



Plenary sitting

B9-0055/2020

14.1.2020

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 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on Burundi, notably freedom of expression
(2020/2502(RSP))

Anna Fotyga, Karol Karski, Assita Kanko, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Joanna Kopcińska, Ryszard Czarnecki, Bogdan Rzońca, Angel Dzhambazki, Andrey Slabakov, Adam Bielan, Evžen Tošenovský, Veronika Vrecionová, Alexandr Vondra, Raffaele Fitto, Emmanouil Fragkos, Ruža Tomašić, Carlo Fidanza, Jan Zahradil
on behalf of the ECR Group

B9-0055/2020

European Parliament resolution on Burundi, notably freedom of expression (2020/2502(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Burundi, notably those of 9 July 2015, 17 December 2015, 19 January 2017, 6 July 2017 and 5 July 2018,
 - having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention against Torture of 1985,
 - having regard to the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi of 28 August 2000,
 - having regard to Council decisions 2015/1755, 2015/1763 and 2019/1788,
 - having regard to UN Security Council resolution 2303 (2016) of 29 July 2016 on the situation in Burundi,
 - having regard to the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi of 4 September 2019,
 - having regard to the report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Burundi of 24 October 2019,
 - having regard to the declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU of 29 November 2019 on the alignment of certain third countries concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Burundi,
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Burundi has been experiencing a political and economic crisis for more than four years since president Nkurunziza's April 2015 decision to seek a disputed third term;
- B. whereas in 2016 the EU decided that the government of Burundi was no longer adhering to the basic principles of the partnership as defined in the Cotonou Agreement, and a Council

Decision of 14 March 2016, under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement, suspended direct financial support to the Burundian administration (including budget support), although support for the public, regional aid and humanitarian aid were maintained;

- C. whereas the crisis has taken a massive toll on Burundi's media: radio stations were burned down, dozens of journalists fled into exile and the media outlets that still try to keep independent reporting alive are constantly harassed or are banned outright;
- D. whereas the BBC closed its bureau in Bujumbura in July 2019 after failing to get the Burundian authorities to lift the order suspending its activities that was issued after it broadcast a TV documentary accusing the Burundian security services of operating secret torture and detention sites with the aim of silencing dissent, and whereas an order suspending the Voice of America for six months in 2018 was extended indefinitely in March 2019;
- E. whereas the UN Security Council underlined on 22 August 2018 the utmost importance of respecting the letter and the spirit of the Arusha Agreement, which has helped to sustain a decade of peace in Burundi, and expressed concern that the situation prevailing in Burundi has undermined the significant gains achieved through the Agreement;
- F. whereas the UN Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry on Burundi highlighted in its report of 4 September 2019 that a few months ahead of the 2020 presidential and parliamentary elections, fear and intimidation prevailed for those who opposed the ruling CNDD-FDD party, and that serious human rights violations continued to be committed by its youth league, the "Imbonerakure", agents from the national intelligence service, the police and local authorities, and whereas although this Commission has made repeated requests, the government of Burundi refused any cooperation with it;
- G. whereas the UN Human Rights Office in Burundi, that worked with the government of Burundi on peacebuilding, security sector reform, justice sector reform, and helped build institutional and civil society capacity on human rights issues, was closed in March 2019 at the insistence of the government of Burundi, which had already suspended all cooperation with the Office in October 2016;
- H. whereas the government of Burundi has cracked down on the news media ahead of the 2020 elections, and whereas this clampdown on Burundi's media is such that Reporters without Borders said it feared for the survival of any remnant of independent journalism in the run-up to next May's election;
- I. whereas Burundi is ranked 159th out of 180 countries in the 2019 World Press Freedom Index;
- J. whereas the UN Special Envoy for Burundi, Michel Kafando, told the Security Council on 19 February 2019 that an inter-Burundian, inclusive dialogue under the auspices of the East African Community remains the only viable option for lasting settlement of the political crisis and the holding of elections in 2020 in a peaceful environment;
 - 1. Remains deeply concerned by the human rights situation in Burundi and the slow progress of the inter-Burundian dialogue led by the East African Community, which undermine initiatives for reconciliation, peace and justice;

2. Urges the guarantors of the Arusha Agreement of 28 August 2000 to meet their obligations to ensure that the entirety of the Agreement is adhered to;
3. Reminds the authorities of Burundi of their obligations to guarantee, protect and promote fundamental rights and freedoms, including the civil and political rights of their citizens such as freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, and calls upon the Government of Burundi to put an end to human rights violations committed by agents of the State and the Imbonerakure, to respect the rule of law, including the right to a fair and impartial trial, and to ensure accountability for all crimes, in line with the Constitution of Burundi and its international obligations;
4. Underlines that considerable improvements to the political and human rights situation, in particular regarding fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression including freedom of the press, freedoms of association and assembly, and progress on reconciliation are necessary to enable credible elections; calls upon the Government of Burundi to ensure that violations of these rights are impartially investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted in trials that meet international standards;
5. Calls upon the Government of Burundi to allow political opponents in exile to return and campaign freely without intimidation, arrest or violence and to let external monitors observe preparations for the polls as well as the voting and counting;
6. Urges the Government of Burundi to cease all targeting of human rights defenders and to recognise the legitimacy of human rights work including by allowing human rights organisations and international monitors such as the OHCHR and the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi to operate freely in the country;
7. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of imprisoned human rights defenders and journalists and for the full restoration of broadcasting rights to the BBC and the Voice of America;
8. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to urgently prepare an expanded list of names of those who are responsible for planning, organising and executing human rights violations with a view to adding them to the list of those Burundian officials who are already under EU sanctions;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Government and Parliament of Burundi, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers; the Commission, the Council, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the EU Member States, the member countries and institutions of the African Union, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.