



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on arrests before, during and after the elections of July 2009; any killings of opposition members in this period

Reviewing events of 2009 a report by *Freedom House* in April 2010 comments on the July 2009 elections noting:

“In the July 2009 presidential election, Sassou-Nguesso won another term with 79 percent of the vote. His closest challenger was independent candidate Joseph Kignoumbi Kia Mboundou, who took 7 percent. Six of the original 16 opposition candidates had withdrawn to protest poor electoral conditions. The government had again rejected calls to establish an independent electoral commission, and the existing National Commission on Elections (CONEL) had disqualified four of the initial opposition candidates, most notably Ange Edouard Pongui of the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (UPADS), the largest opposition party in the National Assembly. While the government reported voter turnout of 66 percent, the opposition claimed that the figure was closer to 10 percent. The African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States sent some poll observers, but the European Union did not. In advance of the elections, the government had updated the existing voter registry rather than carrying out a new census, despite evidence of inaccuracies” (Freedom House (April 2010) *Freedom in the World - Congo, Republic of (Brazzaville) (2010)*).

A report published by the *United States Department of State* in March 2010 commenting on events of 2009 states:

“The arrests of opposition members Malgala Sabin, Douniama-Etou Jean Ferenzi, and Ernest Ngalou following the July 12 elections were perceived to be politically motivated. On July 15, security forces arrested former self-exiled opposition leader and Lissouba loyalist General Ferdinand Mbaou upon his arrival at the Brazzaville airport. Mbaou, who had been in exile in France since 1997, was charged with breaching national security. At year's end he remained in police custody” (United States Department of State (11 March 2010) *2009 Human Rights Report: Republic of the Congo*, Section 1d ‘Arbitrary Arrest or Detention Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention’).

An *IRIN News* story in October 2009 states:

“Authorities in the Republic of Congo have restricted the movements of several opposition politicians, who claim President Denis Sassou-Nguesso's July re-election was won through fraud” (IRIN News (9 October 2009) *Congo: Post-election clampdown on opposition*). This story also states: “Many opposition

figures – some of whom boycotted the July poll - say they have not been allowed to leave the capital, Brazzaville, since mid-August” (ibid).

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

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