



Plenary sitting

B8-0091/2017

17.1.2017

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Burundi
(2017/2508(RSP))

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on behalf of the PPE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Burundi
(2017/2508(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Burundi, notably those of 9 July and 17 December 2016,
- having regard to the Statement of 6 January 2017 by the Spokesperson of the HRVP on the banning of Ligue Iteka in Burundi,
- having regard to the African Commission of Human and People's Rights' resolution of 4 November 2016 on the human rights situation in the Republic of Burundi,
- having regard to the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 30 September 2016 on the situation of human rights in Burundi,
- having regard to the Declaration of 21 October 2016 by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on South Africa and Burundi and the International Criminal Court,
- having regard to the report of 20 September 2016 of the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB),
- having regard to the report of 17 June 2016 of UN High Commissioner for human rights on the human rights situation in Burundi,
- having regard to the Council decision of 8 March 2016 concerning the conclusion of consultations with the Republic of Burundi under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU) 2015/1755 of 1 October 2015 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Burundi,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 2248 (2015) of 12 November 2015 and 2303 (2016) of 29 July 2016 on the situation in Burundi,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 16 March, 18 May, 22 June and 16 November 2015 and 15 February 2016 on Burundi,
- having regard to the report of 30 December 2015 of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on his mission to Burundi,
- having regard to the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi,
- having regard to the Constitution of Burundi,

- having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG),
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to Article 18(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Burundi was plunged into grave political crisis and civil unrest after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced in April 2015 that he would run for a third term, regardless of the Burundian Constitution limiting the presidential mandate to two terms; whereas his re-election on 26 August 2015 has faced strong opposition and resulted in a massive crackdown by the government and a worrying deterioration of the human rights situation in the country;
 - B. whereas the recent report of the UNIIB points at the “abundant evidence of gross human rights violations and abuses” in the country, including targeted assassinations, arbitrary arrests and detentions, acts of torture, sexual and gender-based violence, threats and intimidation, mainly by security forces and ruling authorities; whereas none of these atrocities reported are effectively investigated and their perpetrators prosecuted;
 - C. whereas according to human rights observers, up to 1,000 people may have been killed since April 2015, including 564 verified cases of arbitrary executions; whereas opposition members and civil society actors, notably human rights defenders and journalists, have been primary targets of systematic repression by the authorities;
 - D. whereas the authorities have banned five human rights organisations in October 2016 alone; whereas most recently, in January 2017, the country's oldest human rights organisation Ligue Iteka was banned for altering the country's image and stirring up hatred and divisions; whereas in December 2016, the parliament passed a law imposing strict controls on international non-governmental organisations;
 - E. whereas the government has been tightening its grip on independent media and newspapers, with journalists facing forced disappearance, physical threats and attacks, or judicial harassment; whereas all independent radio stations have been suspended; whereas Reporters Sans Frontières ranks Burundi 156th out of 180 in their 2016 World Press Freedom Index;
 - F. whereas in August 2016, 14 mass graves were reported across the country; whereas the government has impeded access to those graves and prevented international organisations from investigating them;
 - G. whereas there are fears of an “ethnicisation” of the crisis by the government, and divisive rhetoric by state officials is becoming a common trend;
 - H. whereas in August 2016, the Burundian government rejected the deployment of UN police officers to monitor the situation in Burundi;

- I. whereas in October 2016, Burundi became the first country to begin the process of withdrawal from the International Criminal Court following its decision to open a preliminary investigation into violence and human rights abuses in the country;
- J. whereas in December 2016, President Nkurunziza considered the possibility to run for a fourth term in 2020, despite the promise made when he last took office in 2015;
- K. whereas on March 2016, the EU closed consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement and suspended direct financial support to the Burundian administration, concluding that the commitments proposed by the government in terms of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law were unsatisfactory;
- L. whereas both the EU and the US have adopted targeted and individual sanctions against Burundi, and the AU is currently considering them; whereas on 20 September 2016, EU restrictive measures were renewed until 31 October 2017;
- M. whereas the political deadlock in Burundi and the deteriorating economic situation have serious consequences for the population; whereas nearly 300,000 people have fled the country and seek refuge in neighbouring countries, and 61,000 have been displaced; whereas 4,6 million people are currently food insecure;
- N. whereas the security situation in Burundi poses risks for the stability of the region as a whole;
1. Expresses its deep concern regarding the worsening political and security situation in Burundi and at the number of victims and cases of serious abuses reported in the last 18 months; calls for an immediate end to violence and human rights violations;
 2. Reminds the authorities of Burundi of their obligations to guarantee, protect and promote fundamental rights, including the civil and political rights of its citizens, as provided for in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and other international and regional human rights instruments; deeply regrets the decision of the authorities of Burundi to withdraw from the Rome Statutes establishing the International Criminal Court;
 3. Urges the Burundian authorities to conduct a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into all human rights abuses perpetrated, included by police and state officials, and duly hold those responsible accountable;
 4. Calls on the government to reverse its decision to ban the human rights organization Ligue Iteka, to reconsider all restrictions imposed on civil society organizations, and in particular the new legislation on foreign NGOs, and to ensure that human rights defenders are able to operate freely and safely in the country;
- 4 bis. Expresses concerns about the new legislation on the creation of a national volunteer corps that could legalize the activities of the youth militia "Umbonerakure";

5. Is worried that the political crisis might turn into an ethnic conflict; urges the authorities to refrain from any behaviour or language that may further aggravate violence and deepen the crisis;
6. Urges all parties to establish the necessary conditions for rebuilding trust and fostering national unity through an inclusive and transparent national dialogue, including the government, opposition parties and civil society representatives in accordance with the Arusha Agreement and the Burundian Constitution;
7. Reaffirms its support to the targeted sanctions renewed by the EU, as well as the decision by the EU Council to suspend budget support to Burundi following the consultations held under Article 96; calls on the Burundian government to take all necessary measures to return to full compliance with democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, and facilitate a normalisation of its relationship with the EU;
8. Calls on the Burundian government to comply with UN Resolution 2303 and allow the deployment of the UN Police Unit to monitor the security situation and to extend full support to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;
9. Is deeply concerned regarding the growing flow of refugees in neighbouring countries and the alarming humanitarian situation in Burundi; reiterates its support and solidarity to all humanitarian organisations operating on the ground as well as to the neighbouring host countries; further calls on the EU to step up its assistance to the region;
10. Calls on the AU and the EU to seriously consider the regional dimension and prevent any further destabilisation of the region, in particular by maintaining a permanent political dialogue between countries of the region;
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 East African Community, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament.