

UN Human Rights Council 41: Burundi

Thank you, Mr President,

The UK thanks the Commission of Inquiry for their update and we very much appreciate their efforts to investigate under challenging circumstances.

Their report contains disturbing instances of human rights violations, including summary execution, enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, sexual violence, and violations of civil liberties. It also makes clear that the culture of impunity only encourages further violations.

We underline that an end to human right violations is vital to the stability and prosperity of both Burundi and the region, accompanied by an inclusive dialogue between parties and free, fair and transparent elections Mr President, It is not too late to enable free and fair elections in 2020. We call upon the Government to remove its restrictions on political space and to end the violations committed against Burundians. Any action taken by the Government must be in line with the spirit of the Arusha Accords.

Freedom of expression is a key enabler of free, fair and transparent elections in 2020. We are therefore disappointed that the Government of Burundi revoked the BBC's operating license. We call on the Government to engage with the BBC to reinstate their operating licence and to commit, more broadly, to enabling an independent media environment within Burundi.

Furthermore, we are particularly concerned by the repression of civil society and a very limited political space, which does not bode well for inclusive elections.

We would welcome the views of the Commission of Inquiry on the risk of violence and further human rights violations in the run up to the 2020 elections, and the measures Burundi and the international community should take to mitigate these.

Thank you, Mr President.