

Human Rights Council – 42nd session

Interactive Dialogue Commission of Inquiry on Burundi

17 September 2019

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its report and supports its conclusions and recommendations.

Australia supports the extension of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry, which has provided critical oversight of the human rights situation in Burundi. We deeply regret the Government of Burundi's lack of cooperation with the Commission and other independent international mechanisms seeking to investigate human rights violations in Burundi. We urge the Government of Burundi to reconsider its closure of the UN Human Rights Country Office.

Australia is gravely concerned by the findings in the Commission of Inquiry's report in relation to violations of civil and political rights, including arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and sexual violence, and cases of summary executions and enforced disappearances. We are also gravely concerned about the Commission's finding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity have been committed in Burundi, and further that these violations occur against a backdrop of widespread impunity. We note reports of agreements reached to repatriate Burundian refugees, and highlight the need for any returns to be safe, voluntary and dignified.

Australia calls on the Government of Burundi to support free and fair elections in 2020, and ensure the Imbonerakure and government security forces do not undermine democratic processes and political and media freedoms.

We ask the Commission to elaborate on reports of violence, intimidation and increasing control over non-governmental organisations in the lead up to next year's elections.

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