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Plenary sitting

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<TitreType>MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION</TitreType>

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

<TitreRecueil>pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure</TitreRecueil>

<Titre>on Burundi</Titre>

<DocRef>(2018/2785(RSP))</DocRef>

<RepeatBlock-By><Depute>Marie‑Christine Vergiat, Merja Kyllönen, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Kostadinka Kuneva, Stelios Kouloglou, Barbara Spinelli, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Tania González Peñas, Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Paloma López Bermejo, Sofia Sakorafa</Depute>

<Commission>{GUE/NGL}on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group</Commission>

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B8‑0339/2018

European Parliament resolution on Burundi

(2018/2785(RSP))

*The European Parliament*,

* having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
* having regard to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
* having regard to United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2248 (2015) of 12 November 2015 and 2303 (2016) of 29 July 2016 on the situation in Burundi,
* having regard to the United Nations press release of 27 June 2018: "Opponents of constitutional change in Burundi face torture and execution: UN investigators",
* having regard to the Statement by the President of Security Council of 5 April 2018 regarding the situation in Burundi,
* having regard to the Oral presentation of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi at the 37th session of the Human Rights Council of 13 March 2018,
* having regard to the International Commission of Inquiry report presented on 11 August 2017,
* having regard to the UN Secretary-General’s report on the situation in Burundi, published on 25 January 2018,
* having regard to the report of the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB), published on 20 September 2016,
* having regard to the resolution adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council on 30 September 2016 on the human rights situation in Burundi,
* having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and to the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance,
* having regard to the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi (Arusha Agreement) of 28 August 2000,
* having regard to the European Parliament resolutions on Burundi, notably those of 9 July 2016, 17 December 2016, 18 January 2017, and 5 July 2017,
* having regard to Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,
1. Whereas Burundi is still marked by the civil war that took place between 1993 and 2005 and that has left more than 300,000 dead; whereas the decision taken by President Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015 to seek a third term plunged Burundi into the most serious political crisis since the end of the civil war;
2. whereas in May 2018 a referendum was held in which it was approved to modify the Constitution to extend presidential terms from five years to a seven-year mandate; whereas different voices accused President Nkurunziza of seeking to remain in power until 2034 but after winning the referendum, he announced that he will not run again in the elections in 2020; whereas a change in the composition of the Senate and the National Assembly was approved, which will be evaluated within five years; whereas was also changed from a two-thirds majority to a simple majority the way to approve the ordinary laws, changing; whereas in 2020 there will be another democratic elections in Burundi;

1. whereas there are allegations regarding the increase of acts of violence and intimidation against political opponents, and persons suspected of not registering or not voting; whereas there are allegations of torture, execution, and arrests of people who called for a "no" vote in the referendum; whereas several members of the National Liberation Forces (FNL) loyal to Agathon Rwasa (a party not recognized by the government, but considered as the main opposition force in Burundi) were detained and some were allegedly executed or abducted;
2. Whereas, since the outbreak of violence in 2015, according to the United Nations at least 500 people have died, but according to human rights organizations, more than 1,700 people were killed, between 400 and 900 were victims of enforced disappearances, and several hundred or even thousands of people were tortured; whereas many of these cases have not been investigated and remain in impunity;
3. whereas in the last three years the militarization of the Imbonerakure has increased, as well as its ideological radicalization and its importance within the repressive apparatus of the regime; whereas according to the NGOs, at least 20,000 elements would participate actively in the most serious repressive operations against the civilian population and the alleged opponents;
4. whereas according to the International Commission of Inquiry of the United Nations, armed opposition groups have also attacked the security forces and members of the ruling party since 2015;
5. whereas since 2015, more than 429,000 people fled the country and took refuge in neighbouring countries; whereas UNHCR expects another 50,000 people to leave the country during 2018; whereas the Regional Response Plan for Refugees in Burundi, led by UNHCR, had only received 21% of the funds needed for 2017, which does not reach "acceptable humanitarian standards"; whereas since September many refugees are returning to the country and some of them have adduced the harsh conditions in the countries of asylum as the main reason to return;
6. whereas according to the International Organization for Migration, in November there were 187,626 internally displaced persons, 19% of whom were displaced in 2017; whereas two thirds of the total displacement was due to natural disasters, and a third was a consequence of the socio-political situation;
7. whereas attacks on press freedom continues to be dramatic; whereas several media are censored, suspended, blocked and / or closed; whereas on May 4, the government of Burundi said that the broadcasts of the BBC and the Voice of America would be suspended for six months;
8. whereas restrictive laws to control local and international NGOs were approved; whereas some organizations have been forced to suspend their activities and others to close permanently, such as the ITEKA League, the FOCODE or ACAT; whereas many leaders and human rights defenders are exiled and who are still present are under constant pressure, or facing arrest; whereas Germain Rukuki, Emmanuel Nshimirimana, Aimé Constant Gatore, and Marius Nizigama have been sentenced to prison terms between 10 and 32 years, while Nestor Nibitanga may face 20 years;
9. whereas, according to NGOs, sexual violence is used, in particular, as a weapon at the service of repression by some members of the police, army, and militias; whereas according to the allegations, sexual violence has been used as a method of torture to obtain information or extract confessions from detainees; whereas acts of sexual violence have left serious physical and psychological consequences in the victims, some women was passed on HIV, became pregnant or suffered an abortion;
10. whereas relations between Burundi and the United Nations worsened since the publication in 2016 of a report by the UN International Commission of Inquiry that attributed responsibility for violence to the police and government security forces; whereas, since 2016, the Government of Burundi has decided to suspend cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; whereas on 5 May 2017, the former President of Burkina Faso, Michel Kafando, was appointed Special Envoy of the United Nations in Burundi;
11. whereas in September 2017 the report of the International Commission of Inquiry concluded that there were reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity had been committed since April 2015; whereas in June 2018, the Commission denounced that the repression and human rights violations continue and that the government and the related militias continue to threaten their opponents; whereas Burundi threatened to bring the members of the Commission to justice and in last May the team of experts established by the Security Council was expelled from Burundi and since then they have been banned from entering the country; that the government of Burundi believes that the EU and its member states are participating in an attempt to destabilize the country;
12. whereas Burundi is a geostrategic point in the Great Lakes region; whereas there are still many natural resources unexploited, such as metallic and non-metallic minerals, and hydrocarbons;
13. whereas Burundi is ranked 184 on the Human Development Index; that Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world with a GDP of $ 258 per capita; whereas 64.6% of the population of Burundi currently lives below the poverty line; Whereas, according to the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 3.6 million people need humanitarian aid in Burundi; whereas one in four Burundians are affected by food shortages, malnutrition or epidemics such as malaria and cholera; whereas More than 3 million people experience food insecurity and more than 2 million have limited access to drinking water;
14. whereas the political crisis has further aggravated the socio-economic situation and the living conditions of the population; whereas Burundi has seen a sharp decline in its agricultural production which has resulted in increases in food prices of up to 50%; whereas climate change adversely affects food production, competition for scarce land results in population displacements and property disputes; whereas the reduction in budgetary and institutional support provided by the international community, the disruption of markets and trade, together with state budget cuts, has significantly reduced people's access to basic services;
15. Expresses concern about the situation in Burundi; considers that the current socio-political crisis can only be resolved through political dialogue at national and regional level;
16. Condemns all human rights violations committed in Burundi, including killings, extrajudicial executions, attacks on the physical integrity of persons, rape and sexual violence, acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, arbitrary detentions and illegal detentions, as well as violations of press freedom, freedom of association and freedom of expression and general impunity in the country;
17. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees in relation to the expression of their democratic rights; especially demands the immediate and unconditional release of the five human rights defenders currently imprisoned only because of their human rights work, and urges the authorities to ensure Mr. Rukuki gets the medical care he needs following a recent death while in custody
18. Calls for the immediate cessation of acts of violence, the violation of human rights and political intimidation against civil society and the opposition, as well as the disarmament of all illegal armed groups; demand that people not empowered by law, not perform maintenance activities or participate in them;
19. Urges the authorities to engage a political dialogue and to repeal laws that restrict freedom of expression, assembly and the NGOs´ work in order to ensure a climate conducive to the expression of democracy; calls for the abolition of measures taken against NGOs, radio stations and other independent media in the country;
20. Invites authorities to establish a national mechanism for the prevention of torture in accordance with the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture;
21. Expresses its deep concern about the results of the International Commission of Inquiry; notes that, for the next session of the Human Rights Council in September 2018, final conclusions will be presented on the situation in Burundi; calls, in this context, the allegations will be addressed as certain violations or attacks constitute crimes under international law;
22. Calls for a rigorous, independent and transparent investigation of the crimes committed in the country and for their perpetrators to be brought to justice; reiterates that there cannot be impunity for those responsible for serious violations of human rights;
23. Calls on the competent authorities to protect women and girls from all forms of sexual violence and requests that victims and survivor of sexual violence be provided with the necessary medical and psychological assistance;
24. Denounces the "ethnicization" of the crisis through the use of propaganda that equates opponents, members of civil society, journalists and Tutsis with “enemies of the regime” who must be eliminated; denounces in this sense, statements of incitement to hatred or calls for violence and requests that the perpetrators be brought before the courts;
25. Expresses its deep concern about the economic and social situation of all Burundian people, including the growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons; Calls on the European Union and its Member States to unblock the funds needed to deal with the humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes region, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and to increase official development assistance; reiterates its support for all humanitarian organizations in the field and all neighbouring countries hosting refugees and calls the EU and its Member States to increase their contribution to these bodies in line with their declarations and commitments in this area;
26. Calls on the international community and humanitarian agencies to increase their assistance to all those who are currently refugees or displaced by the conflict; Calls on neighbouring States to do everything possible to put an end to human rights abuses in refugee camps;
27. Urges the EU and its Member States, as recommended by the United Nations International Commission of Inquiry, to grant refugee status (without preconditions) to asylum-seekers from Burundi and to place them among nationals priority of resettlement measures;
28. Reaffirms that the activities of European companies operating in third countries must fully respect international human rights standards; calls on the Member States, therefore, to ensure that companies governed by their national legislation, respect human rights and social, health and environmental standards when installing or operating in a third state; Calls for sanctions to be imposed on European companies that do not respect these standards or that do not satisfactorily compensate victims of human rights violations directly or indirectly responsible for them;
29. Condemns any interference by third countries in the political situation of the country notably in the pre-electoral period;
30. Considers that the problems of Burundi can only be solved in the country guaranteeing the same rights to all citizens and addressing the problems of control of fertile agricultural land, unemployment and poverty, the fight against corruption, poverty, inequality and discrimination and the promotion of social, political and economic reforms to create a democratic and stable state;
31. Considers the lack of access of the populations to the country's natural resources, the widening of income inequalities, the increase in unemployment, the deterioration of the social situation and impoverishment are obstacles to stability and that the fight against these problems they should be a priority in the immediate future;
32. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government of Burundi, the institutions of African Union and the Economic Community of West African States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the General Assembly of the United Nations, the co-presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the Pan-African Parliament.