

Statement at 42nd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Item 4: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue with COI on Burundi

Speaker: Salma El Hosseiny

M. President,

It has been three years since the *Human Rights Council* established the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi and since then, the government has used every possible means to prevent the Commission from accessing the country. This includes subjecting its members to threats and personal attacks, and threatening them with prosecution for “defamation” and “attempted destabilization” of the country.

In the meantime, the Government and its affiliated agencies and forces, including the police, the National Intelligence Service, and the ruling *CNDD-FDD* party’s youth league, *the Imbonerakure*, continue to commit gross, widespread, and systematic human rights violations. ISHR remains concerned that the few human rights defenders still in the country live and operate in constant fear in a restrictive and unsafe environment. We call on Burundi to uphold its obligation to protect fundamental freedoms including freedom of association and assembly, and refrain from adopting laws that restrict the activities of civil society.

In light of the 2020 elections approaching, the Burundian Government should engage in an inclusive dialogue, including with civil society, political representatives, trade unions and all other stakeholders to create conditions conducive to holding free, democratic and transparent elections. ISHR believes the scrutiny provided by the CoI remains vitally important and calls for the renewal of its mandate. Keeping in mind the massive violations committed during the 2015 elections, what mechanisms will the CoI put in place to monitor, investigate, report and push for accountability for all human rights violations, including against defenders, in the upcoming elections?

ISHR also urges the government of Burundi to reconsider its position and to fully cooperate, in good faith, with all United Nations mechanisms, including the Commission of Inquiry.

I thank you.