

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI



Washington, DC

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE EMBASSY OF BURUNDI IN WASHINGTON, D C

Regarding President Barack Obama's "Executive Order -- Blocking Property of Certain Persons contributing to the Situation in Burundi" dated 22 November 2015

1. On November 13th, 2015, in a video message, President Barack Obama expressed his concerns for the well-being of the people of Burundi. The video has been viewed widely in Burundi with a nearly unanimous reaction: America is Burundi's friend and wants the best for us. However, on November 22nd, 2015, President Obama issued an Executive Order, effective the following day, affecting "property of certain persons contributing to the situation in Burundi." This communique serves as a reply to that Executive Order and other actions of the U.S. Government in recent months with regard to U.S. policy toward Burundi.
2. It is distressing to the Government of Burundi that the United States has not only chosen to impose sanctions – expelling Burundi from the AGOA trade preference regime and constraining four Burundian citizens – but that the action was taken so soon after the conciliatory message of President Obama and under the pretext that Burundi poses an "Extraordinary threat to the National Security and Foreign Policy to the United States."
3. During this past year, the United States Government has expressed displeasure at the political situation in Burundi. The Governments of the two countries had a disagreement over the interpretation of the constitution of Burundi, a disagreement that has also been on display among Burundi's people, as well.
4. President Obama's encouragement of good-faith dialogue and the rejection of violence has been heeded in Burundi. The Government of Burundi shares the American President's desire that Burundians settle their differences through talk. As Sir Winston Churchill famously said, "To jaw-jaw is better than to war-war."

5. Indeed, in the interest of peace and reconciliation, last month President Pierre Nkurunziza appointed a 15-member National Commission for Dialogue. The Commission's mandate is to seek out the opinions of Burundi's citizens, learn from them their visions for the future of the country, and develop a set of recommendations that will be implemented in the interests of peace, prosperity, and stability.
6. In the latter part of the 20th century, Burundi experienced a brutal civil war. Through the Arusha Accord and our new constitution, the Government of Burundi established a national consensus that set aside ethnic divisions and united the people of Burundi with a common purpose.
7. Like many Americans, the people of Burundi and their leaders have been saddened by the lives lost and the injuries suffered because of the uprising launched in April 2015 by some leaders of the opposition, in reaction to President Nkurunziza's decision to seek a second elected term in office – a decision supported as constitutional through a ruling of our country's constitutional court.
8. With the aim of protecting the people of Burundi, President Nkurunziza declared a National Emergency to maintain public safety. He directed the head of the National Police Force to take the necessary and legal actions to prevent any more killing and deaths in our capital, by seeking to remove all guns and military-type weapons from the streets of our capital. The disarmament operations to protect the civilian population have been conducted in a professional manner with the presence of military observers sent by the African Union.
9. There is no doubt that the widespread availability of illegal guns is a major factor contributing to violence. The Government of Burundi is seeing military weaponry coming from the national borders and being placed in the hands of young men and women. Recruiters for terrorists and bandits roam through refugee camps to rope in teenagers and young men (often against their will and better judgment), sending them to Burundi to cause mayhem. This gun-running and criminal recruitment are difficult issues to resolve. The Government of Burundi is doing its best, with the tools and resources it has, to stem the violence and maintain order.
10. What troubles the people of Burundi now is that its unity may be threatened by interference from the outside. This refers not to the diplomatic endeavors of the United States and of Burundi in Europe, which are done with the best of intentions. It refers, instead, to sinister efforts by nearby forces who have armed, supplied, and offered haven to rebels seeking to undermine the legitimate government of Burundi.
11. Burundi is a sovereign country. The fact that members of the American administration disagree with the interpretation of the Constitution of Burundi by the Constitutional Court does not give them the authority to declare the

Burundian policies illegitimate. Burundi and United States are partners in the war on terror, in Somalia and elsewhere, and America's elected and appointed leaders should recognize that Burundi's political system and rule of law are currently under threat by people who look only for their selfish interests. They seek to undermine public order and frighten Burundi's law-abiding citizens

12. Since the end of the civil war more than a decade ago, Burundi has been making considerable progress in ending ethnic tensions, improving its economy, creating stable institutions, and cooperating with its friends overseas and nearby neighbors to promote peace and prosperity. The events of the past few months, as tragic as they have been, will not stand in the way of future progress. The Government of Burundi invites its friends in the United States to support him in this endeavor.
13. It is the hope of the Government of Burundi that President Obama's words of encouragement for peaceful settlement of political disputes are extended to those who do not have the best interests of Burundi's people at heart but who rather wish to destabilize Burundi and divert it from the path toward peace. The imposition of sanctions may, in fact and unfortunately, undermine the deliberate progress of reconciliation that is currently taking place in Burundi. Sanctions contradict and impede the spirit of dialogue.
14. This communique is issued in an unbendable spirit of friendship with the hope that Burundi and the United States will remain partners for many generations to come.

Done on December 15th, 2015 in Washington DC