



Burundi Watch Update

29 May – 4 June 2018



Opposition loses challenge to referendum

The constitutional court in Burundi cancelled a petition filed by the opposition to annul the May 17 referendum on the basis of intimidation, torture and killings of citizens during the campaigns. The court declared on Thursday, May 31 that the results were legitimate and the majority of the people on Burundi voted to have the presidential terms extended from five to seven years. This means that the president of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, can contest for two more seven-year terms in office starting in 2020.¹

Demos against UN envoy remarks

The government of Burundi led a countrywide demonstration on Saturday against the remarks made by the UN special envoy to Burundi, Michel Kafondo. Mr. Kafondo had said that the referendum held in May would further polarize the already tense political situation in the country. The demonstration was held in the main towns of all the provinces in Burundi. While the demonstration was against the remarks of Mr. Kafondo, the government was also protesting the positions of France and Belgium which Interior Minister Pascal Barandagiye said were dividing citizens of Burundi. In the town of Ngozi in Ngozi province, Mr. Barandagiye said that France and Belgium have to stop interfering in the internal political affairs of Burundi.²

EU Envoys want AU to lead Burundi Peace process

The East and Horn of Africa envoys to the European Union want the African Union to be in charge of the Burundi Peace Talks because they feel that the East African Community is not making progress in this matter. Prior to this suggestion, Moussa

¹ "Burundi court validates vote to extend president's tenure," ABC News, 31 May 2018, available at <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/burundi-court-validates-vote-extend-presidents-tenure-55558535>

² "Burundi demonstrates against UN special envoy's remarks," Xinhuanet, 3 June 2018, available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-06/03/c_137226015.htm

Faki Mahamat, the African Union Commission (AUC) chairperson, had sent a letter to the chairman of the EAC president Yoweri Museveni noting that EAC's engagement had not delivered anything on Burundi. The AUC asked Museveni to stop the referendum in Burundi that was held on May 17 but the referendum was held nonetheless.³

³ "Now envoys want AU to take over Burundi peace talks," *The East African*, June 2, 2018, available at <http://www.theeastafican.co.ke/news/ea/Envoys-want-AU-to-take-over-Burundi-peace-talks/4552908-4591696-16dsts/index.html>