



Oral statement by FIACAT, co-sponsored by CCPR Centre, DefendDefenders¹, OMCT,
Protection International and TRIAL International
39th session of the Human Rights Council

Item 4 – Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen of the Commission of Inquiry,

I am speaking before you on behalf of a coalition of Burundian NGOs², with the support of CCPR Centre, FIACAT, OMCT, Protection International and TRIAL International.

These organisations would like to thank the Commission of Inquiry for the work it has accomplished and for presenting its report. It is extremely worrisome to note that the Commission's findings are that serious human rights violations still persist, some of which qualify as crimes against humanity.

The signatory Burundian NGOs, thanks to their constant monitoring, agree with the Commission's findings. Indeed, since 30 June 2018, SOS-Torture / Burundi has documented 35 cases of extrajudicial executions, 2 cases of rape and 158 arbitrary arrests, the victims of which were often opponents – real or perceived – sometimes involving members of the Imbonerakure. Ligue Iteka also drew up a list of 16 cases of gender-based violence and 49 instances of torture, some of which having been perpetrated by SNR and members of the Imbonerakure. These figures are not exhaustive and do not represent all the cases that have been documented by Burundian organisations.

Human rights defenders are also still being persecuted because of their work. Two examples come to mind: the first is that of Nestor Nibitanga, a member of APRODH, sentenced to five years in prison for breach of State security on 13 August 2018; the second is that of Germain Rukuki, a former accountant at ACAT Burundi, who was sentenced to 32 years in prison because of the work he did for ACAT, and who is still in jail as we speak.

In light of these elements and considering the upcoming elections of 2020, ensuring the permanence of an independent and reliable international mechanism to investigate human rights violations in Burundi appears as something of the utmost importance. The existence of such a mechanism is only made more essential by Burundi's refusal to cooperate with the High Commissioner for Human Rights to enforce resolution 36/2, despite having initially supported it, which was to commission 3 experts to go to Burundi in order to provide the Burundian government with technical assistance and capacity development.

This is why the signatory NGOs ask that the Human Rights Council renew for an additional year the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for Burundi, as per its own recommendation, and call for the Burundian government to cooperate fully with the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Commission of Inquiry for Burundi.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

¹ DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)

² ACAT Burundi, CAVIB, CB CPI, FOCODE, Ligue Iteka, RCP and SOS-Torture / Burundi