

[Human Rights Council dispatches expert mission to investigate human rights abuses in Burundi](#)

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(Geneva) - In a US-led [resolution adopted by consensus at a special Human Rights Council session today](#), the Council mandated the High Commissioner for Human Rights to put together an expert mission to Burundi, to investigate abuses and make recommendations to the Council and the Burundian government on ways of ending serious human rights violations.

Following on the heels of Security Council and African Union efforts to bring an end to the political crisis, the special session came after [repeated demands by civil society](#), including ISHR, for the rapidly deteriorating situation to be addressed formally by the UN's top human rights body.

'We welcome the initiative to - finally - enhance the UN's human rights monitoring and investigation role, and to increase the political pressure on Burundi to end attacks on human rights defenders, peaceful protesters and the media,' said Michael Ineichen, ISHR Head of Human Rights Council Advocacy.

'It is critical that the OHCHR mission puts the protection of human rights defenders and civil society at the center of its attention', Mr Ineichen said.

In a [statement to the Human Rights Council](#) during the special session, ISHR welcomed the enhanced UN human rights monitoring and investigation role envisaged in the resolution.

There was widespread support by a number of States for the special session of the Council and efforts to address this crisis. Ireland deplored attempts to silence dissent and called on Burundi to create the required circumstances to facilitate an inter-Burundian dialogue - noting that 'Justice, accountability and ending impunity are essential'.

Kenya described the situation in Burundi as a 'deep spiraling political crisis' and welcomed recent efforts - including the special session of the Council and the recent initiative at the Security Council - to resolve the conflict. The resolution was co-sponsored by four African states: Kenya, Ghana, Senegal and the Central African Republic.

Referring to Nelson Mandela's statement 'for how long shall we kill our own people?', Ghana welcomed the special session of the Council as well as a consensus resolution, highlighting that 'we cannot remain indifferent'.

The resolution underlines the complementarity and coordination of the Council's efforts with other efforts of

the United Nations, the African Union and other appropriate regional and international entities. In a press-release after its recent visit to Burundi, the [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) underscored the 'importance of the presence of neutral monitors' and called for an increase of human rights observers and military experts.

'The statement by the African Commission indicates that the presence of and close monitoring by the international community in Burundi is vital to avoid further bloodshed,' said Clement Voulé, Head of ISHR's Africa program.

Burundi was recently elected to be a member of the Human Rights Council from 2016. While the resolution adopted touched on this issue, it remains weak in this respect by merely urging Burundi to 'be mindful' of the obligation on members to 'uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights'.

'We regret the Council's failure to explicitly state member States' obligation to cooperate with it, and condition Burundi's membership on doing so,' said Michael Ineichen.

'Full cooperation by the authorities with the urgent OHCHR mission, and an immediate halt to the serious human rights violations, should be a prerequisite for Burundi to commence its term on 1 January,' Mr Ineichen said.

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