

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND SPOKESPERSON OF THE GOVERNMENT

DECLARATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BURUNDI FOLLOWING THE HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORT OF 7 JULY 2016

The Organisation for the Defence of Human Rights "Human Rights Watch" issued on July 7, 2016 a report entitled "Intelligence Services Torture Suspected Opponents". Mr. Daniel Bekele, Africa Director of the NGOs whose mailing address is in Nairobi, Kenya, is the author of the above mentioned report.

The report accuses the agents of the National Intelligence Services in Burundi to have tortured and mistreated dozens of suspected opponents of the Government, at the headquarters of the National Intelligence Services and in secret places, and that members of the police and the youth wing of the ruling party "Imbonerakure" have also committed serious abuses between April 2015 and April 2016.

After analyzing the report and comparing its contents to the previous reports released by Human Rights Watch, the Government of Burundi wishes to bring to the attention of the public the following observations:

1. While refuting these false allegations, the Government of Burundi is not surprised by the publication of such a report by Human Rights Watch inasmuch as it is not the first of the kind sort published by the organisation in specific circumstances.

As usual, this is a biased and lopsided report. Throughout this report indeed, this organization narrates what they call anonymous testimonies by suspected opponents who have suffered torture when the whole world has been informed of barbarism suffered by the security forces and other people suspected to be close to the government especially those accused of belonging to the youth wing of the ruling party, the Imbonerakure, during the same period.

2. In fact, the organization devotes only half a page to abuses by insurgents and armed opposition groups only to conclude that they were not in a position to know the identity of the perpetrators of these abuses or identify the families of the victims. Either, Human Rights Watch does not mention anywhere in the report, the refugees enrolled and trained in Rwanda to attack Burundi, including minor children who were captured on the battlefield and shown publicly to diplomats. If this organization really had humanitarian purposes, they would have sought to meet them.

3. The Government of Burundi reminds the opinion that this is not the first fabrication by Human Rights Watch against security forces and government institutions in general. One should remember that since 2010 and before, Human Rights Watch did not miss a single opportunity to discredit the government of Burundi especially on the eve of the activities of international scope and other important deliberations on Burundi.

It shall be recalled indeed that on May 14, 2010 exactly on the eve of the first elections, this organization has released a damning report against the Government and the security forces accused by the NGO to do nothing to prevent and quell election violence, finally concluding that the elections were impossible unless the United Nations was sending a foreign force to secure them. Yet these elections were successful, to the disappointment of this organization and that of the political groups that manipulate it.

4. Not convinced with the above failure, Human Rights Watch backslide on 23 November 2010, by publishing another report, "Closing Doors? The Narrowing of Democratic Space in Burundi. ", again hostile to the government of Burundi, followed two years later by another report published May 2, 2012, this time entitled "You Will Not Have Peace While You Are Living". The latter was considered as an insult to the Government and the people of Burundi and deprived the NGO Human Rights Watch of any credibility over Burundi related issues.
5. For the 2010 elections, the strategy of the NGO Human Rights Watch has been unmasked, prompting the expelling of its representative in Bujumbura by the Government to secure the electoral process and ever since, the organization moved to Nairobi Kenya from where it published its reports by accomplices based in Bujumbura without any verification whatsoever.
6. It should be emphasized that, in line with its policy, the NGO Human Rights Watch did not publish the recent report by accident because three important activities are organized in this period at African level namely :
 - The 42nd Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of Francophonie due in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on July 11, 2016 ;
 - The 27th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union taking place in Kigali, Rwanda from 10th to 18th of July 2016 ;
 - And the upcoming Session of Interburundian Dialogue scheduled for July 12 to 15 in Arusha, Tanzania.
7. The publication of the damning report at this time is intended as usual to influence the decisions that will be taken at these meetings. Therefore, the Government urges the international community not to be misled by the reports published by the NGO Human Rights Watch on Burundi, given its stark bias and lack of objectivity on the issue.
8. The Government of Burundi has repeatedly insisted that this organization always shows solidarity with opposition parties hostile to the electoral system as a route to power, and regularly published incendiary reports were only meant to pave the way for these parties to assist them in sabotaging and derailing the process at every electoral rendezvous. The NGO is also active alongside detractors to influence the maintaining of the unjust measures imposed to the people of Burundi by some partners based on these false reports.

9. The report issued on July 7, 2016 and which targets Burundian intelligence services ; just adds another discredit to the organization, especially inasmuch as it is published in total ignorance of the findings made by the various delegations that made it to Burundi since January 2016 to get firsthand an inside story about the evolution of the political and security situation in Burundi.

The United Nations Security Council delegation, the African Union and the envoys of the sub region, not to mention the Secretary General of the United Nations who came in person to verify what was said about Burundi, everyone welcomes the positive progress and the peaceful atmosphere prevailing in the country. Only Human Right Watch and its political friends who share the same interests remain clinging to their negativistic positions.

10. With this determination and attitude of denigration and contempt ever perpetrated against the people of Burundi and the legitimate institutions of the State, the Government of Burundi reaffirms that Human Rights Watch disqualifies itself further as a reliable and credible partner over any Burundian issue. Its reports only bind the NGO and its local subcontractors as well as those residing abroad who indeed are the actual authors.
11. The Government of Burundi urges Human Rights Watch to put an end to its hostile attitude against a People busy with the reconciliation and reconstruction of its country battered by decades of bloody conflicts. The Government of Burundi appeals to Human Rights Watch to reconnect with its main purpose of defence of human rights without discrimination and thus improve its image vis-à-vis of the people of Burundi.

Done at Bujumbura, July 11, 2016

Philippe NZOBONARIBA
Secretary-General and Spokesman
of the Government.-