



**Oral Statement
Adoption of the UPR report of Burundi
28 June 2018
Delivered by ...**

Thank you, Mr President.

Mr. President, DefendDefenders and CIVICUS take note of the government's engagement with the UPR process and welcome the decision by the government of Burundi to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or punishment. However, we regret the fact that the provisions of the Optional Protocol have not been implemented. In fact torture and the inhumane treatment of citizens have become commonplace in Burundi since its last review.

In our joint UPR Submission, we documented that since its last review, Burundi has not fully implemented any of the recommendations it accepted relating to civic space. Instead the authorities have selectively used restrictive legislation like the Law on Assemblies and Public Demonstrations (2013) to pre-empt and prevent peaceful demonstrations by citizens.

Since April 2015, the Burundian authorities have used violence against peaceful protesters and are responsible for the numerous killings, abductions, acts of torture, disappearances and arbitrary arrests of real or perceived opponents of the regime. These acts have largely been carried out by security forces, intelligence services and the armed wing of the ruling party – *the Imbonerakure*. Some of these crimes amount to crimes against humanity and they have been carried out with utmost impunity.

Legal restrictions adopted by the national assembly that increase government control of the activities and funding of national and international NGOs and the ban imposed on some civil society organisations have stifled freedom of association. The violence against representatives of civil society has forced many human rights organisations to close down and most of them now operate from abroad. Many human rights defenders and journalists are now in exile after some of them were the subject of targeted assassinations.

Mr. President, DefendDefenders and CIVICUS call on the Government of Burundi to take proactive measures to address these concerns and implement recommendations to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society.

We thank you.