

Human Rights Council – 24th special session

Statement by Ireland

17th December 2015

Ireland would like to add some remarks to those already made by the EU.

It is vital that the Human Rights Council acts swiftly in fragile situations where there is serious risk of mass violations and abuses. Today such a human rights situation exists in Burundi.

Ireland is extremely concerned about escalating human rights violations and abuses in Burundi. A further increase in violence just last weekend left over ninety people dead. We are deeply disturbed by reports including of people being executed at their homes, and of murder victims being left on the streets. It is clear from the frequency and persistence of violent attacks in Burundi that the perpetrators consider they can carry out such attacks with total impunity.

It is the Government's primary responsibility to protect its people from violence and intimidation, to respect, protect and fulfil all human rights, to uphold the rule of law and to ensure accountability for all violations and abuses. Justice, accountability and an ending of the pervasive impunity are critical to end this crisis and to prevent its perpetuation and repetition.

Ireland deplores what appears to be a broader campaign to systematically silence any dissent in Burundi, through the harassment and murder of human rights defenders, political opponents, and media workers, as well as the suspension of civil society organisations.

These individuals and groups are the lifeblood of a democratic and pluralistic Burundian society. We warmly welcome members of Burundian civil society who were able to join this discussion today, particularly Mr. Pierre Claver Mbonimpa who continues to display tremendous courage in the face of unspeakable tragedy.

It is imperative that Burundi create and maintain, in law and in practice, a safe and enabling environment in which civil society and journalists can operate free from hindrance and insecurity.

Ireland calls on the Government of Burundi to immediately create the conditions needed for an inclusive inter-Burundian dialogue. We urge the Government to engage in the mediation efforts of the East African Community, led by Uganda, with the commitment and urgency which this volatile situation requires.

Ireland commends the strong and principled response of the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. We also welcome the UN Security Council Resolution 2248, as well as the proposed UN Security Council mission. We regret that the EU's Article 96 negotiations with Burundi did not result in clear commitments from the Government to address human rights violations and abuses and to promote reconciliation.

The draft U.S. resolution before us today calls for the swift action which the human rights situation in Burundi warrants and which complements other UN and regional efforts. We believe the deployment of independent existing experts should take place immediately to prevent further deterioration of the situation. Ireland urges all members of the Council to support the draft resolution.