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Descrizione

Burundi Joins Congo in Demanding Reparations from Belgium

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- East African nation wants \$43 billion from Belgium, Germany
- Belgian lawmakers formed panel to probe nation's colonial past

Burundi wants Belgium and Germany to pay \$43 billion in reparations for harm done during decades of colonial rule over the nickel-producing East African nation.

Il Burundi vuole che Belgio e Germania paghino 43 miliardi di dollari in risarcimenti per danni causati durante decenni di dominio coloniale sulla nazione dell'Africa orientale produttrice di nichel.

The move follows similar calls for compensation by the Democratic Republic of Congo after Belgian King Philippe in June offered his "deepest regrets" over his nation's colonial past in the Congo. While the killing of George Floyd in the U.S. sparked some introspection about racism in the West, in sub-Saharan Africa much of the analysis has focused on the legacy of colonialism.

Burundi also wants Belgium and Germany to return archival material and objects stolen between 1899 and 1962, Senate President Reverien Ndikuriyo told senators in the capital, Gitega, on Thursday. In 2018, the Senate appointed a panel including historians and anthropologists to investigate the impact of colonialism in the nation.

Much of Burundi's present-day political challenges can be traced back to a decree by Belgian King Albert I to classify the population along three ethnic groups, according to Aloys Batungwanayo, a historian and doctoral researcher at the Lausanne University.

“It is this decree that has led to conflicts in Burundi and the region because some of the population was excluded from the ruling class because of the decree,” Batungwanayo said in the commercial hub Bujumbura on Friday.

Brutal Past

Other than the ills of colonization, Burundi accuses Belgium of fomenting dissent in the country in the recent past and sheltering the plotters of an attempted coup in 2015.

Oltre ai mali della colonizzazione, il Burundi accusa il Belgio di aver fomentato il dissenso nel paese nel recente passato e di aver protetto i cospiratori di un tentato colpo di stato nel 2015.

On its part, the European nation may seem to be confronting its brutal past as lawmakers have agreed to set up a panel to look at Belgium’s colonial history in Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

But while King Philippe seems contrite about King Leopold II’s atrocities in Congo and for the suffering and humiliation in the subsequent Belgian colonial period, his expression of regret to Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi in June was short of an official apology. The former king claimed the Congo region as his personal property in 1885 and ruled it until 1908, when it was handed over to the Belgian government.

Burundi’s economy, estimated at \$3.1 billion by the African Development Bank, has been struggling since Belgium and the European Union placed it under sanctions when the late President Pierre Nkurunziza decided to extend his rule, which some critics said contravened the constitution.

L’economia del Burundi, stimata a 3,1 miliardi di dollari dalla Banca africana di sviluppo, è in difficoltà da quando il Belgio e l’Unione Europea hanno sanzionato quando il defunto presidente Pierre Nkurunziza ha deciso di estendere il suo potere, che secondo alcuni critici violava la costituzione.

Economic output could contract 5.5% this year, according to the International Monetary Fund.

(Bloomberg)