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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 5, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for the steps your administration has taken to prevent widespread violence and mass atrocities in Burundi. Administration officials at the highest levels have been engaged, and I appreciate your continuing efforts. However, President Pierre Nkurunziza has demonstrated that he will not reconsider his bid for a third term. Given the history of instability and violence in the Great Lakes region, we are concerned that his intractability could lead to a regional crisis. I write to ask that you take steps to avoid such an outcome.

First, I ask that you urge United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and African Union (AU) Chairperson Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to convene representatives from the African Union and the East African Community (EAC) to come to agreement on an approach to help end the political crisis in Burundi which includes President Nkurunziza stepping aside as his party's candidate, and a delay in the polls until conditions will allow the opposition to compete on a level playing field. As part of this agreed approach, Nkurunziza should be urged to hold police responsible for killing protesters, ensuring media can operate freely, and allow for some means of verification that he is disarming the Imbonerakure as called for by the EAC.

Second, I ask that you appoint a Great Lakes Special Envoy to replace Russ Feingold as soon as possible. Having a senior level State Department official working on peace in the Great Lakes at this volatile time will greatly enhance the efforts that senior Administration officials are making to ensure peace.

Finally, I urge you to begin discussions with the AU about finding a replacement for the Burundian forces deployed to AMISOM in the event that Burundi's participation in the mission becomes untenable should the domestic security situation necessitate that they be pulled out. Furthermore, I ask that you consider carefully whether to continue to provide further supplies or materiel to the Burundian military in the absence of a political settlement.

None of us wants to see a tragedy unfold in Burundi. I look forward to working with you and others in the administration to avert a crisis.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator