



**Joint submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Burundi by ARTICLE 19, the Collaboration on ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), the East Africa Law Society, the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU), and the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (Defend Defenders)**

*For consideration at the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the Working Group in January 2018*

*29 June 2017*

## **Executive Summary**

1. The submitting organisations welcome the opportunity to contribute to the third cycle of the UPR of Burundi. This submission addresses a markedly worsening situation for freedom of expression and freedom of association in Burundi since its last UPR. It does not aim to be comprehensive of all problems in this area but focuses on issues relating to:
  - Legal framework relating to freedom of expression;
  - Restrictions on media freedom;
  - Restrictions on freedom of expression online;
  - Restrictions on the rights to freedom of assembly and association
  - Right to information.
2. Overall, we find that the situation in Burundi in these areas has not improved. Not only has Burundi failed to improve legal protection for the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association, but in 2013 and 2015, it also enacted two repressive press laws and a restrictive law on assemblies and association. Media freedom and civic space have deteriorated to unprecedented levels, following President Pierre Nkuruziza's March 2014 decision to seek Constitutional amendments to enable him run for a third term in the April 2015 presidential elections. The situation was aggravated by the subsequent failed coup d'état of 13 May 2015, with various independent media houses destroyed for their alleged role in the coup.
3. Journalists, media workers, human rights defenders and others critical of the re-election bid have been facing harsh treatment from the authorities and many have been forced to flee the country for fear of reprisals. Several independent media houses have been closed; and those critical of the ruling party have been increasingly targets of physical attacks and death threats from police and the *Imbonerakure* (the youth wing of the ruling party). Already severely restricted, civic space has shrunk further, and more restrictions on protests have been introduced, including a total ban on peaceful demonstrations.

## Legal framework relating to freedom of expression

4. During its 2<sup>nd</sup> UPR, Burundi received, and noted, numerous recommendations relevant to this submission. In particular, these included modifying the restrictive legislation on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, ensuring protection of freedom of opinion, ensuring that the press has margin for manoeuvre, as does civil society, take the necessary steps to ensure that its legal system and policies are in full compliance with its international obligations in respect of freedom of expression and that journalists and human rights defenders are guaranteed the freedom to carry out their work independently and without fear of prosecution or intimidation. None of these recommendations have been implemented.
5. Existing national constitutional guarantees for protection of freedom of expression (in Article 31 of the Constitution) has been undermined by government restrictions on the media, failure to reform existing laws that violate freedom of expression such as the Penal Code Act, and the enactment of laws that do not conform with international human rights standards.
6. In 2013, the National Assembly adopted a new Press Law (*Law No 1/11 of 4 June 2013*, amending *Law No. 1/025 of 27 November 2003*). The Press Law was problematic from an international freedom of expression perspective for several reasons: a) it mandates a compulsory accreditation and onerous registration regime for all journalists working in Burundi (Articles 5-9 and 72); b) it broadly restricts publications from including reporting that “undermines national unity and public order, or that are related to issues such as national defense, security, public safety, unauthorised demonstrations and the economy” (Articles 10 and 17-19); c) it requires journalists to disclose confidential sources of information, against international standards (Article 20); d) it unduly regulates print and web media (Articles 26-35 and 44-45); and e) it provides for prior censorship for films that are proposed to be directed in Burundi (Article 46) as well as for exorbitant fines and harsh penalties for journalists from between 300,000 to 2 million Burundian francs, approximately 150 to 1,000 euros (Articles 56-64 and 66-69).<sup>1</sup>
7. Two legal challenges were brought against the 2013 Press Law:
  - Based on a constitutional challenge - brought by the association *Maison de la Presse du Burundi* - in January 2014, the Constitutional Court nullified several provisions of its provisions. These included quashing provisions under Article 56 on exorbitant fines and other penalties that could be imposed on journalists in an arbitrary manner.
  - The second challenge was filed in July 2013 by the Burundi Journalists Union to the East African Court of Justice (EACJ), arguing that it violated the fundamental and operational principles of the East African Community principles of democracy, rule of law, accountability, transparency and good governance as protected by the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community (EAC Treaty). In May 2015, the EACJ found the provisions imposing content restrictions (Article 19(b), (g) and (i)) and mandating the disclosure of sources (Article 20) to be in violation of the EAC Treaty and ordered Burundi to implement the judgment without delay through legal reforms.<sup>2</sup> The EACJ did not quash the other provisions of the Press Law which the applicants had challenged (Articles 5-10, 17-20, 26-35, 44-46, 48-54, 56-64 and 66-69).<sup>3</sup>
8. Following these decisions Burundi enacted a new Press Law on 9 May 2015, modifying sections of the 2013 Press Law. Notably, the 2015 Press Law omitted the previous provision on severe fines under the 2013. However, other problematic provisions remain and/or addressed freedom of expression concerns only in part. In particular,
  - Under Article 19, the National Communication Council has powers to refuse to accredit or withdraw journalists’ accreditation; although it introduces provisions providing aggrieved persons with an appeal option to a competent court;

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<sup>1</sup> Burundi Journalists' Union v Attorney-General of Burundi: a positive judgment in the midst of a crisis; at <http://bit.ly/2u19AqJ>.

<sup>2</sup> Burundi Journalists Union vs. AG, Reference No. 7 OF 2013; at <http://bit.ly/2s492Pj>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para 123.

- Article 18 obliges journalists to refrain from publishing in print or broadcast any information that infringes on national unity, order and public safety, morality and good morals, honour and human dignity, national sovereignty, privacy and presumption of innocence.
- Article 19 bars journalists from disseminating or publishing information that relates to secrecy of national defence, national security, information affecting the stability of the currency, secrecy of judicial inquiries at the pre-jurisdictional stage, insults against the Head of State, disclosures, appeals or announcements encouraging revolt, civil disobedience to an unauthorized public demonstration, apologies to crime, blackmail or fraud, racial or ethnic hatred. The provision also incriminates journalists from publishing defamatory, abusive, libellous or offensive texts or offenses against public or private persons, information affecting the credit of the State and the national economy, confidential or secret documents or recordings relating to military operations, national defence, diplomatic activity, scientific research and records of State commissions of inquiry.
- Article 16 provides for protection of journalistic sources; however this protection is meaningless since the legislation that restricts this protection remains in place. In particular, the Penal Code (Article 250) empowers courts to compel journalists to reveal their sources; and the Criminal Procedures Action (Article 189) makes it an offence for any person to disobey summons, creating penalties of imprisonment or the payment of a fine or both.

### **Restrictions on media freedom**

9. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> review cycle, Burundi noted recommendations addressing, *inter alia*, ensuring the safety of journalists against violence and harassment and ensuring that journalists and human rights defenders are guaranteed the freedom to carry out their work independently and without fear of prosecution or intimidation. However, Burundi has failed to so implement these recommendations and it applies several measures to restrict media freedom. The restrictive media environment is further worsened by a lack of independent judiciary and law enforcement that approve and endorse rights' violations.

### ***Legal harassment and forced disappearances of journalists and opposition leaders***

10. The Burundi authorities harass and silence journalists by bringing various charges against them for their journalistic activities. There have been also serious cases of a murder of a journalist and his family, members of the opposition and their staff, and one case of a disappearance of journalist.
  - On 23 May 2015, Faustin Ndabitezimana, a member of the Front for Democracy opposition party that led demonstrations against the government was killed by armed men. The opposition head, Zedi Feruzi of Union for Peace and Democracy-Zigamibanga (Union pour la paix et la démocratie-Zigamibanga) and one of his bodyguards were also gunned down.
  - In October 2015, Christophe Nkezabahizi, a cameraman at the state-owned *Radio Television Nationale du Burundi* was killed together with his entire family when police fired bullets around his homestead while allegedly searching for persons suspected to have kidnapped three police officers.<sup>4</sup>
  - On 22 July 2016, Jean Bigirimana, a journalist working for both *Iwacu Press Group* and *Infos Grands Lacs* disappeared without trace to date.<sup>5</sup> It is alleged that security forces kidnapped him.
  - In November 2011, Hassan Ruvakuki of *Bonesha FM* and the Swahili service of *Radio France Internationale* was arrested in November 2011 on terrorism charges. He had written stories regarding Burundian rebel groups forming in Tanzania. In June 2012, the High Court sentenced him to life imprisonment, ruling that in 2011, he had participated in an armed attack in Cankuzo, a province bordering Tanzania.<sup>6</sup> However, in January 2013, an Appeals court reduced his

<sup>4</sup> CPJ, Radio Television Nationale du Burundi Killed in Bujumbura, Burundi, October 13, 2015; at <http://bit.ly/1QhP1Ny>.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2bNWHdJ>.

<sup>6</sup> BBC, Hassan Ruvakuki: Burundi Reporter life sentence reduced, 8 January 2013; at <http://bbc.in/2u1bGGP>.

sentence to 3 years in prison. Ruvakuki was later released on health grounds on 19 Feb 2013, having spent 15 months in prison.<sup>7</sup>

- On 13 June 2013, Lucien Rukevya of the state-owned broadcaster *Television Nationale du Burundi* (RTNB) was arrested and detained by the intelligence services for allegedly breaching national security and possessing "incriminating documents" that he was a member of M23 rebels in Democratic Republic of Congo. His home and office were searched and he was later released without charge, after several days in detention.<sup>8</sup>
  - On 11 June 2013, shortly after the adoption of the 2013 Press Law, Janvier Harerimana of *Radio Isanganiro* was questioned by the police and pressured to reveal his sources for a story on an alleged murder committed by a member of the Imbonerakure.
  - In June 2013, Evariste Nzikobanyankain of *Radio Isanganiro* was interrogated by a State Prosecutor for publishing information deemed "detrimental to public safety" under Article 10 of the 2013 Press law.
  - In April 2014, several Burundian reporters, including Eloge Niyonzima of *RPA*, and Alexis Nkeshimana of *Radio Bonesha* were charged with 'undermining state security' under the 2013 Press Law, following their reports documenting the public's fears regarding alleged arms distribution to the Imbonerakure youth wing of the ruling party, which had been reported in international media. They were coerced into revealing their sources.<sup>9</sup>
  - In May 2014, Alexis Nimubona of *RPA* was charged with criminal defamation for his reporting, which identified provincial officials as implicated in the above-mentioned alleged arms distribution.<sup>10</sup>
  - In January 2015, Bob Rugurika of *Radio Public Africaine* (RPA) was arrested and charged with conspiracy to murder, violating confidentiality in criminal investigations, harbouring a criminal, and failing to uphold "public solidarity" following his broadcast on the murder of three Italian nuns in late 2014, in which it was alleged that Burundian security forces were involved in the attack.<sup>11</sup> In February 2015, while on bail<sup>12</sup> and after receiving death threats, Rugurika fled the country and is currently being prosecuted *in absentia*; if convicted, he faces a 20-year prison sentence.
11. The harassment and prosecution of their peers has largely forced journalists into exile and self-censorship. It is estimated that over 100 journalists have fled the country and live in dire conditions abroad. They still live in fear since they are considered enemies of the State. For example:
- In August 2016, Boaz Ntaconayigize, a Bonesha FM journalist who had fled into exile in Uganda, was stabbed in Kampala just days after he told his editor that Burundian intelligence agents had infiltrated the Burundian refugee community in Uganda.
  - Burundi has also sought for the extradition of some of the journalists including Anne Niyuhire, the director of Isanganiro Radio and Patrick Nduwimana, the director of Bonesha FM.<sup>13</sup> We note that Uganda and other neighbouring states hosting these refugees have so far respected the obligation of *non-refoulement*.

### **Forced closure of media outlets and unions**

12. A number of independent media outlets and organisations have been closed (temporarily or definitely) or threatened with closure since the 2015 political crisis in the absence of court orders. The Commission of Inquiry on Burundi also recently highlighted, that the main private media organisations currently remain suspended and only two private radio stations *Radio Rema*, closely

<sup>7</sup> RSF, Conditional release "follows radio reporter's release "on health grounds", 22 October 2013; at <http://bit.ly/2u12Eka>.

<sup>8</sup> CPJ, Security officials arrest Burundian TV journalist, 17 June 2013; at <http://bit.ly/2sU0f5z>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/burundi>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> HRW Burundi: Prominent Radio Journalist Arrested, Escalating Crackdown on Critics as Election Nears, 22 January 2015; at <http://bit.ly/2tnT1ai>.

<sup>12</sup> The Daily Monitor, 19 February 2015; at <http://bit.ly/2ulddXM>.

<sup>13</sup> RSF, Communique from Burundian Government; at <http://bit.ly/2tnToBJ>.

allied to the ruling party, and *Radio Isanganiro* have been allowed to resume broadcasting. In particular:

- The offices of the Burundian Union of Journalists were closed in October 2016 and remain provisionally suspended.
  - In November 2015, *Iwacu* media house was threatened and forced to stop publishing for several days with its Director summoned by the Prosecutor's Office with accusations of participating in the coup d'état. It currently continues to operate.
  - In April 2015, security forces raided and forced the closure of *RPA* without providing any court order, accusing it of inciting violence through its coverage of protests.<sup>14</sup>
  - In April 2015, *Radio Insanganiro* and *Bonesha FM* coverage of protests was restricted to the capital Bujumbura by disabling their relay transmitters. Both stations were subsequently forcibly closed in May 2015.<sup>15</sup>
  - In February 2016; *Radio Isanganiro* (which was shut down in November 2015 pending the investigation to the coup d'état) was allowed to re-open after signing an undertaking with government to adhere to a "balanced and objective" editorial policy. It remains under state scrutiny: the government "corrects" stories aired by the station, advising it not to cover certain content. At the same time, its journalists have been summoned for questioning by authorities. On 5 April 2017, an editor was summoned by National Intelligence Service for questioning about flouting the editorial policy.<sup>16</sup> Also, one of its programmes was suspended in November 2016 for broadcasting a song entitled "Human Rights for Journalists." On 4 April 2017, the station's editor-in-chief was summoned for questioning by the National Intelligence Service in Bujumbura for the radio's alleged collaboration with Burundian media broadcasting from Rwanda.<sup>17</sup>
13. Moreover, during the 2015 protests, the property and equipment of *Radio Isanganiro*, *RPA*, *Bonesha FM*, and *Radiotélévision Renaissance*, were allegedly destroyed by security agents. The offices of *Radio Rema* were allegedly burned by government opponents.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Lack of independent media regulator**

14. There is no independent media regulator in Burundi. The media regulatory body, National Communications Council (*Conseil National de la Communication*, "the Council") – a statutory body created under chapter 5 of the Constitution – fails to meet the international standards on media regulator independence: it is appointed by the President and controlled by the Minister of Information. It has broad powers to regulate all media, accredit journalists, oversee issues of media ethics as well as media law, impose sanctions and arbitrate, and powers to appoint or terminate its members.
15. The Council enforces the government's crack-down on media. For example:
- In May 2013, it suspended *Iwacu's* popular online readers' forum for one month for failure to moderate comments that allegedly "disturbed national unity" and incited "ethnic hatred" (though it failed to provide evidence for these allegations);
  - In June 2013, it suspended *Radio Rema* for broadcasting content that the Council considered libelous to members of civil society.<sup>19</sup> Although the suspension was lifted, the Prosecutor General still sued the media house. It is not clear whether the charges were ultimately dropped;<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.voanews.com/a/burundi-journalists-protest-closing-of-radio-station/2746796.html>

<sup>15</sup> Freedom House: Freedom of the Press 2016 - Burundi, 27 April 2016; at <http://bit.ly/2u1hhNll>

<sup>16</sup> RSF, Burundi: Radio Isanganiro under pressure, 6 April 2017; at <http://bit.ly/2oNclZQ>.

<sup>17</sup> Oral Briefing by Fatsah Ouguergouz, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi Human Rights Council Thirty-fifth session, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2017, para 11; at <http://bit.ly/2t3koEq>.

<sup>18</sup> Amnesty International Report, Braving Bullets, Excessive Force in Policing Demonstrations in Burundi, Index: AFR 16/2100/2015, Paras 3-4, page 20.

<sup>19</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2tnyxyX>.

<sup>20</sup> Freedom House, Freedom of the Press, 2014, Para 4; at <http://bit.ly/2tnzTtG>.

- In May 2014, it suspended for 2 days *RPA* broadcasts that repeated the allegations of Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a famous Burundian activist, that the government had youth training militia camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo,<sup>21</sup> as well as broadcasts protesting his detention.

### **Restrictions on freedom of expression online**

16. With the increase in Internet users using broadband in Burundi, there has also been an increase of government efforts to control online information flows. In particular:
- From 29 April 2015 to 13 May 2016, the government ordered telecom companies and Internet service providers to block access to specific social media applications such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook on grounds that "*people were using those social media to spread dangerous rumours and helping protesters to organise their movements, which could endanger national security.*"<sup>22</sup> Internet service providers were also reportedly tasked to monitor users who were considered to be fuelling the protests.
  - On 20 August 2016, 56 individuals belonging to a WhatsApp group were arrested by police for allegedly spreading defamatory and abusive statements on WhatsApp and other social media.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently, 46 of those arrested were released but eight remained in the central prison of Bujumbura over charges of slander and defamation against public officials and institutions. It is unclear whether the 8 were released or are still in police detention.
17. In 2015, Burundi established a mandatory SIM card registration: personal information, such as a name and address, has to be supplied.<sup>24</sup> In July 2015, all unregistered SIM cards were blocked.<sup>25</sup> In March 2016, Burundi adopted a law (the Ministerial Law No 540/356) prohibiting possession of two SIM cards from the same telecom provider. Article 1 of this law mandates that any person who requires dual SIM cards must seek authorisation from the ARCT which is also empowered (under Article 3 of the Law) to verify that all SIM card users are real subscribers. A fine of 5 million Burundi Francs (US\$ 2,967) is applicable for violating the provision.<sup>26</sup> This legislation is problematic from both the perspective of freedom of expression and privacy.
18. Under Burundi legislation (Article 92 of Law No. 1/10 of 3 April 2013 on the reform of the Code of Criminal Procedure), an authorised officer can intercept a person's communications during criminal investigations.<sup>27</sup> Although Law No 1/011 (1997) provides for protection of privacy, it mandates communications service providers to provide confidential information under Article 24 if required.

### **Restrictions on freedom of assembly and association**

19. During the 2<sup>nd</sup> UPR cycle, Burundi noted recommendations which called for the government to fully guarantee the right to freedoms of assembly, association, in conformity with the ICCPR.
20. In the past 5 years, the government has increasingly restricted and, in some cases banned entirely, the exercise of association and assembly rights. In particular, on 5 December 2013, the government enacted Law 1/28 which aims to restrict, regulate, and control public demonstrations and assemblies, in contravention of Burundi's own constitutional guarantees (in Articles 19 and 32).
21. Law 1/28 broadly and ambiguously defines what constitutes an assembly; provides for a system of prior notifications of assemblies including identification of organisers, the time and date of the demonstration, its purpose, expected participants and the itinerary (Articles 4 and 7); grants discretionary powers to administrative authorities to refuse or ban assemblies on grounds of public order (Articles 5 and 8); restricts public assemblies and demonstrations to between 6:00 am and

<sup>21</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2spm9d9>.

<sup>22</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2sU3kCy>.

<sup>23</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2tnKSCU>.

<sup>24</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2t3nBEe>.

<sup>25</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2tnCYJM>.

<sup>26</sup> CIPESA, State of Internet Freedom in Burundi, 2016 Charting Patterns in the Strategies African Governments Use to Stifle Citizens' Digital Rights, Page 7; at <http://bit.ly/2skbhCc>.

<sup>27</sup> Revised Code of Criminal Procedure; at <http://bit.ly/2ulANUg>.

6:00pm (Article 11); establishes criminal and civil liability for organisers in relation to offenses committed by protesters during assemblies (Article 13); bans, and imposes fines of up to 250 US dollars for, counter-demonstrations (Article 18).<sup>28</sup>

22. On the 14 of August 2014 the government issued a directive on the policing of demonstrations, “negotiated management of public space”, authorising the use of lethal force in dispersing and arresting demonstrators.<sup>29</sup>
23. In March 2015, the government issued directives authorising only those from the ruling party to organise and participate in demonstrations, forbidding all other assemblies organised by opposition parties or individuals opposed to or criticising the government.
24. Since its last UPR, there have been numerous instances where the State has violently suppressed protests and restricted the assembly and association rights of opposition groups and critical individuals and organisations:
  - In February 2013, police in Bujumbura violently dispersed a peaceful demonstration of journalists protesting the incarceration of journalist Hassan Ruvakuki, subjecting the demonstrating journalists to beatings.
  - On 4 and 18 of February 2014, the Burundi Bar Association was, on the orders of the Bujumbura Mayor, barred by the police from holding its general assembly and a seminar with the French Bar Association, despite having complied with prior notice procedures.<sup>30</sup>
  - In June 2014, the Interior Minister banned a civil society demonstration in support of their incarcerated colleague, Claver Mbonimpa, on the grounds that he had a pending criminal case, advising them to allow the legal proceedings to take their course rather than “distracting” the public.<sup>31</sup>
  - Over 100 demonstrators were arrested on 17 April 2015, during a protest against President Nkuruziza; approximately 60 demonstrators were detained and charged for alleged “participation in an insurrectional movement.”
  - On 24 October 2015, the Interior Minister closed five civil society and human rights groups including the Civil Society Coalition for Electoral Monitoring, Burundian Coalition for CPI, Burundi Journalists Union, Burundian League of Human Rights-ITEKA and SOS Torture-Burundi on the basis of their “being liable to disturb order and state security.” The Interior Minister subsequently stated in a January 2016 letter that the activities conducted by the organizations were not in line with the objectives for which they were formed and that they violated the Constitution of Burundi and not-for profit Law No 1/011 of 18 April 1992.<sup>32</sup>
  - In January 2017, Lique Iteka, Burundi’s oldest human rights organisation, was subject to forced closure by the government, apparently as a reprisal for their publishing a joint report into the dire situation for human rights in the country with the International Federation for Human Rights in November 2016.
  - On 4 April 2017, the government arbitrarily imposed a six-month suspension on the Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD), one of the main opposition parties in the country.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Audace Gatavu, An Analysis of the Legal Framework for Civil Society in Burundi: Case of the December 2013 Law, International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law / vol. 16, no. 2, December 2014/16; at: <http://bit.ly/2uIAitw>.

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International, Braving Bullets: Excessive Force In Policing Demonstrations In Burundi, 2015, Para 2; at <http://bit.ly/2tnXHqX>.

<sup>30</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2to4Nlo> and Amnesty International, *Rapport sur le Burundi, Le verrouillage, lorsque l'espace politique se rétrécit*, 15; at <http://bit.ly/2u1o0Hi>.

<sup>31</sup> Letter from the Minister of the Interior No. 530/1161/CAB/2014 dated June 18, 2014, to Vice President of Forum for the Strengthening of Civil Society (FORSC).

<sup>32</sup> See <http://bit.ly/2spJ3kC>.

<sup>33</sup> HRC Thirty-fifth session, Interactive Dialogue on Burundi Oral Briefing by Fatsah Ouguerouz, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, Geneva, 14 June 2017, Para 10; at <http://bit.ly/2spxRVn>.

## **Access to information**

25. To-date, Burundi has not adopted a freedom of information law, posing also serious challenges to journalists who seek to obtain information including official documents from the State.
26. Together with the forced closure of independent media houses, the mass exodus of journalists to neighbouring countries and the widespread practice of self-censorship among journalists who remain in Burundi, access to information in country is extremely limited, and restricted largely to media subject to total government control or oversight.

## **Recommendations**

27. We call on UN Member States to make the following recommendations to the government of Burundi:
  - Reform and repeal restrictive provisions of the Penal Code, the 2015 Press Law and all legislation affecting freedom of expression with the full and effective participation of all stakeholders including civil society, and bring it to full compliance with international standards;
  - Reopen closed radio stations and create and maintain an enabling environment for media freedom where journalists and media workers can operate freely and unhindered;
  - Refrain from any attacks against journalists and other critics, seek the support and assistance of international and regional human rights experts and mechanisms to establish an independent body to conduct prompt, impartial and thorough investigations into crimes of violence against journalists and media workers and opposition leaders; and ensure those responsible are held accountable and that redress is provided to the victims of those crimes or their next to kin;
  - Cease legal harassment of journalists and media workers in exile and ensure that those responsible for the harassment are held into account;
  - Establish an independent regulator for broadcast media in accordance with international and regional freedom of expression standards;
  - Refrain from blocking access to social media platforms;
  - Repeal the legislation on SIM card registration;
  - Fully respect and protect the right to freedom of assembly and association. In particular, it should reform the legislation on freedom of assembly and association (including the Law 1/28 of December 2013 to conform to regional and international human rights standards. Burundi should also ensure that all its legislation, policies and practices comply with international and regional standards on police use of force, specifically the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pre-Trial Detention in Africa;
  - Enact legislation to guarantee a right to access government-held information, in line with international human rights standards.