



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2014)0023

Burundi, in particular the case of Pierre Claver Mbonimpa

European Parliament resolution of 18 September 2014 on Burundi, in particular the case of Pierre Claver Mbonimpa (2014/2833(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Burundi,
- having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
- having regard to the statement of 10 September 2014 by the EU Delegation to Burundi,
- having regard to the UN Security Council statement of 10 April 2014 on the situation in Burundi,
- having regard to the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the Great Lakes region of 22 July 2014, in particular point 7 thereof,
- having regard to the reports of the UN Office in Burundi (BNUB),
- having regard to the statement made on Wednesday, 9 July 2014, by UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic at the Burundi Configuration of Peacebuilding Fund,
- having regard to the mission reports and priority areas of action (2010-2014) of the FAO and UNICEF in Burundi, in particular with regard to combating hunger and malnutrition,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- 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 Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

- A. whereas Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a leading human rights defender and President of the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons (*Association pour la protection des droits humains et des personnes détenues*, APRODH), was once again arrested on 15 May 2014 and later charged with ‘threatening the external security of the state’ and ‘threatening the internal security of the state by causing public disorder’ and has been in pre-trial detention since he was taken in for questioning;
- B. whereas Mr Mbonimpa’s work in the defence of democracy and human rights in Burundi over the past two decades and more has earned him several international awards and widespread recognition domestically and beyond;
- C. whereas the charges against him relate to comments he made on *Radio Publique Africaine* (RPA) on 6 May 2014 that the youth wing of the ruling party CNDD-FDD, also known as the *Imbonerakure*, is being armed and sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for military training, and whereas these same concerns were raised by the BNUB, which stressed that the militarisation of these young people constituted a ‘major threat to peace in Burundi’;
- D. whereas the arrest of Pierre Mbonimpa is representative of the mounting risks facing human rights defenders, the harassment of activists and journalists and the arbitrary arrest of opposition party members, which according to human rights groups and the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights have largely been carried out by the *Imbonerakure*;
- E. whereas, following a peaceful opposition party event on 8 March 2014, 70 people were arrested, with 48 later being handed prison sentences, including life imprisonment;
- F. whereas in recent weeks the government in Burundi has prohibited peaceful protests and demonstrations in support of Mbonimpa and warned radio stations not to broadcast information supporting Mbonimpa’s claims;
- G. whereas full respect for freedom of expression, including for journalists and human rights defenders, is a precondition for free and fair elections in 2015 and for the results thereof to be accepted by everyone;
- H. whereas the EU has recently allocated EUR 432 million to Burundi from the European Development Fund 2014-2020, to assist with improving governance and civil society, among other things;
- I. whereas at least one in two Burundians and almost two-thirds, or 58 %, of all children under the age of five suffer from chronic malnutrition, and whereas Burundi has the highest rate of hunger among the 120 countries on the basis of which the global hunger index was calculated in 2012;
- J. whereas Burundi is one of the five poorest countries in the world, with one of the lowest GDPs per capita; whereas many Burundians have become increasingly frustrated at the increasing cost of food, water and fuel, high levels of corruption and the unaccountability of political leaders;
- K. whereas Burundi is currently facing its worst political crisis since it emerged from a 12-year civil war in 2005, and whereas this is once again posing threats not only to the country’s internal stability, but also to that of its neighbours in an already volatile region

of the African continent;

1. Firmly condemns the detention of human rights defender Pierre Claver Mbonimpa and calls for his immediate unconditional release; expresses concern about his deteriorating state of health and demands that he be given urgent medical assistance;
2. Expresses particular concern about the situation of MSD opposition members being detained following the events of 8 March 2014; calls on the Burundian authorities to annul the judgment and re-try those against whom there may be credible accusations in line with international standards, including the right to a defence and proportionality;
3. Urges the Burundian Government to take measures to control the CNDD-FDD youth league, preventing its members from intimidating and attacking perceived opponents, and ensure that those responsible for abuses are brought to justice; calls for an independent international investigation into the claims that the CNDD-FDD arms and trains its youth wing; urges the leaders of opposition parties to prevent violence being perpetrated against their opponents;
4. Calls on the countries of the Great Lakes region to address the unlawful activities of the *Imbonerakure* and jointly address such problems with the Government of Burundi; calls on these countries to maintain a high level of commitment to promoting peace and stability through existing regional mechanisms and to intensify their efforts on regional economic development, paying special attention to reconciliation, respect for human rights, the fight against impunity, and the establishment of better judicial accountability;
5. Recalls that Burundi is bound by the human rights clause of the Cotonou Agreement, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and therefore has an obligation to respect universal human rights, including freedom of expression; calls on the Government of Burundi to allow genuine and open political debate to take place ahead of the elections in 2015 without fear of intimidation, by refraining from interfering in the internal management of the opposition parties, from placing restrictions on campaigning for all parties, especially in rural areas, and from abusing the judiciary to exclude political rivals;
6. Expresses deep concern about the absence of justice for scores of political killings between 2010 and 2012, following the 2010 elections; calls on the Burundian authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of these killings are brought to justice, in fair trials, and make every effort to prevent political violence before the 2015 elections;
7. Reiterates in this context the importance of respecting the Code of Conduct in electoral matters (*Code de bonne conduite en matière électorale*) and the UN-brokered election roadmap which was signed by political actors in 2013, and fully supports the activities of the BNUB aimed at preventing a further increase in political violence in the run-up to the 2015 elections and helping restore long-term security and peace;
8. Is deeply concerned at the economic and social situation facing the population of Burundi as a whole, in particular refugees and displaced persons, whose numbers will continue to rise, given the security problems within the country and the tensions in neighbouring countries;
9. Encourages all sides to keep to their commitments contained in the 2000 Arusha Peace

and Reconciliation Agreement, which was instrumental in ending 12 years of civil conflict in 2005; warns against amending the Burundian constitution in such a way as to strip it of the fundamental power-sharing provisions stipulated in the Arusha agreements;

10. Calls on the EU High Representative and the Member States to ensure that there is a clear and principled EU policy vis-à-vis Burundi that addresses the ongoing serious human rights violations, in line with the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights; calls on the Commission to consider launching consultations with Burundi under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement with a view to possible suspension from the Agreement and to take any appropriate measures while they are conducted;
11. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States, the Government of Burundi and governments of the countries of the Great Lakes region, the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament.