. The IBAHRI is also concerned about reports surrounding the elections, which indicate that independent observers and media were not allowed. The IBAHRI welcomes the assistance provided by Burundi to refugees from the DRC following the spike in violence in the east of the country driven by M23. This violence forced thousands to flee, including to Burundi, in the pursuit of safety. Burundi is said to have received more than 70,000 Congolese refugees since January 2025, while still hosting thousands from previous conflicts. However, funding for humanitarian assistance is running low, as it is affected by cuts in foreign aid from several countries. The IBAHRI calls upon the UNHRC to support independent investigations of human rights violations in Burundi; continue the ongoing monitoring of and public reporting on the human rights situation in the country; set up efforts to support the implementation of all recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry, in particular on justice and accountability; and ensure that Burundi is provided with assistance to be able to support refugees from the DRC.

## FACTS & FIGURES ON ID PARTICIPATION

### 21 State Delegations

#### 1 Inter-Governmental Organization

#### 1 National Human Rights Institution

#### 10 Non-Governmental Organizations