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The human rights situation in Burundi showed no signs of improvement in 2016, following the political crisis that began in 2015. A pattern of arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, enforced disappearances and unlawful killings was observed. The Burundian authorities banned or suspended several human rights NGOs and continued to subject human rights defenders, journalists and opposition supporters to harassment and intimidation. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) raised concerns over the risk of ethnically-motivated violence due to instances of ethnic hate speech and teachings in the country. There is also an increasing trend in modern slavery, linked to the human trafficking of girls to work overseas as domestic servants in Gulf Arab households.

In multilateral fora, the Burundian Government adopted a policy of non-co-operation, failing to appear before the UN Committee Against Torture to respond to allegations of widespread human rights violations and rejecting a report presented to the UN Human Rights Council by the United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi (UNIIB). The report exposed numerous grave human rights violations and documented examples of horrific sexual violence. In October the Burundian Government suspended its co-operation with OHCHR in Burundi, and began the process of withdrawing from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The UK's human rights objectives in Burundi in 2016 focused on preventing mass violence and offering humanitarian support to the growing number of at-risk Burundians. The UK funded a nationwide human rights monitoring and reporting programme supporting a network of investigators and local human rights activists, and placed particular emphasis on the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. The latter included support to women's associations to reduce stigmatisation and increase women's engagement with decision-makers, and the development of early warning and investigation processes. The Department for International Development (DFID) provided £3 million in humanitarian assistance in Burundi and £46 million for Burundian refugees in neighbouring Rwanda and Tanzania. The UK also worked through the EU and UN, championing a Human Rights Council Resolution to intensify international monitoring and reporting of human rights abuses; supporting a UN Security Council Resolution authorising the deployment of UN police in Burundi; and backing a rollover of EU restrictive measures against individuals whose activities included violence, repression or serious human rights violations.

Looking to 2017, improved respect for human rights will remain the UK priority in Burundi. Given that the protracted political crisis in Burundi has been the root cause of the deterioration in

human rights since 2015, we will strongly support international efforts, led by the East African Community and former Tanzanian President Mkapa, to find a peaceful political solution in line with the Arusha Peace Accords. We will continue to support targeted and high level interventions to combat modern slavery and improve human rights and security, including the relationship between security forces and the general population. We will also look to raise greater domestic and international awareness of sexual violence in Burundi, with increased access to justice for survivors.

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