

[Burundi | Human Rights Council should establish commission to investigate abuse](#)

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The [call by a cross-regional group of leading human rights NGOs](#) came as the United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB) released a report finding that extrajudicial killings, abductions, enforced disappearances, torture, sexual violence and other abuses by state agents and armed opposition groups continue to be perpetrated with impunity in Burundi. The [UNIIB report](#) could not exclude that 'some instances of these gross human rights violations amount to crimes against humanity'. It further reported that 'Burundian civil society actors, notably human rights defenders and journalists, have been primary targets of systematic repression by authorities'.

The report further says that it is 'clear that more and more people who would otherwise have confronted repression have fled the country or are too scared to speak out or take action.'

'To the extent that there is a reduction in violence it has come to a significant extent as a result of increased oppression. Any semblance of opposition to the Government is dealt with ruthlessly and seemingly without fear of accountability,' the UNIIB report says.

In their joint letter, ISHR, Human Rights Watch, FORUM-ASIA, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project and the Asian Legal Resource Centre, said 'the human rights situation in Burundi will not significantly improve until there is an end to impunity for these crimes. Given the gravity and persistence of the abuses, it is vital to set up an independent investigation and produce an objective record as quickly as possible, with a public report laying out the evidence of serious abuses and crimes by all parties. We therefore urge the Human Rights Council to create a Commission of Inquiry to investigate abuses committed by all parties since the crisis started in April 2015.'

In addition to recommending the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry, the UNIIB report also recommended that the Council 'consider whether Burundi can remain a member of the Council in terms of paragraph 8 of General Assembly Resolution 60/251.' Paragraph 8 provides that the General Assembly 'may suspend the rights of membership in the Council of a member of the Council that commits gross and systematic violations of human rights'.

'The Council should schedule an urgent debate or special session to consider recommending that the General Assembly suspend Burundi, including in light of its level of cooperation with any Commission of Inquiry,' said ISHR Director Phil Lynch.

'A State that systematically targets civil society, perpetrates gross violations with impunity, fails to cooperate

with UN human rights bodies, and harasses and attacks human rights defenders who seek to engage with those bodies is in no way worthy of a seat at the world's human rights high table,' Mr Lynch said.

ISHR is co-sponsoring a [Human Rights Council side-event on the human rights situation in Burundi on 26 September](#).

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