

Standing for Peace and Reconciliation Statement on Burundi, May 2015

"We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever; and this is our testimony to the whole world."

-George Fox, 1660

As organizations that are part of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) we are deeply concerned by the situation in Burundi. We grieve the loss of life and injuries that are taking place, as well as the fact that over 100,000 people have fled the country in the last few weeks. Our faith teaches us to respect all humanity and that peace is possible despite even the darkest moments of unrest. Our work in the world leads us to believe in the power of people to come together across lines of conflict.

Throughout the last four centuries Quakers have worked for peace in this world. The Evangelical Friends Church of Burundi, founded over 80 years ago, has engaged in efforts to build a future where all God's children are able to heal together and live in harmony. Work in health and education were the early contributions of this faith community in Burundi. Over the last twenty years, trauma healing, reconciliation, and violence prevention have been a hallmark of Friends' work in Burundi.

We know that a path out of the crisis in Burundi is still possible and stand in support of all those who work for a peaceful and just path forward. We hope that you will join us in holding Burundi in the Light and take a moment to prayerfully consider some of the ideas that Burundian friends have told us are important. The following thoughts have particularly resonated with us:

First, it is important for everyone to reject violence and work toward a political resolution to this crisis – a resolution that ensures all Burundians share in the shaping of their country and brings forth a process of deep reconciliation.

Second, we lift up the importance of dialogue. It is vital for people with different views to come together for discussion and seek shared solutions.

Third, in recognition that many Burundians are suffering, we encourage those on all sides of the political divide to be led by a spirit of concern for the well-being of the country, rather than individual ambitions.

Finally, our work has led us to believe that responding to individual moments of crisis is important but true peacebuilding is a long-term endeavor. Thus, we urge everyone to look at ways to support prevention of violence now, as well as ways to support peacebuilding in the months and years ahead.

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Along with Friends in Burundi, we call on all people of faith to continue to pray and know that God can bring healing. We urge you to join us in supporting a political resolution by Burundians that avoids deadly conflict and leads to lasting peace and justice for all. As Hebrews 10:24 directs us, “let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

We will continue to hold all Burundians in the Light and support the work of peacemakers.

African Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Teams
American Friends Service Committee
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends United Meeting
Friends World Committee for Consultation
Quaker Peace Network Africa
Quaker Peace and Social Witness
Quaker Service Norway
Quaker United Nations Office, New York

