

Grotesque rape chants expose 'campaign of terror' in Burundi – UN rights chief

18 April 2017 – Raising alarm over an apparent ‘widespread pattern’ of rallies in many places across Burundi where young men from the Imbonerakure militia – the youth wing of the ruling political party – repeatedly chant a call to impregnate or kill opponents, the top United Nations human rights official has called on the authorities to promptly act to stop such incitement to violence.

In a [news release](#) issued today by his office ([OHCHR](#)), UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said that it was particularly worrying that instead of a putting a stop to such events, senior Government officials continue to take part in such rallies.

‘The grotesque rape chants by the young men [...] are deeply alarming – particularly because they confirm what we have been hearing from those who have fled Burundi about a campaign of fear and terror by this organized militia,’ said High Commissioner Zeid.

The news release mentions a chilling video, circulating on social media of a rally in the Ntega commune, Kirundo province (northeast Burundi), in which more than 100 Imbonerakure members are seen repeating dozens of times their call to ‘make opponents pregnant so that they can give birth to Imbonerakure’.

In the same video, another group then repeats a chant – audible some 19 times – ‘he or she should die’.

The UN human rights wing noted that the ruling CNDD-FDD party, on 5 April, issued a statement condemning the chanting. OHCHR, however, added that recent reports indicate that similar, larger rallies have been organized across the country by officials from the Government and the President’s party.

‘[The] condemnation is meaningless if, instead of a putting a stop to such events, senior Government officials continue to take part in such rallies,’ stressed Mr. Zeid, adding: ‘The Government needs to stop pretending that the Imbonerakure are nothing but a community development group. Such blatant and brazen hate speech and incitement to violence must not be tolerated, nor encouraged.’

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In the news release, the UN rights chief also voiced concern over continuing

reports of serious human rights violations in the African country, including systematic use of torture by security forces, increasing cases of enforced disappearance, nightly raids by the Imbonerakure militia into homes of people who refuse to join the ruling party, and people targeted due to their ethnicity.

According to UN estimates, more than 400,000 people have fled the African nation over the last two years fearing for their safety.

Those responsible for human rights violations, regardless of their position or rank, must be held accountable, said Mr. Zeid, underlining that the authorities in Burundi must send clear, unequivocal instructions to the police, security, intelligence and military officers to operate in line with international human rights law.

Impunity for human rights violations by security forces and the Imbonerakure must be brought to an end.

The High Commissioner also asked the Government to grant OHCHR unfettered access, to be able to monitor the human rights situation throughout the country, to be able to independently verify allegations of grave violations and to support the authorities in bringing the perpetrators to justice.