HOUSE OF COMMONS

International Development Committee

Oral evidence: Humanitarian Situation in Burundi, HC 517

Tuesday 12 July 2016

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Stephen Twigg (Chair); Fiona Bruce; Dr Lisa Cameron; Stephen Doughty; Mrs Helen Grant; Pauline Latham; Jeremy Lefroy; Wendy Morton; Albert Owen

Questions 1-52

Witnesses

I: Dr Benjamin Chemouni, London School of Economics, Richard Moncrieff, Central Africa Project Director, International Crisis Group, Carina Tertsakian, Senior Researcher, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch, and Emma Fanning, Humanitarian Policy Adviser, Oxfam GB.

II: Nick Hurd MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, Jane Rintoul, Director for East and Central Africa, Department for International Development, and Neil Wigan OBE, Africa Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Benjamin Chemouni, Richard Moncrieff, Carina Tertsakian, and Emma Fanning.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this session of the International Development Committee addressing the current crisis in Burundi. We have two panels of witnesses this morning, our first panel for an hour and then we have the Minister with officials at 11.15 for three-quarters of an hour. Can I thank our four expert witnesses who are with us for the first panel? We have 11 questions that we are going to try to cover in the next hour, to give a sense of the timings that we need in order to cover all of the ground. There will be questions that are directed obviously at one or two of you; for some of them, we would expect all of you to come in. I will open with the first question and invite each of you to respond to it. Perhaps when you answer the first question, you could just introduce yourselves as well.

Human Rights Watch has reported "widespread lawlessness" in Burundi, citing arbitrary arrest, torture and rape among the abuses that civilians are suffering. Can I ask each of you to describe briefly the current situation on the ground and what are your biggest concerns, in terms of security and human rights, as the crisis evolves? Emma, would you like to go first?

Emma Fanning: My name is Emma Fanning. I am from Oxfam, and Oxfam has been programming in Burundi since the mid-1990s. We mostly do food security programmes and also peacebuilding.

At the moment, we are seeing peaks and troughs security-wise, and we are in somewhat of a trough right now. In terms of the humanitarian situation, we are probably seeing a steady degradation underlined by a number of factors, including the economy, structural issues, budget cuts, climatic change and El Niño, all of which are making it more and more difficult for people to survive. I could say more, but we will leave it at that for the moment.

Richard Moncrieff: I am Richard Moncrieff, the project director for Central Africa at International Crisis Group. I would describe the situation for some months in Burundi as a fake calm. There were street protests last year that grabbed international attention. There were a few spikes of violence towards the end of last year, in December in particular. Again, they grabbed international attention and then, as is the way of these things, international attention rather moved on. That is an unfortunate, because the situation is still extremely serious.

There are three elements that I would point to that tell us this, and each of those three give us some indications of where the international community should put its efforts. One is the continuing radicalisation of

the regime in power. That radicalisation includes demonising other communities and using violence against all people who speak out against its plans. Impunity is obviously a part of that, with the security forces and the informal militia linked to the Government.

Number two is the economic situation, which is deteriorating very rapidly. We know from many other cases in Africa that, in a situation of political tension, if the economy starts to collapse as well, it creates very serious risks of further violence.

The third element I would point to is the difficulties in getting to proper talks or negotiations with the existing opposition. The existing opposition is in some disarray at present. The talks that are starting in Arusha are important. It is important that they happen and it is important that they are supported, but the immediate prospects for them do not look good. If those talks do not go well and if the civilian opposition also starts to fragment, we could argue that that raises the possibility of further armed violence between the different parties, which would raise tensions within the country. All those three areas are areas that the international community should focus on, and I would just add, because it is something that has rather gone off the table, that we need to keep on the table the issue of contingency planning for a very serious and rapid deterioration.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. A number of those are issues we are going to explore in subsequent questions. Thanks, Richard. Carina.

Carina Tertsakian: My name is Carina Tertsakian. I am a Senior Researcher on Burundi and Rwanda for Human Rights Watch. As you explained in the question, Human Rights Watch has documented numerous cases of killings, torture, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and many other abuses since this crisis began in Burundi, in April of last year. We have just published a report on scores of cases of torture in Burundi, primarily by the intelligence services but also by the police, these two institutions collaborating closely with the youth league of the ruling party.

The situation has been going on for more than a year now, as you will know. Sadly, Burundi has fallen off the agenda of the media, at least to some extent, so I very much welcome this session. The crisis is absolutely not over. The Government of Burundi have shown no sign of relenting, and the repression towards anyone suspected of being an opponent or a critic is absolutely brutal.

Some of the torture techniques that we documented are just so vicious it is unbelievable that anyone even survives, for example intelligence agents who use metal bars and hammers to smash people's bones and smash their jaws, pulling out people's teeth with pliers, tying ropes to the genitals of male detainees and pulling them, and other acts of torture that are just horrific. For these abuses, there is complete impunity.

One of our main concerns is in fact the state of the justice system in Burundi. Already very weak, it is now completely lacking in independence and under the thumb of the ruling party. Any officials in the justice system who want to try to act independently, and there are such people, are immediately overruled, pushed to one side and given orders by officials who are part of the ruling party.

The situation remains extremely serious. The security situation is bad, particularly for Burundian activists who are trying to get information out of the country. Most of them, as you probably know, fled the country last year, so all the main human rights activists and journalists have been out of the country for more than a year. The very few who remain are operating in a very dangerous climate and can only work in hiding. We have found, on the ground, a very deep fear among Burundians.

Dr Chemouni: My name is Benjamin Chemouni, from the London School of Economics, and I am working on Rwanda and Burundi. Just to complement what has said, we see that the regime is becoming more professional in its violence. Before, it was killing people in front of cameras and in front of journalists, so it was visible. Now, as Carina has said, it is much more professional. They are much better at targeting people and are doing that behind closed doors. It is very important to underline that, so it is indeed a "fake calm".

There are two very worrying dynamics here. The first is the blackout regarding all the violence. Before, it was easier to get information. The regime is better at concealing it. If we take the case of the countryside, if there was any mass violence happening, it would be harder and harder for us to know that this is happening and to respond to it. We have to keep in mind that it is difficult to know what is happening in the countryside, for example. It is more and more difficult, because they are getting better at hiding it.

The second thing as well, and it has been said, is the impunity. For example, in the countryside, who is running the country? It is not the administration; it is a mix of intelligence services and the party, especially the use of the party, in a climate of total impunity, no accountability and no rules, except the rule of the ruling party. We have to keep in mind that this is a very explosive situation for this reason.

Q2 **Pauline Latham:** In light of what you have just said, concerns have been raised about the use of ethnically charged rhetoric in Burundi. What threat do you think this poses in the short and longer term to Burundi's stability and social cohesion? I do not know who would like to answer that.

Richard Moncrieff: Thanks for the question. It is a very important question. In the work we have published this year, we have used the term "ethnicisation from above", and that is how we see it. The regime is trying to push the ethnic card in order to shore up its support among its

core Hutu supporters but also the security forces, who are the people who really matter to it at the moment.

All the evidence shows that most people, the general population, are quite resistant to that. Fifteen years of peace have brought a lot of benefits to the country, and people strongly adhere to getting on with their neighbour, so that is very encouraging. We also see that the army has been quite resistant to this so far, but we see, and the evidence is there in interviews and so forth, that the police and the informal militia, the Imbonerakure, are clearly using ethnic rhetoric. It is the way they talk between each other. We see that very clearly. We see the top levels of the Government continuing to use very unpleasant ethnic rhetoric. This poses a very serious threat to the long-term social cohesion of the country and, indeed, an immediate threat to the stability of the country, because the poisoning of the atmosphere in this way, when it enters the security forces and informal militia, as we have seen in Burundi in the past, can have catastrophic consequences.

Q3 **Pauline Latham:** If you believe that we are going down that route, what more do you think the international community can do to help?

Richard Moncrieff: I will say very quickly, because I know that Carina wants to come in, that we need much better monitoring of ethnic hate speech to be followed up by consequences. That means sanctions. They are not a magic bullet or magic wand; they will not solve things overnight, but the international community needs to stand up and say that this kind of hate speech is unacceptable—and say so more clearly than it is at the moment.

Carina Tertsakian: It is true, as Richard said, that certain hard-line politicians on both sides of the divide—I have to say that some of the opposition politicians as well as Government—have been using this ethnic rhetoric, primarily to whip up support. As far as we have seen from extensive work in Burundi, and Human Rights Watch has been working in Burundi since the 1990s, that does not correspond to similar sentiments among the general public. That is maybe the one small positive thing, though it is important, that we can retain. At the level of the general public, people are not falling for that. They have seen how much suffering that can cause.

I just wanted to stress that the current crisis in Burundi is, at heart, a political crisis. It is not an ethnic crisis, even though this language comes on top of it. Unlike the terrible massacres that took place in the 1990s and that very murderous armed conflict that was fought along ethnic lines, the current situation is very different in nature.

We believe, to answer your second question about what can be done about it at an international level, it is quite a big challenge of course, because the Burundian Government is very resistant to any suggestions. There are two specific recommendations that we would have. One is that there should be an international commission of inquiry that would

investigate in depth the most serious crimes since last year. The second is an international police force that could be deployed in Burundi with a strong protection mandate. It is not going to solve the whole problem, but it could at least deter certain abuses.

Q4 **Mrs Grant:** This is a follow-up and then it is me anyway. Richard, I just wanted to come back to something you said about rightly proposing some sort of zero-tolerance approach to hate speech and hate crime. That sounds good, and obviously it is the right way of dealing with it, but if the police force and if the judicial bodies are effectively under the thumb of the Government, it is not going to work, is it? Do you have any other thoughts?

Richard Moncrieff: The international community has very low leverage at the moment for impact on the ground and to reform the justice system and so forth. That is not going to happen. We have withdrawn aid and that has been the right thing to do in the present circumstances. This is a longer-term crisis and, in the longer run, we, the international community, need to stand up and say that this kind of hate speech is wrong. I do not think that would have an immediate impact, but it would be important. That should be accompanied by sanctioning individuals, which has happened, but should be extended.

Q5 **Mrs Grant:** It is long term, not short term, because the police force are obviously not going to do it in the short term, are they?

Richard Moncrieff: Yes, we are not going to have that kind of direct impact on the ground. Nevertheless, international statements can help to cool the situation. They can warn off the hotheads. They can encourage people who are worried about it within the regime. We know, and have first-hand information, that there are people within the regime who are increasingly worried about the possible consequences of what they are doing, including talk of the ICC and so forth, so making those statements can have an impact, but we should not expect them to have a very direct impact on the judicial system or the police in the short term.

Q6 **Mrs Grant:** Thank you for that. You touched on my main question earlier. It is really about the economy, what is happening there and what the implications are for the economy, for people living in rural areas and for people living in urban areas. Should the international community be doing more to help? That is probably for all of you.

Emma Fanning: Like everything else in Burundi, it is quite hard to gauge the urgency. Look at somewhere like South Sudan, where inflation is at 260% annually; when you look at Burundi, it is more like 7% to 8%. This is the problem with Burundi: it is a slow onset. As an international community, we are quite bad at responding quickly to developments and that is what needs to happen in Burundi.

We are seeing in the economy, at a macro level, a 30% devaluation of the Burundian franc between June and December last year. At the same time, we are seeing less tourism, which is a big industry in Bujumbura,

less foreign investment and a decrease in wages, which means fewer remittances going into the provinces and less spending power there. When 90% of the population relies on agriculture, we are seeing, at the same time, that food production has gone down, both linked to this crisis but also climatic changes, which have played quite a large impact in some areas of the country. Markets are not functioning as they were. You also have many more people relying on markets than there were two years ago, making more pressure on that at the rural level, as well as the Bujumbura level.

This means that people are really struggling to survive, and that is having a knock-on effect on things like access to basic services. You have budget cuts at the same time as this collapse in the economy. My figures are probably quite off but, looking at the budget today, it is about a third less than last year's, even at current-day exchange rates. Actually, the exchange rate was 30% higher last year. That is a huge budget gap. At the same time, you have sectors like education going from 22% of the budget to 19%. You have health going from 14% to 8%. This means that, with the lack of spending power, people cannot afford the drugs. Malaria is spiking, for example. There were 50% more cases this year than last year. That is because people cannot afford the drugs, as much as anything else. This macro economy issue is really filtering down.

In addition, we are seeing at the moment that a lot of the displacement to Tanzania is motivated by economic concerns as well as the current political crisis. This means donors in the UK need to be responding. We need to be funding both the humanitarian response now but also resilience initiatives and longer term development to prevent people from falling into this bigger problem. Likewise, the refugee responses are very under-funded. Funding and more durable or imaginative solutions are really needed around the region, if this is not to get worse.

Chair: You have just answered not just Helen's question but the subsequent two questions, which is great. Lots of people are indicating to ask supplementaries and we are running a little behind time. Let me take Stephen and Wendy with supplementaries, but then we will move on.

Q7 **Stephen Doughty:** Based on what you have said, have any donors adapted yet or is there very much a slowness in responding?

Emma Fanning: It is very slow. The humanitarian response plan is 30% funded. That is $18 million. It has a gap of $43 million. Of that funding, 72% comes from the UN. Traditional humanitarian donors, including the UK, are not funding this. Meanwhile, the EU is looking at, and I think is in-country at the moment looking at, modalities to redirect some of the budget cuts. It is really urgent that those go through and get to the people who need it.

Q8 **Wendy Morton:** My supplementary is that you touched on or suggested that the international community needs to look for more imaginative

solutions. Do you have any thoughts or examples that you could share with the Committee?

Emma Fanning: I was talking particularly about the refugee crisis there. You have in Tanzania, for example, a government that is showing some indications of being progressive. They have in the past accepted and naturalised quite a lot of Burundian refugees. We are also looking at Uganda, which has one of the more progressive refugee policies within the region. Although encampment policies are very much where it is at, Uganda does not do that. There are other solutions.

We all have to look beyond the traditional three durable solutions, which are return to the country of origin, naturalisation or resettlement to a third country, to something more temporary that allows mobility and reflects that people are coming and going across that border all the time, checking on their affairs. There is lots policy-wise that we could be doing also to support Tanzania and development initiatives within that.

Chair: Wendy, Emma has largely answered your next question, but you might want to give others an opportunity to answer.

Q9 **Wendy Morton:** My question really was around humanitarian aid, refugees and the humanitarian response so far. Richard, the International Crisis Group has estimated that 10% of the population in Burundi are in need of humanitarian assistance. I wonder if you could perhaps share your thoughts with us and what effect you feel the crisis has had on living conditions and access to basic services.

Richard Moncrieff: That statistic would be one that we did not gather ourselves. That is probably citing a UN agency. I cannot remember the exact source, but I think it is OCHA. I can make some more general comments on this subject.

I would like to just take the opportunity to emphasise the flight of human capital from Burundi that has occurred over the last year, which is disastrous for its long-term development. We have been talking to people who have fled Burundi, whether they are based in Nairobi, Kigali or even Brussels, and you can see a business class, an intelligentsia, teachers and so forth—all the sort of people who run a country. They have all fled. They have fled because the Government do not want people there who think for themselves. That really is disastrous.

That means we have a collapsing economy in Bujumbura. Investment is pulling out. Domestic investors are trying to pull out their money and international investors are obviously not interested. That then has impacts in the countryside, as we have mentioned. Remittances go down and there is difficulty in getting fertiliser because of exchange rates. We then have a real problem with the harvest. This is in a country that was already at the very bottom of all the indicators, before this started. We have a hidden crisis here, and we are very likely to have hunger

emerging and it is likely to be poorly recorded, for the reasons we have already gone through of accessibility to the countryside.

I have another quick point on the economy and the sense of how the economy and politics link. The Government need to keep a certain number of people happy in order to stay in power. It will tend to do that by dishing out money, in one way or another. When that money dries up, things start to crack. We know that from other countries and we should be very concerned about that. The international community, therefore, has to play a balancing act between, on one hand, putting in enough money in clever ways to support the population and not abandon both the population in Burundi and also the 250,000 refugees. Thought has been given to this, as far as I can pick up, but it is slow, as Emma says. On the other hand, it also has to try to use the economic levers to put as much pressure on the Government as it possibly can to change its behaviour.

Q10 **Fiona Bruce:** Just looking at the 260,000 or so refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries and the fact that only about 28% of UNHCR's estimated funds are needed to support them, why has the international community not stepped forward? I know that the UK has provided about £6.6 million to help these refugees, but there is a huge shortfall, which, as Emma has said, is going to have a major impact on these people and the countries they are in.

Emma Fanning: The simple answer is that it is not on the radar. We are really struggling with funding. We almost had to stop programming in May. It is just not on the radar. The donor community is very over-stretched at the moment; there are a number of crises worldwide. Unfortunately, that means digger deeper into pockets rather than ignoring, because it will only get worse if this is not dealt with now.

Q11 **Fiona Bruce:** Is that in terms of the impact on the countries that the refugees have fled to as well as the refugees themselves?

Emma Fanning: Yes, and also within Burundi, if you funded the humanitarian response plan now and there were social safety nets put in place, particularly cash transfers to vulnerable households as well as supporting resilience, you could mitigate quite a lot of the impacts, particularly in rural areas. If that is not done, those people are going to fall further and further into difficulty, and it is going to be much harder to deal with later.

Q12 **Fiona Bruce:** I have a separate question: there have been some accusations that Burundian rebel fighters have been recruited from the refugee camps. Do any of you think these claims are well founded? What are the risks to security in Burundi and the wider region, if that is the case?

Dr Chemouni: It is an important point because, in the region, the engine of history is really the sponsorship of rebel movements by neighbouring countries. If this happens, the consequences of violence spill over. It is

very hard to say on Rwanda, but personally I would not be surprised. The main issue is the risk of spillover or at least of large-scale violence. One of course is that Rwanda is supporting and training people in camps. That is a problem, because it gives a reason for the regime in Bujumbura to say that these people are just puppets from a Tutsi government. It can give them some base for this inflammatory discourse about ethnicity, if they can show that Rwanda is supporting a rebel group.

The second element on which I also want to focus is that you also have some Burundians in Congo, as well, the FNL. They have been training for a long time but are also quite a radical group. This could be very problematic for the security of the region, because we all know what the situation is Congo is. I also want to raise that, if this kind of group were, for example, to be linked to other rebel groups in Congo, such as the FDLR, we could imagine that Rwanda would intervene in order to stop this kind of alliance. You can then imagine the kind of issue this could be for the region. I really want to put a focus on this: the risk of spillover or destabilisation of the region, because of this dynamic of sponsoring armed groups from Burundi.

Richard Moncrieff: Just to respond to your question about the evidence, there was some evidence that Rwanda was sponsoring the recruitment of armed groups in camps in Rwanda. The evidence came from three different sources—an NGO, a UN panel of experts and also diplomatic statements, particularly from the US. We can assume that those are separate sources and therefore that is quite credible evidence, just to answer that. It does fit a pattern in the region, as Benjamin described very well.

I would also emphasise that, if armed groups gather momentum within the exiled opposition, one of the very negative impacts of that would be to further radicalise the regime in Bujumbura in a polarisation between the two. We are in very dangerous territory. It needs to be emphasised to all countries of the region that, however much we may find the actions of the Government in Bujumbura distasteful, the armed route can only really lead to disaster.

Carina Tertsakian: Just to add a small factual thing, as Richard said, we at Human Rights Watch documented and published information on the recruitment and training of Burundian refugees in Rwanda last year. The information we collected was mostly from last summer. There were cases of Burundian refugees in Rwanda who were being recruited by other Burundians, taken off to some remote place and given military training by a mixture of Burundians and Rwandans.

Since that information got out, the Rwandans, not surprisingly, have severely restricted access to those refugee camps, so it has become much more difficult to document what is going on or indeed to know whether that still is going on. In a broad sense, Rwanda was the first place where all the Burundian opposition people fled when the crisis

began last year. Now, not all of those people are involved in armed activities at all, but the relationship between the two countries is very tense, for that reason among others.

Q13 **Mrs Grant:** As we know, a number of major donors have suspended aid to the country. Is that the right thing to have done and what impact is it having? Richard, you mentioned clever ways of getting money in, just a few questions ago. Without giving anything away, could you give an indication of the sorts of methods that you are thinking about? I would like to hear, if there is time, Chair, what everybody's view is on this.

Richard Moncrieff: It is not my absolute area of expertise. I know you are talking to DFID next, so I am sure you will drill down on that. I do know that it can be difficult, because of aid systems and bureaucracies, to shift aid from one package to another. It is also difficult to spend money in Burundi that has a direct impact on the population, because we do not have the staff there and many of the Burundian people we used to work with have fled. There is a whole load of very real, practical problems about spending that money. In terms of whether we should continue to send aid, my view and our view is that the current position, which is to suspend all aid that goes to the Government or in some way supports Government structures, is correct.

Dr Chemouni: Basically, the problem is how you can asphyxiate a regime without asphyxiating the population. Part of the answer is that you have to channel aid bypassing the state altogether, just because otherwise it is used for corruption or supporting the regime. If you channel it to the people, you have to be sure that it is not used for political reasons locally as well, so it is quite tricky. My personal belief, however, is that this is essential given the economic situation in Burundi.

Another thing as well is that, if you think that aid is a leverage in order to negotiate with the Government, this will not happen in the short term, just because this Government basically has a war chest. They have been engaged in corruption for decades and in minerals trading, and they have offshore accounts, etc. They are not the ones who are going to soften. It is not a leverage against them in the short term. The bottom line is that aid is essential, but bypassing the state.

Q14 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Could I now turn to the peace talks being held in Arusha, which are being mediated by former President Benjamin Mkapa? Could somebody give me an update on those? The last we heard was that the talks in April seemed to be fairly inconclusive. There was a real concern that many of the opposition were not included in that. I know the President Mkapa has subsequently journeyed to Europe to talk to some of those groups as well. I wondered what the current situation is and whether there is any hope of a proper resumption of those talks.

Richard Moncrieff: The short-team prospects are rather bleak. The meeting in May did not include the main opposition group, CNARED. That opposition group has rather started to fragment, if not worse, in the past

few days and weeks. The main proximate driver for that has been the different responses to the invitations to these talks. The dispute has been around whether the CNARED should be invited as one single group or should be invited as individuals. Mkapa went to talk to them in Brussels and we were hopeful that they would be invited as one group, which we think would be the correct way to do things. We do not want to play divide and rule all over the place, but it seems that that may be difficult, because as we speak different individual members of CNARED are going to Arusha on an individual basis, which is unfortunate.

I would like to add on these talks that the issue of what is going to be talked about, because we are spending so much time trying to get people around the table, has not been very much highlighted and I think it should be.

There are two different groups of things that need to be on the table. The first is the proximate conditions to bring peace back to the country, to disarm the informal militia, to create the right conditions, so that exiles can go back, but there also needs to be a more fundamental discussion about the future of the country and the way the country is run. This can be framed around discussion of Arusha—talking Arusha in Arusha, if you like—because at the moment the regime in Bujumbura is intent on dismantling the gains of Arusha, which was the peace agreement signed in 2000, which then went on to form the constitution of the country. The regime is trying to dismantle it, and that issue needs to be on the table, when eventually we do get proper talks, which is unlikely to be tomorrow, but we should get there at some point.

Q15 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Can I just ask one follow-up question? Is there any feeling that there are countries or leaders, other than those in Burundi, who have a vested interest in ensuring that Arusha does not succeed, or is this purely an intra-Burundian problem?

Richard Moncrieff: I do not think that there are countries that have a direct interest in disrupting the gains of Arusha, but there are countries that have an unfortunate understanding of the current situation and are rather too favourable to the current regime. That may be for many reasons. Two that come to my mind are people's tendency to side with an incumbent regime and the desire, which for example I picked up in talks when I was at the African Union in Addis a few months ago, for this to go away—that the levels of violence have not reached a point where we need really serious, concerted action. We are not quite at South Sudan levels, if you like, which is something Emma has pointed out as well. There is a sort of idea just to sweep this under the carpet, which we obviously find very unfortunate.

Q16 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Returning to the point made earlier, which is that the regime has kept the killings to a limited extent, I have been hearing figures of 50 to 80 people killed a week or something like that, or certainly on some weekends, particularly targeting young people in certain areas. Do you see that it is a definite policy to keep it below the

radar?

Richard Moncrieff: Yes. Benjamin has pointed to that and I agree with that.

Dr Chemouni: If I may jump in, the regime wants just to play the clock. The goal is really to target and eliminate anyone who could really be an opposition. We talk a lot about bringing people around the table, but the regime has absolutely no incentive for doing that at all. The next question would be what kind of leverage we use in order to force the Government to negotiate.

Maybe it is going to be your next question but, for the moment, why would they sit with an opposition that sits in Brussels and is quite weak? That opposition is composed of people who used to belong to the CNDD-FDD as well, who also enjoyed the perks of the system for decades, etc. We also have to be careful not to idealise this opposition and its people, with their own agenda. They do not really have a programmatic stance about what could be done. There is an issue to be solved of, first, the leverage that we could use in order to bring people around the table. At the moment, Nkurunziza just wants to play the clock and has no incentive to talk to people.

Carina Tertsakian: I have a couple of quick points to follow that up. The talks have gone nowhere so far. Of course, everyone wants things to happen once the different actors sit around the table, but it is has been very slow and almost every stage has broken down before it has even started. Collectively, we cannot put all our eggs in that basket. I would really caution against pinning too much hope on those talks. I do not want to sound too pessimistic, but there is a real urgency to the situation in Burundi that means that we cannot wait around, months and months and months, while politicians argue.

Q17 **Jeremy Lefroy:** It is fine not to pin too much hope on that. What should be done?

Carina Tertsakian: That is the next thing. I mentioned a couple of ideas earlier about international initiatives that could be helpful, such as setting up an international commission of inquiry.

Q18 **Jeremy Lefroy:** If I may, given the complete and deliberate lack of engagement by the Government—the President has reported to have said he wants to stay in power until 2050 or something like that and that basically Arusha means nothing—how is the Government there going to accept an international police force and an international commission of inquiry? They are simply going to say "no". How do you see that happening?

Carina Tertsakian: It is a real challenge. I agree with you. Many of the ideas for actions that might have an impact are going to hit that stumbling block of the Government's intransigence. I do not think that is a reason to give up. We have to keep trying. There may be ways of

persuading the Government. There may be people who could persuade Nkurunziza. So far, the existing bodies and mechanisms have not worked for the UN, the African Union or the European Union. Sadly, none of those initiatives have really had an impact yet.

Maybe we need to think of other people, like senior or perhaps retired African leaders, who could try to get Nkurunziza's ear to try to persuade him that, whatever his political agenda might be, he has to stop his security forces from killing and torturing his own people. That has to be the priority. I feel that we should be looking, in a very concerted way, at how to stop those abuses daily, while talks go on or do not go on in Arusha.

Q19 **Dr Cameron:** You have partly answered this question already. The Security Council approved a UN police force for Burundi in April. What progress, if any, is likely to be made on this and is it a sufficient response in terms of ensuring the protection of civilians? You can perhaps enhance what you have been saying already.

Carina Tertsakian: They have not actually approved it yet. The UN Secretary-General put forward three different options for the police force. I will not go into all the details here, but the document is available if you are interested in reading it. They ranged from a strong police force with about 2-3,000 people, with a protection and monitoring mandate, through to a much weaker police presence, with only a few dozen police who would work alongside, supporting the Burundian police. So far, the discussion of those options has not resulted in a clear conclusion.

At Human Rights Watch, we feel that only option one would really have an impact. If you are going just to have a small number of police wandering around in Burundi watching what is going on, well, we know what is going on. There are UN human rights monitors; there are African Union human rights monitors; there are NGOs. Sure, it always helps to have more but, if we really want to try to have an impact beyond where we are now, we believe that it has to a) have a much larger number of police and b) have a mandate to protect.

Q20 **Dr Cameron:** What is the likelihood of that being possible?

Carina Tertsakian: Sadly, it does not look very likely, at the moment, partly because, as has already been said, the Burundian Government just does not want to hear anything about that. Also, unfortunately some members of the Security Council have not been strong enough in backing that option one. That is one thing I just wanted to raise here as well, the UK being a key member in the Security Council. We would really urge the UK Government to support the model that can have an impact and that will have a strong mandate to protect and not just to monitor.

Q21 **Wendy Morton:** During the course of the questions this morning, we have touched on other countries within the region—Rwanda, Tanzania and others. I would be interested to know what your view is. Is there a

risk that this crisis in Burundi could spill over into other countries and cause regional instability? Maybe that is one for Richard to begin with.

Richard Moncrieff: Thank you. My first point would be that the main risk remains to the Burundian population and that risk involves the region. To come back to something Benjamin pointed out earlier, the historical patterns in the region involve neighbours supporting proxy armed groups, often based in refugee camps, so the region is immediately involved, even if the risk principally concerns Burundi.

On your second point about whether this situation poses a risk to the wider region, I think it does, yes. The reason is that we are already seeing a polarisation of different countries taking different positions on Burundi, according to different sets of alliances and antagonisms, many of which are historic. Much of this concerns whether or not you are a friend of Rwanda, which is playing out in the African Union. That is impeding finding a clear solution to the problem and there is that risk of escalation.

We should also note that, next door in the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is an electoral deadline at the end of this year that will not be met. That promises to raise tensions in that country. While the Democratic Republic of Congo is a large country that has some capacity to absorb crises from its neighbours on the one hand, on the other hand we have seen that country be profoundly destabilised by events next door in the past. That should be a concern.

Q22 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Turning now to this Committee's report on Burundi and DFID's work in Burundi about five years ago, we criticised DFID's decision to end its bilateral programme there. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but do you think that DFID's decision has had an impact on the UK's ability to support humanitarian efforts in Burundi and the wider region? Also, has it affected our ability to support diplomatic efforts?

Emma Fanning: The main thing is an awareness and understanding of what is going on at that detailed ground level in the nation that DFID is normally really very good at. Whilst they have some contacts within Burundi, they do not have that deeper understanding. I think that is missing. It is missing in the continued lack of financing for the crisis, where it could make a lot of impact.

Diplomatically, yes, but it would need more investment. There was a report from the Foreign Affairs Committee on the Sahel in 2014 that looked at British engagement in Francophone Africa. There is that role for the UK in more Francophone areas, especially looking forward without the EU delegations. There is a role to play there.

Q23 **Jeremy Lefroy:** Just as a follow-up question, given that, as you have all said, this is substantially a political crisis now and political crises can very rapidly lead to humanitarian crises and crises of development, where development gains are lost very quickly, is there a lesson to be learned

for the interaction of our political work through the Foreign Office, the maintenance of those contacts and international development work from this? I am also thinking of the current situation in DRC, where political crises could potentially lead to severe impacts on development work.

Richard Moncrieff: I would say a few points. I am not quite sure if I will answer your question, but I will try to; tell me if I do not. We are really talking about the diplomatic impact of aid: whether aid gives you a seat at the table and whether that can be used in a positive way. I would make two points about that. First, there are ways in which aid can be used to support civil society and, in the case of Burundi, the army, which has had some positive impact over the last 10 years. That can create social resilience and reduce the likelihood and scale of violence when a crisis comes. That is important and I believe DFID was doing some of that, although it was a minor player relative to other donors in Burundi. That is one aspect.

The other aspect is whether aid gives you diplomatic leverage to avoid the kind of crisis we are now in. I do not think it did or at least we, by which I mean all the donors in Burundi, were not willing to use that leverage properly. Back in the crucial period of 2002, 2011 and 2012, when this radicalisation within the regime started, donors tended to have the view that this was a post-conflict country and we needed to keep supporting the Government. We therefore soft-pedalled on some of the very serious human rights abuses that were occurring then. We raised them, but not in very strong terms and strong language, because we wanted to give this Government a chance.

Now, I can see that; I can see where we were coming from. Nevertheless, and as you say, hindsight is a wonderful thing. We can now see that this was a failure of early warning and early action, because there were huge amounts of aid put in, in that period, and the political crisis is now risking just wiping away all the gains that that aid made. I am sceptical, without a reassessment of how aid is used with authoritarian governments, that the small contribution of DFID could have made a significant diplomatic difference.

Emma Fanning: Can I just come back to the earlier question of funding? One of the things that contact on the ground can give you is a much better understanding of civil society organisations. One of the major cuts has been to civil society organisations, directly through funding from the EU, for example. That kind of thing, although it is not diplomatic leverage, is something that can be done for the country. Particularly in Burundi, there are a lot of local organisations that have worked on conflict resolution since the last war. They do not have any money now. That kind of thing needs to be kept going. That more detailed understanding of the country would be very useful.

Richard Moncrieff: Can I add a quick rider on that? I would like to support that but also add that many of these organisations that have been supported by donors over the last 10 years are now in exile. We

should try to find ways of supporting civil society organisations, despite the difficult circumstances that they are now in, which may mean being in exile or split between Bujumbura and exile.

Q24 **Stephen Doughty:** On the point you have just made there, the EU institutions are obviously the largest donor in Burundi, apart from the UN, I imagine. Could you say a little bit about what they are getting right and what they are getting wrong? Do you think that the UK's decision to leave means that we should reconsider our decision to stop bilateral assistance?

Emma Fanning: It is very good that they have a mission going on at the moment, and that needs to be urgently fast-forwarded. There has been a big gap in the budget. Going to scale is obviously going to be the big issue. Yes, on DFID, but it needs that understanding of what is happening. On the point made earlier about going to scale being very difficult, it is about really understanding the mechanisms that can be used. I believe there is a lot of funding going through the Red Cross at the moment, which is one way of doing it. Getting through the apparatus of the state to those basic services is going to be difficult and requires a really good understanding.

Stephen Doughty: I wonder if Richard or any of the others have any comments on the EU's role at all.

Carina Tertsakian: The EU role was quite interesting. There were those discussions last year, you may recall, under what they call the Article 96 procedure, which involved quite a thorough, detailed dialogue between the Burundian Government and the EU, including on all the pressing human rights concerns that we have been discussing here today. We were quite encouraged to see that the EU raised those issues very clearly and explicitly with the Burundian Government. Unfortunately, the Burundian Government did not respond in a satisfactory way and that triggered the suspension of that aid.

Again with hindsight, we could think of why that did not work. Maybe nothing would have worked, but maybe, on the other hand, that process began a bit late. For almost a year things had already been going really badly in Burundi. While they raised the right issues, in my view, perhaps the manner and the timing were a bit slow.

Chair: Thank you all very much indeed for giving your evidence to us today. We are going to move on to the second panel now. Please feel free to stay to watch.

Richard Moncrieff: Could I thank you as well for keeping attention on Burundi and for holding this meeting? It is extremely important, so I would like to thank you all as well.

Q25 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. We do not often get thanked by our witnesses, so thank you very much indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Mr Nick Hurd MP, Jane Rintoul and Neil Wigan OBE.

Q26 **Chair:** Minister, welcome, and welcome to the two senior officials. Thank you very much for joining us today. We are going to run through to midday. We have nine areas that we are going to seek to cover in 45 to 50 minutes, just to get a sense of the tempo. I will start off with a broad, open question, Minister. In terms of the current crisis in Burundi, what are the UK Government's major concerns about the crisis and, in particular, what are the priorities for action in response to it?

Mr Hurd: Chairman, thank you for inviting me. If I may, I will just echo the statement of appreciation from the previous witness for the fact that this Committee continues to be relentless in focusing minds on the situation in Burundi. In particular, Jeremy and Fiona, outside this Committee, have been absolutely persistent in making sure that we do not lose focus on this tragic situation there. I mean that.

Our priorities, and Neil can speak to this through the Foreign Office, are to make sure that we are putting as much diplomatic pressure as possible to bring people to the table and try to find a political way through. There is a process under way, which is frustrating and slow, but we are a player in that. Through the UN, we are working those channels to try to keep the UN focused on this situation, not least in the short term, in terms of trying to get agreement on the police contingent that we would like to see deployed.

From the perspective of DFID, our priority is to make sure that we continue to lead and to drum up support for making sure that there is the humanitarian capacity to absorb an escalation and a rapid deterioration in the situation. We have been, far and away, the largest bilateral funder to the humanitarian appeal in 2015. I think 35% of the appeal was funded by the UK, and we have had to think very hard about our contingency planning to make sure that we are ready and others are ready if this escalates into a full-blown humanitarian crisis. We have to be ready. There is the diplomatic effort, which the Foreign Office leads, and there is the humanitarian preparedness, on which we lead.

Chair: Thank you. We will explore each of those points in subsequent questions. Neil, do you want to add anything to what the Minister has said from a Foreign Office point of view?

Neil Wigan: As the Minister says, we are trying to keep as high a diplomatic tempo as we can. Danae Dholakia, our Special Envoy, is in Arusha for the dialogue at the moment and is trying to make that work. Our team at UKMIS New York is working on the UN Security Council draft resolution at the moment, trying to push that through. We are engaging

very heavily with the region. I saw President Museveni of Uganda about two weeks ago and Burundi was on the agenda. I was in Brussels with the EU Africa directors last week and again Burundi was one of the main issues on the agenda. We are doing whatever we can in all those fora to keep the pressure up.

Q27 **Fiona Bruce:** Thank you, Minister, for coming today. I would like to talk about humanitarian support for people within Burundi, not the refugees who have fled the country, which I know other Members of the Committee will ask about. You have referred to the fact that there could be a humanitarian crisis coming, and that seems to be the consensus that is growing. What do you think the international community can do to respond to this? What can the UK specifically do to respond to the need for growing humanitarian support within Burundi now?

Mr Hurd: Thank you for that, Fiona. What we are doing is I just approved last month £7 million for humanitarian response within Burundi, leaving aside what we are prepared to spend in Tanzania and Rwanda, in terms of absorption of people. We are committing funds within Burundi.

The key there is preparedness. Jane can talk to this, but our experience places a high premium on the need to be prepared and to be ready to act early and decisively. For example, we have recently had reports of outbreaks of cholera, which we have been able to respond to quickly and decisively. Making funds available in advance, preparedness funding, is key, and again Britain has sent a strong signal about the need for this with the package that I have approved.

Again, Fiona, we monitor the situation very carefully indeed. As well as making it a very big part of the job of the head of DFID Rwanda and the High Commissioner in Rwanda, we are just deploying a Burundi co-ordinator based in-country, who I have met. We are determined to keep ourselves as well informed as possible and make funds available for preparedness, so that there are resources that can be deployed quickly. That is the key.

Q28 **Fiona Bruce:** Could I just press you a little bit more on the £7 million? It is good to hear that. How is that being utilised or will it be utilised?

Mr Hurd: There is £3 million committed and there is £4 million for contingencies, so £7 million total.

Jane Rintoul: Shall I say a little bit about that? Some of it is about the pre-purchase and pre-positioning of emergency kit and supplies—food, water, shelter and that sort of thing—to help meet internal displacement in particular. It is also about resourcing. Quite apart from this current £3 million package of course, we have funded UN posts, so it is about getting the right expertise on the ground in order to ensure that the international community, as well as the functioning services in Burundi, are ready to respond.

As the Minister mentioned, one way in which the success of this has been evident is in providing diagnostic and treatment kits for cholera, for example. We have heard that there have been some minor outbreaks of cholera, but UNICEF, which is delivering this for us, has identified the cause of the problem and been able to rectify it immediately, so it has not spread. That sort of pre-equipping addresses any problems as they arise.

Mr Hurd: Just as a point of detail, throughout 2015 and 2016, DFID funded a total of seven experts in the UN, inside the country.

Q29 **Fiona Bruce:** Can I just clarify? This £7 million is quite separate from the funds that have been allocated to help refugees in the neighbouring countries. How much is that?

Mr Hurd: For neighbouring countries, from memory, the total is £36 million.

Q30 **Wendy Morton:** Over 260,000 Burundian refugees have fled to neighbouring countries since April last year. We have heard that the UNHCR has received just 28% of the requested $175 million funding it is looking for, for the humanitarian response. Minister, do you feel that donors, including DFID, are scaling up enough to support those countries, such as Tanzania, DRC and Rwanda, to ensure that they can deal with the influx of refugees? What more could be done and should be done? I appreciate that you have already highlighted preparedness, but I wanted to ask a little bit more around that.

Mr Hurd: There is an issue of under-funding, but this is not limited to Burundi by any stretch of the imagination. The Committee will be well aware that the humanitarian system is desperately stretched at the moment. There is a terrible crisis related to El Niño in Southern Africa, where the funding appeal there is again arguably very under-funded. That is the really difficult context in which we are operating.

As I said earlier, Wendy, this country is always proud to lead in these situations, because early signals, early direction and early leadership are really important. For the regional appeal in 2015, the UK contributed 35% of the funds; 35% was from the UK. In terms of 2016, I have mentioned what we have made available in-country. I have also approved £15 million of more funding for Tanzania. I have been to see the camps myself and talked to young Burundians in those camps. We are evaluating the need for more money for Rwanda at this point in time. We keep the situation under constant review.

In parallel with that, we have a role to play in picking up the phone to others and basically saying, "Come on." That is part of our role and responsibility, as well as helping to manage relationships with countries like Tanzania and Rwanda, which we rely on to absorb and do so in a peaceful and productive way. We cannot ever take that for granted.

Those relationships need to be managed as well, so that is the sort of package of activity that I hope we continue.

Q31 **Chair:** Can I ask, Minister, about the issue of suspension of aid to Burundi by a number of major donors, including the European Union? Given the heavy reliance of the country on external donors to provide basic services, is the British Government's view that this was the right decision and how will donors work to limit the impact on the living standards of the people of Burundi?

Mr Hurd: I think it was the right decision, as long as we did make it clear that we expected the funds to be redeployed through other channels to make sure that the people of Burundi were supported. That is not easy. We can talk about the complexity of that. It has meant that, arguably, there has been a delay in disbursement, because it is difficult to find reliable, high-integrity platforms to work with, particularly with the situation in Burundi. Article 96 was the right process, as long as we do not lose sight of the fact that we must not let the people of Burundi down and must make sure that these monies are in place. We will use our influence, such as it is, on that process, but I think the decision was right. Ultimately, let's not lose sight of where responsibility lies.

Q32 **Chair:** Can you say a bit more about the UK's role in the European Union's decision to suspend?

Mr Hurd: As a member of the European Union, we were part of that decision-making and supported it. Part of our role now, and again Jane can talk to this if she likes, is to monitor the situation very carefully and apply supportive pressure to make sure that EU funding is disbursed in a timely way, through channels, and focused on the things that are the priorities and make a difference. We all recognise the difficulties in that. I think it was the right decision, but the proof will be in seeing the disbursement of the money on the ground, in an effective way. Jane, do you want to add to that?

Jane Rintoul: I would just say that, yes, there has been a challenge for the EU in reorienting its funds not to deliver through the Burundian Government structures. They have now approved two programmes. Together they are about €55 million. One is health-focused and one is nutrition- and rural livelihoods-focused. They are now moving towards implementation. The health programme is further advanced, in that they now have a contracted partner to begin implementation. It has taken a little while, but they have done exactly as we and others have exhorted them to do: to make sure that the resources were redirected through non-government means, so that they can continue to support Burundians.

Mr Hurd: The EU has also made €10 million available for humanitarian assistance as well, quite recently.

Q33 **Albert Owen:** If I can just move on to the political crisis, what prospect

is there of the current peace talks becoming more inclusive and bringing to an end the political crisis in Burundi? What is the UK doing to support this process? Is it hampered by our limited diplomatic presence there?

Neil Wigan: In response to the last part of your question, the dialogue is primarily taking place outside Burundi. As said, our Special Envoy is present at the dialogue. Clearly in terms of information, it will be helpful when we do have a representative deployed on the ground, but our High Commissioner visits Kigali regularly. The team in Kigali visits Bujumbura regularly, so we do have that presence.

In terms of prospects, I can say that, at the moment, there are arguments about which delegation sits where. This is very normal as part of Burundian negotiations. That was true of the first set of Arusha accords, which was a very long, protracted process. We are working very hard to turn the dialogue into a substantive, effective process as quickly as possible, but I suspect it will take some time to get there in a continued, rather messy process.

Q34 **Albert Owen:** Just on the UK presence there, you said it is outside of it. Are you reviewing the situation and is it your intention, if things settle, to get more diplomats into the capital?

Neil Wigan: As the Minister said, we will have one UK-based member of staff permanently deployed to Bujumbura, as well as the locally engaged staff who we already have there. We would look at increasing that presence, but we have not historically had a big presence in Bujumbura.

Q35 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I have a follow-up really about peacekeeping. The Burundian army has played a major role in peacekeeping efforts, over the last 10 or 15 years, particularly with AMISOM in Mogadishu, where they have done a great deal at tremendous cost. There were well over 450 troops killed.

There are three questions arising out of this. The first is: what is the current status of those Burundian peacekeeping missions, which are vital in many parts? Secondly, we have heard that the payments for those peacekeeping missions are possibly going directly to the Burundian Government and may be a source of finance to them in their oppressive measures at the moment. What is our Government's approach to that, given that this is almost budget support through another means? Thirdly, there are also reports that certain high-ranking officers who may have been involved in some of the crimes committed against the civilian population in Burundi over the last few months have potentially been posted to peacekeeping missions, almost as a reward for their support and for their work for the Burundian Government. Again, I would like to know what the British Government's approach to that is, given that we are a major funder of AMISOM and indeed all other peacekeeping missions in which Burundi and others take part.

Neil Wigan: I should say I was Ambassador in Somalia before this, so I am very aware of the Burundian contribution in Somalia and what a

difficult job they have. The current status is that they are still a troop-contributing country in Somalia, with a significant presence. That contingent is meant to be as active and engaged as any other contingent, at the moment.

The status of payment is that, under Article 96, where we no longer wish to make direct payments to the Burundian Government, the EU is now working with the AU to come up with an alternative payment mechanism to make payments direct to soldiers. Under the existing MoU, the AU makes payments to the governments of the troop-contributing countries, which then pass on an agreed share of the stipends to the soldiers involved. We also understand that the Burundian Government has been withholding some of that, as a source of foreign exchange. Again, one of the benefits of the Article 96 process is that it allows us to set up an alternative mechanism to make sure that the soldiers who are risking their lives are receiving a salary and the Burundian Government is not.

We are aware of reports of individuals associated with human rights abuses being deployed to AMISOM. It is quite difficult for us to exercise a veto over any individual deployment, but we certainly raise our concerns about human rights allegations very clearly, particularly including allegations of sexual abuse committed by AMISOM peacekeepers. We focus on that very heavily with the force commander in the SRCC as well.

Q36 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I am referring to the potential deployment of very senior officers, not just individual troops but at a very senior level. They would have a critical role in AMISOM, for instance, and yet potentially have these outstanding allegations against them, which would seem to me to be in complete contradiction to the norms of peacekeeping. Presumably, being an African Union force, the African Union should be taking this very seriously. I wondered what is happening on that.

Neil Wigan: We are raising that with the African Union and with the peace support operations department in Addis Ababa, but the troop-contributing countries have been very reluctant to see outsiders have a veto over individual personnel decisions.

Q37 **Mrs Grant:** The UN Security Council agreed to send a UN police force to the country in April. Could you explain what progress has been made in relation to that? Is that sufficient? We also heard in evidence this morning that perhaps DFID could do more to help. Can you comment on that, please, as well?

Mr Hurd: Is that whether DFID could do more to help in the context of the police?

Mrs Grant: It is in relation to the setting-up and deployment of the UN police force.

Mr Hurd: I am not sure about the second point. The priority is to get agreement about the deployment and the scale of the deployment. As I understand it, and Neil can comment on this, we are being extremely

active at the UN in pushing, pushing, pushing. There is a problem, in that there is a requirement for approval from the Burundian Government of the proposal, which is something that exercises the minds of at least two members of the Security Council, whose approval is clearly linked to the attitude of the Burundian Government to this. It is a UN process, which we are doing our bit to push through, but it is about the scale of it.

Mrs Grant: Is it there?

Mr Hurd: No.

Neil Wigan: The AU has authorised the deployment of 200 police. Only a limited number of those have been deployed so far. I am not sure of the exact number, but it is in the low 10s. As the Minister says, the UN Security Council is now looking at the deployment of UN police. Some members are reluctant to go with a bigger deployment than the Government of Burundi would give consent to. We have been to Bujumbura to lobby the Government directly to say to them, "We want you to accept a reasonable number that would actually make a difference." They are very resistant and are trying to build support on the Security Council. We are working hard in New York to get acceptance on that.

Q38 **Mrs Grant:** Is that AU contribution sufficient in terms of numbers or do you think they should be sending more?

Neil Wigan: If deployed, 200 would give a significant monitoring function. Will it prevent all human rights abuses being committed in Burundi? No, I do not think so, but it would give that sense of monitoring and of scrutiny, which might restrain the level significantly.

Mr Hurd: The key words there, Helen, are "if deployed". The numbers deployed at the moment are a very small percentage of the high-level number. In a separate process through the UN, we are pushing for another 200 police and human rights observers to go as well, but there are people discussing a number much lower than that. The key thing is not the high-level announcement bit; it is the number of people deployed on the ground that matters, which we need to track and monitor.

Q39 **Mrs Grant:** I have a final catch-all question on that. If there was an escalation of violence in the country, do you think the international community would be ready to act?

Mr Hurd: Is that in terms of a military intervention?

Mrs Grant: It is in terms of whatever is needed to protect people and stop violence.

Mr Hurd: There are three potential elements to that. One is the absolute priority of getting these police and human rights observers on the ground, at scale. It has to be 200 rather than 20 to make any difference. Then you have to make sure you have the humanitarian response ready

and the contingency funding and plans in place to respond to an escalation. If our worst fears materialise, the steady stream of people leaving now will turn into a flood. The third piece you have to have clear in your mind is who is going to go in there and stop them killing each other. Our preference, and Neil can talk to this, is for that to be a regional response, possibly with a UN backup from forces that are already deployed in the area. Neil can talk about that, but those are the three components.

Q40 **Mrs Grant:** Just to clarify, if we managed to get 200 police officers effectively on the ground, do you think that would help the situation?

Mr Hurd: Yes, but 20 will not.

Q41 **Chair:** Minister, you set out the three strands and your third was existing forces in the region. I take that to mean MONUSCO. Can you tell us where things are, in terms of the possibility of MONUSCO's task including work in Burundi as well as in DRC?

Neil Wigan: We have been talking to DPKO in New York, as well to the mission on the ground, both at headquarters in Kinshasa and the contingents deployed in eastern DRC, to ensure that they have contingency planning in place, should there be the kind of deterioration in Burundi that you have talked about. As the Minister says, we would ideally like to see the region leading the response to this. We were pleased when the region talked about creating a special force, MAPROBU, if necessary. That force has not progressed, but we would still like to see this as primarily being a regional responsibility.

Mr Hurd: I should also add that we have sent very clear signals to Rwanda that we want their interventions in this situation to be constructive.

Chair: Do you want to say a little bit more about that?

Mr Hurd: No, I do not think it needs it.

Q42 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I would like to turn to the previous International Development Committee report, which we published in 2012. I do not really want to go over all the ground that we have been through since then, because at the time we were clearly critical of DFID's decision to end the bilateral programme. As I said to the previous panel, hindsight is a wonderful thing. Might things have been different? We simply do not know.

The question I really want to ask is: will both DFID and the Foreign Office seriously consider engaging with Burundi when, as we hope will happen, this crisis has passed—indeed now, but certainly when it has passed? The point we made in 2012 was that the UK is investing a great deal in the whole of eastern and central Africa, but the one country in which that investment was not nearly as great was Burundi. Clearly, it is a country that has, by all indicators, huge needs.

Mr Hurd: I will be very candid. At the moment, our forward planning does not include resuming a bilateral relationship with Burundi. I have to be quite candid about that. It is a situation where a significant amount of UK taxpayers' money is being deployed to support the people of Burundi; we are just not doing it in a traditional DFID way. That was subject to the strategic review and I think that was the right decision at the time. This is a test of our ability to deploy humanitarian funding intelligently and influence others. We have some centrally managed programming at work in the country. There is regional money, not least our ground-breaking TradeMark East Africa programme, which is about trying to support regional trade, which is critical to the future of Burundi. There is the relationship with the EU, as long as that lasts.

Critically also, as I know the Committee is aware of but we have not talked about, there is the important role that the World Bank plays. We have not talked very much about the economic situation in Burundi, but it is critical. The World Bank has a critical role to play in terms of helping to underpin economic recovery, if peace can be established. They are taking a much more active role in the country, with our encouragement. It is a big test for us about their ability to operate in fragile states. I have spoken personally to the director responsible for the region. Let's not forget, because sometimes we do, that the UK is one of the biggest donors to the World Bank.

We are very active player in terms of supporting the people of Burundi and supporting the path to peace, as we hope, but also the path towards economic recovery. We are just not, at this moment in time, envisioning doing it through what I would call a traditional DFID bilateral relationship. This is a test of our ability to influence others and use our multilateral spending in as intelligent a way as possible.

Q43 **Jeremy Lefroy:** One of the reasons given in 2012 was that the programme would be too small, and yet in 2014 we visited a programme in Liberia that was smaller than the closed programme in Burundi, which was maintained and run on a similar basis, i.e. it was run largely from Freetown in the way that the Burundi programme was run from Kigali. That seemed to us to be a slight contradiction in reasoning on the part of DFID. I would really like to know what the reasoning is, given that small does not seem to exclude the possibility in other places.

Mr Hurd: That was a decision taken then. There may be apparent contradictions but, looking forward, I am very clear in my mind that DFID should be building bilateral relationships and running bilateral operations where we intend to work at scale. That is my view.

Q44 **Jeremy Lefroy:** What you are saying, Minister, is that we are not intending to work at scale in Burundi for the foreseeable future.

Mr Hurd: No, what I am saying is that we have significant resources being deployed, through the EU, through the World Bank, through our centrally managed programme and through our humanitarian support.

Let's not forget that 35% of the regional funding appeal was funded by the UK. There is a significant amount of resource there.

My personal view is that we have to be smarter and smarter about how we use our influence to make sure that British taxpayers' money that goes through these multilateral relationships works effectively. My own personal view of bilateral relationships is that we should be doing more to consolidate our efforts in countries that have long-term strategic value to the UK. In other countries, we should be thinking about how we use our multilateral relationships and our humanitarian support in the most effective way possible.

Now, is that under review? Yes, because Ministers will come and go, people will take different views and events will dictate thinking. It may be that a case becomes stronger and stronger for revisiting that argument. I can only give you my very candid view, Jeremy, about what I feel and what I see at this moment. You know Africa much better than I do, and we know that things can change very rapidly, and DFID has always been a flexible organisation and I hope will always remain so.

Q45 **Jeremy Lefroy:** I would very much appreciate that and think we all would. I would just urge both DFID and the FCO to think very carefully about this. I believe that this country has strong potential and actual relationships with all the countries in that region, including Burundi. We have invested very heavily in DRC, where we were last week, perhaps without having had the traditional ties that we have elsewhere. It is the same for DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. They are all intimately combined.

Mr Hurd: Let me just reinforce my point: we spend a huge amount of time, at DFID and the Foreign Office, thinking and worrying and planning around Burundi. James Duddridge and I talk about it very regularly. We have brought officials together to talk about it regularly. We have made it quite clear to our leadership teams in Rwanda that a big part of their responsibility is Burundi. We have committed people and funded people in-country. We have made humanitarian funding support in-country. We are acting very proactively through the UN and through our relationship with the EU, just to bring us much pressure to bear on this situation as possible. But I do not yet, at this point, see an argument for revisiting the bilateral arrangement.

Q46 **Chair:** On a connected point, are you able to tell us whether we are likely to see the Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Reviews before the House rises next week?

Mr Hurd: I believe so.

Q47 **Stephen Doughty:** I share a lot of Jeremy's concerns, but I wanted to widen it out, Minister. Perhaps Neil, having worked extensively in both Francophone and Anglophone Africa as well, could comment on this. There were also concerns raised in the reports at the Committee

previously about Mali, about Central African Republic and about the UK's overall development and diplomatic footprint in Francophone Africa. Not least because of the result of the referendum we are not going to be part of those EU discussions—you are not going to be going to the EU directors of Africa meetings in the future, Neil, and so on—I want to understand what consideration has been given, particularly if we are going to see the publication of the two reviews, to the implications of the referendum for our role and our relationship with Francophone Africa.

Mr Hurd: What you will see, Stephen, if you track this over time is that, in the context of DFID, it is possible to track a reasonably significant shift in resources towards countries in what is called the Arc of Instability. That is right. With resources, you can also begin to track the focus of deploying people, and that is right.

I can speak only from a DFID perspective. This touches on what Jeremy is saying. The decision to open a bilateral programme or a DFID office in a country is a big one. It needs to be done with a very clear understanding of why, what we are hoping to achieve and why we think we can achieve things in countries, particularly where other countries have historically had much more of a presence, a role and an influence. Looking at this through the prism of British national interest, it is abundantly clear to me, to take for example the Sahel, that it is going to be an area of increasing importance to us, because it is a source of instability and it is a source of migration.

Q48 **Stephen Doughty:** Have the Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Reviews been reviewed in the light of the referendum decision? Are they different than they would have been?

Mr Hurd: No, they were being reviewed anyway. We at DFID have led this. We have had to do a review of our approach to the Sahel and how we think we can help support the British national interest in those countries. That is the conversation that I was having with James in the Foreign Office way before the referendum.

The question that Brexit poses for us is around our ability to influence what our EU partners do over the next two years, because we have a lot of British taxpayers' money operating through their systems, particularly in the Sahel. When we are on our own and independent, what is the best route? It is too early to comment on that. Our priority is to define the strategy, define what it means in terms of resource allocation, work out our strategy for influence on the EU in the short term and then to think beyond that point as to what is the most intelligent way of deploying British resource in that area. I am very clear in my mind that the Sahel will continue to be a place of increasing importance to the British national interest, in a way that has not been reflected in resource allocation over the last 10 or 15 years.

Q49 **Stephen Doughty:** Are there officials in DFID and the FCO at the moment looking at where we redeploy our ADF funding, our ECHO

funding and our EIB funding?

Mr Hurd: Of course there is some thinking now about the future, because obviously the European channels have been a very important part of how we do our ODA. There is also some short-term thinking about what to do now in terms of resource allocation in the Sahel.

Neil Wigan: As the Minister said, we are very clear that the Sahel is an area of rising interest to the UK, from a migration and counter-terrorism perspective, so we are very focused on it. Our missions in Bamako and Cameroon are particularly active, and we are sending people more often than in the past into places like Chad and Niger, where we do not have a permanent presence. We also run a certain amount of CSSF project money in the Sahel to make sure that that is focused on our priorities.

While we are a member of the EU, we will continue to exert our full roles, rights and responsibilities. It is a mixed blessing, but I will still be going to EU Africa directors' meetings for the next two years and, at the last one, I was very clear that this is what we will do. While we are a member of the EU, we will be fully active and using all those EU resources in the Sahel to get maximum effect.

Q50 **Chair:** I am going to ask a final question on Burundi and then ask a question on DRC, following the Committee's visit there last week. We heard earlier from Human Rights Watch that they are recommending that there should be an international commission of inquiry into the crisis in Burundi. What are the Government's thoughts on that?

Mr Hurd: I have a lot of sympathy with that and understand where it comes from. If politics is the art of the possible, I know my priority would be to deliver something through our conversations with the UN about getting a deployment of police and human rights observers on the ground at scale. That is a priority. As I think we have indicated, there is some way to go on delivering that. In political terms that is the priority in terms of the deliverable.

Q51 **Chair:** Let me move on finally just to ask a question about DRC, because we did have a Committee delegation there last week. I should put on record our appreciation to DFID and to the Foreign Office for the visit, but also in particular pay tribute to some of the programmes that DFID is supporting in DRC. Permeating our visit was the political context with regard to elections. Elections due in December now look like they are not going to happen this year. Can you tell us what the Government are doing to try to ensure that there is the adherence to the Congolese constitution that is so crucial to political stability, but also to the chances of the Congolese people controlling their own destiny?

Mr Hurd: I am delighted the trip was a success and I am pleased if we have facilitated a successful visit. I am very proud of the work we do in that country under exceptionally difficult circumstances. You have put your finger on, clearly, far and away, the biggest short-term issue. It was very clear to me from my visit some months back that President

Kabila and his circle are operating a policy of glissement and are trying to find a way to keep their hands on power. I did what you would expect me to do, which was to say into any microphone thrust into my face that the constitution needed to be respected. Those were messages I took to the Ministers who I saw.

We continue to use whatever influence we have with people in the area to send as consistent a message about that as possible. We will keep under active review what the actions of the British Government and partners will be in the face of clear evidence that people continue to obstruct what I think the Congolese people want, which is the constitution to be respected.

Neil Wigan: I was Ambassador to DRC in the 2011 elections, so I have skin in this game. Very much as the Minister said, we are using all the levers that we can to keep the political process moving forward and to ensure stability, so that the Congolese can vote. I saw the Congolese vote in Kinshasa in 2011 and they really want to.

We are immediately focused on trying to bring about a dialogue between the Government and opposition. We are working with Edem Kodjo, the former Prime Minister of Togo, who is trying to facilitate that progress. We hope that the next round of that dialogue will take place at the end of July to try to get an agreed way forward, among the Congolese, on how to advance this. We are very much using our role in the UN Security Council, including Resolution 2277, which mentioned the role of MONUSCO in the elections, to make sure that we can help out as much as we can.

Mr Hurd: The other thing just to say, Chairman, is that we are keen to remove any excuses. One of the things that I offered when I was there was funding to support the election process, quite significant funding, because I did not want anyone making excuses for the glissement. We are very clear and of course we have a very big stake there, on behalf of the British taxpayer. We are very clear about what needs to happen and we are monitoring the situation extremely closely.

Q52 **Chair:** What do you see as the biggest risks to the programmes that DFID funds if political instability breaks out?

Mr Hurd: The risk, given the history, is political instability coupled with economic instability. Let's not lose sight of the fact, as I am sure you have got a picture, the economy is a problem. It could return that country to the kind of violence and profound instability that we have seen in the past. Our investment there, on behalf of the British taxpayer, is part of a long-term process, which we think is gradually moving the needle in that country in the direction that we all want to see—towards peace, security and long-term prosperity.

If the needle jolts backwards because of this, that process will take that much longer and will require that much more investment. There is

obviously an element of time to protect the investment we make on behalf of the British people, but also just a profound desire to avoid that magnificent country going backwards into some of the horrors of the past. We all want it to move forward.

Chair: Thank you. That is precisely the conclusion that we all reached too. Thank you very much indeed for coming to give evidence to us today about the crisis in Burundi.