



Plenary sitting

1.7.2015

B8-0667/2015

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Burundi
(2015/2723(RSP))

Rolandas Paksas, Ignazio Corrao, Fabio Massimo Castaldo
on behalf of the EFDD Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Burundi
(2015/2723(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Burundi,
 - having regard to the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi,
 - having regard to the Spokesperson's statements on the situation in Burundi of 27 April 2015, 5 June 2015 and 17 June 2015,
 - having regard to the statement by Vice-President / High Representative Mogherini on the situation in Burundi of 13 May 2015,
 - having regard to the European Council conclusions on Burundi of 18 May 2015 and 22 June 2015,
 - having regard to the UN Security Council statement on the situation in Burundi of 10 April 2014,
 - having regard to the statement by Vice-President / High Representative Mogherini on the suspension of the EOM to Burundi of 28 May 2015,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the East African Community (EAC) summit of 31 May 2015,
 - having regard to the communiqué of the 515th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at the Level of Heads of State and Government on Burundi of 13 June 2015,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG),
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas President Pierre Nkurunziza announced on 25 April that he was going to stand for a third term in the elections that were initially scheduled for 26 May; whereas following the announcement thousands of demonstrators defied the government ban on protests and took to the streets; whereas as a response the government deployed security

forces in large numbers and police forces reportedly opened fire on the protesters;

- B. whereas the Constitution of Burundi, as well as the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi of 2000, stipulates that the President ‘shall be elected for a term of five years, renewable only once. No one may serve more than two presidential terms’;
- C. whereas at least 70 people – mostly civilians, but also police and security forces– have been killed, hundreds of others wounded and an estimated 600 protesters have been arrested in the ensuing months of political unrest in the country; whereas the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said that the violence in Burundi has forced more than 150 000 people to flee to neighbouring countries (Tanzania, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo) where they are at risk of contracting infectious diseases, including cholera;
- D. whereas the Imbonerakure militia, the youth league of the ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party, has been implicated in the use of violence, intimidation, attacks, beatings, house-to-house, moonlit killings and looting sprees;
- E. whereas on 5 May Burundi’s Constitutional Court decided that Nkurunziza was allowed to run for a third term on the grounds that his first term did not count as he was elected by parliament and not directly by the people; whereas the court’s vice-president fled the country after refusing to sign the decision, claiming that the judges were subject to death threats; whereas two senior members of the electoral commission also fled the country citing fears for their own safety;
- F. whereas on 13 May an attempted coup took place in Burundi in the absence of President Nkurunziza, as the Burundi Army General Godefroid Niyombare announced he had sacked Pierre Nkurunziza as president for seeking an unconstitutional third term in office; whereas on 15 May, amid clashes, President Nkurunziza returned to the country;
- G. whereas a number of civil leaders have been arrested, some radio stations have been shut down and access to social media sites via mobile phones has been blocked; whereas the Burundi Government launched a crackdown on independent media after the attempted coup, with journalists being subjected to threats, arrested or forced to flee the country;
- H. whereas the international community, including the African Union and the United Nations, has called on the government to postpone the elections due to the ongoing instability and the lack of minimum conditions for democratic elections; whereas legislative elections took place on 29 June, despite being boycotted by civil society and the opposition, and Presidential elections are still due to take place on 15 July;
- I. whereas Belgium and the Netherlands have partially stopped their foreign aid to Burundi because of the ongoing situation, the United States has suspended the training of Burundi soldiers for African peacekeeping missions over concerns that political violence in the country would hamper their ability to participate in such operations, and France has suspended its security cooperation with Burundi;

- J. whereas on 24 May the opposition party leader and head of the Union for Peace and Development, Zedi Feruzi, was shot dead along with his bodyguard while walking home in Bujumbura;
- K. whereas on 15 June African leaders at a summit in South Africa decided on the deployment in Burundi of military experts and human rights observers to monitor the situation in the country, to give advice to police officers and to disarm militant groups;
- L. whereas the EU Electoral Observation Mission has been suspended because of the lack of minimum conditions for democratic elections; whereas the EOM will resume when and if conditions for the conduct of democratic elections are agreed by all stakeholders;
- M. whereas on 25 June Burundi's Second Vice-President Gervais Rufyikiri fled the country after urging the President to step down and to put the interests of the Burundian people before his personal interests by withdrawing his presidential bid; whereas on 28 June National Assembly Speaker Pie Ntavyohanyuma fled to Belgium on the eve of the elections, denouncing the President's bid for a third term as illegal; whereas the African Union has stood down its election observers in Burundi, saying that the parliamentary elections would be neither free nor fair;
- N. whereas the European Union funds about half of the annual budget of Burundi, one of the world's poorest nations; whereas the European Commission has released an additional EUR 3 million to meet the needs for assistance and protection of the increasing number of Burundian refugees in neighbouring Tanzania;
1. Condemns the attempted coup in Burundi, the grenade attacks against civilians and police and any violence perpetrated by all sides; expresses deep sympathy and solidarity with the population of the Republic of Burundi at this troubled time; expects all actors in Burundi to show restraint and points out that it is the weakest sectors of the population, especially children and women, who suffer most from violence;
 2. Expresses its concern about the Burundian authorities' decision to close the country's borders late on Sunday and to press on with the elections despite the ongoing situation and the numerous calls to postpone them, and is convinced that without the opposition's participation in the process the outcome will be unfair and undemocratic;
 3. Reiterates the importance of the Arusha Agreement for lasting peace and unity in Burundi; calls on all political forces to respect it and to find solutions that comply with the agreement;
 4. Calls on Burundi's government to postpone the presidential elections until minimum conditions conducive to the holding of democratic elections are re-established; points out that inclusive, credible and transparent elections held in a political environment free of intimidation or violence are essential elements of the Arusha Agreement;
 5. Does not believe that the Constitutional Court's decision to allow President Nkurunziza to run for a third term is fair, as this decision seems to have been marred by death threats and the intimidation of judges; calls on the President to approach this matter in a spirit of reconciliation and in the interests of the country, and to reconsider his decision to run for a third term, as this is contrary to the constitution and the Arusha Agreement;

6. Urges all political forces, the authorities and civil society to engage in an inclusive and transparent political dialogue leading to a unity government that could decide on a schedule for new presidential elections in order to allow people to choose a legitimate and constitutional leader;
7. Denounces the activities of the Imbonerakure militia and the use of violence against civilians, the use of firearms and grenades and any act of violence committed by any party; reiterates that those who are directly or indirectly involved in violent acts and serious breaches of human rights must be held individually responsible and brought to account in a court of law;
8. Condemns the excessive use of force against demonstrators and the climate of intimidation against opposition parties and civil society, as well as the restrictions put on free media; emphasises that fundamental freedoms, and in particular the freedoms of opinion, of expression, of the press and of peaceful protest, are the cornerstones of a functioning democracy; calls for the immediate and unconditional release by the authorities of all those who were arrested for exercising these rights;
9. Fully supports the mediation efforts being undertaken by the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations; welcomes the appointment of Abdoulaye Bathily, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Central Africa, as a facilitator in the Burundi crisis, and calls on all parties to work with him and with the envoys of the African Union and the East African Community in order to restart a dialogue on all divisive issues, including a new calendar for presidential elections;
10. Expresses its great concern at the massive population displacements caused by the political tensions; congratulates Burundi's neighbours on their open and welcoming attitude towards refugees and calls on international actors and humanitarian agencies to support them in their efforts;
11. Welcomes and supports the conclusions of the African Union (AU) Summit of 13 June 2015 and the roadmap for dialogue between all Burundian parties, as well as the decision to deploy AU human rights observers and AU military experts to verify the process of disarming the militias; calls on the Government of Burundi to extend its full cooperation to this process;
12. Takes note of the suspension of EUR 2 million of aid to Burundi and welcomes the decision of the European Commission to provide EUR 1.5 million to meet the immediate humanitarian needs for assistance and protection of the large numbers of Burundians who are fleeing to neighbouring countries; believes that EU aid assistance should be redirected towards civil society and humanitarian aid;
13. Recalls that the EU partnership with Burundi is governed by the Cotonou Agreement and that this agreement includes obligations for the parties, particularly as regards respect for human rights;
14. Supports the Council's proposal to impose sanctions on those responsible for violence and its willingness to consider other steps within the framework of the Cotonou Agreement, including the use of Article 96; stresses, however, that any action should not hurt the population as a whole but only target those directly responsible for

violations;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Government of Burundi and the governments of the countries of the Great Lakes region, the African Union, the East African Community, the United Nations Secretary-General, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament (PAP).