



Human Rights Watch statement on Burundi

- *delivered at briefing by the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva, 26 May 2015*

The Burundian government has intensified its crackdown on fundamental civil rights since public demonstrations against President Pierre Nkurunziza's election bid for a third term began on 26 April 2015.

Human Rights Watch has documented excessive use of force by the police, including indiscriminate shooting of live ammunition at demonstrators. Police have shot dead and injured demonstrators, and police and intelligence agents have beaten detainees. Members of the youth league of the ruling party have also been implicated in killings and beatings.

Following a failed military coup on May 13, some senior government officials have warned that demonstrators will be treated as accomplices of the "putschists".

Tensions have increased following the murder of opposition party leader Zedi Feruzi on 23 May.

The Burundian media has borne the brunt of the repression. The government has shut down all the main private radio stations and the premises of several of them have been attacked by people presumed loyal to the government and, in at least one case, by men in police uniforms. They are still off the air. Journalists and civil society activists have been repeatedly threatened by state agents. Many have gone into hiding for fear of reprisals.

Human Rights Watch calls on the Burundian government to stop police from using excessive force against protestors and to bring to justice all those responsible for killings, injuries or beatings.

The government should immediately restore respect for freedom of expression and assembly, allow radio stations to broadcast and stop threatening journalists and activists.

Human Rights Watch calls on the UN special rapporteurs on freedom of opinion and expression, on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and on the situation of human rights defenders to visit Burundi as a matter of urgency and investigate recent abuses. We encourage the High Commissioner to continue to monitor and report on the situation, and to keep the Council informed of developments.