A call for action

Monday 27 April, 2015

Regarding the seriousness of the situation in Burundi today, we believe that stronger action is needed as quick as possible. These are our recommendations:

1) The Burundian army, which remains a trusted institution, must receive international back up force that allow it to play a constructive role in disarming the *imbonerakure* and defending the right of peaceful protest. However, since senior army leadership is likely to be divided — the U.N., in concert with the African Union, must prepare to directly intervene as quick as possible.

2) Should the army turn on itself, as is possible, an intervention of external forces could be the only means to protect civilians from the *imbonerakure* as well as members of the armed forces that continue to back the president. Given Burundi's memories of 1993 — and the horrors that unfolded the following year in Rwanda —the risks of its implosion must not be taken lightly.

Warning of Regional Insecurity

Although Rwanda today remains secure, the two countries have historically been destabilized by each other's crises. Should Burundi erupt into full-scale war, chances are high that Rwanda could be drawn in, particularly if reports emerge of Tutsi being targeted. While this might not have an immediate effect inside Rwanda, it would likely mobilize other anti-Rwanda actors in the region, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Congo-based militia formed by perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide, which believed to maintain active links with *imbonerakure* members. Today military sources and media are reporting about the presence of high number of FDLR members in Burundi. It is also reported that *Imbonerakure* and FDLR are being identified among policemen in the police uniform as police try to discourage protests against the 3rd term.

Signs show massacre can be the option of the ruling Pierre Nkurunziza given the shutdown of the most popular media and arrest of human rights defenders. In addition, two protests 'coordinators' are forced into hiding after escaping arrests. This happens after a year long of local and international warning about weapons distributions and paramilitary training of the militia by the ruling party. A UN cable warned about this issue in April 2014.

History of Burundi shows that systematic killings took place after shutting down media. The example of 1972 and 1993 genocides reminds Burundians that shut down of media by the state follow killings. Since Monday 27 April 2015, Burundian who are orally cultural access to information through two radio including REMA FM a private station linked to the ruling party and that spread frequent hate speeches. The rest of Independent stations only broadcast in town and the rural community are not informed.

Ends.

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About Jean Claude:

A child of the Civil War in Burundi, Jean Claude Nkundwa has been working to address the inevitable tensions and issues that occur in a post war society. He has been involved as a volunteer in reconciliation work since 2003 and set up AYINET, Burundi in 2005 to work for social justice. From 2009-2011he initiated a peace and reconciliation program with the aim of learning by doing. Jean Claude also advocated for a successful Transitional Justice Process. After study in Burundi and graduate studies in the US, he has worked with a range of international organizations, specifically consulting for NGO's across a number of East African communities. He is now living in Burundi with his wife and son, and continuing to grow the reconciliation and advocacy work that he started in 2003. Jean-Claude has been a tireless advocate for transparency and justice in Burundi, particularly leading up to the elections.