



Democratic Republic of the Congo – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 20 November 2013

Are small parties and their members at risk of political repression, arrest and torture in DRC?

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information, in a section headed “Treatment of UDPS Members by the Authorities and Security Forces”, states:

“Sources also reported that, early in September 2011, the headquarters of the UDPS and the People's Party for Reconstruction and Development (Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et le développement, PPRD) were ransacked, and the headquarters of Radio Lisanga Télévision (RLTV) was set on fire (ASADHO 8 Sept. 2011; Forum des As 7 Sept. 2011). The headquarters of these organizations are located respectively in the communities of Limete, Kasa-Vubu and Gombe, in Kinshasa (ASADHO 8 Sept. 2011). In July 2011, Congolese authorities shut down the RLTV station, owned by a political opponent, because [translation] 'it advocated violence, incited hatred and sought to compromise the electoral process by airing a daily program called 'SET' (Soutien à Étienne Tshisekedi [Support for Étienne Tshisekedi])'. According to the Ministry of the Interior of the DRC, UDPS headquarters was vandalized [translation] 'in reaction to acts of vandalism perpetrated by UDPS militants' on 5 September 2011, at an office of the PPRD, the party in power. The Ministry added that 12 people were allegedly injured and six vehicles allegedly set on fire in the incident of vandalism against UDPS headquarters. On the other hand, in Le Phare, the Secretary General of the UDPS was quoted as saying that the operation that destroyed the headquarters of his party and RLTV was conducted by soldiers, transported in police vehicles (7 Sept. 2011). He added that this operation killed two people, injured several others and resulted in the arrest of about fifty UDPS members. However, the source does not indicate what happened to those who were arrested. Among the sources that it has consulted, the Research Directorate has not found any details regarding the possible reasons for this violence.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (18 May 2012) *COD104019.FE – Democratic Republic of the Congo: Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), including its status, its relationship to the government in power, and the treatment of its members by the authorities and security forces*)

An Amnesty International statement on the actions of the security forces in the aftermath of the 28 November 2011 election states:

“Amnesty International has also collected information describing acts of torture, illtreatment and arbitrary and illegal arrests by the defence and security forces, carried out with the purpose of intimidating members of opposition parties, notably the UDPS and their actual and perceived supporters, as well as journalists, military personnel and police officers. These waves of arrests in various locations in the country, notably in Kasai Oriental, Équateur, North and South Kivu and Katanga aimed to stifle opposition voices and put an end to the protests launched by the opposition

following the announcement of the elections results. Although some of these people have been released, others are still detained incommunicado in military bases in Kinshasa, notably at Kokolo, and at other locations outside the jurisdiction of the judicial authorities, such as the Tshatshi base or the building of the Litho Moboti Group (GLM).” (Amnesty International (23 March 2012) *Democratic Republic of Congo. The Congolese government must put an end to impunity for serious human rights violations committed by the defence and security forces during the electoral process*)

See also a Human Rights Watch report which states:

“The incidents of post-election abuse by security forces were documented by seven Human Rights Watch staff working with 17 Congolese human rights activists trained as election observers and deployed across the country. Human Rights Watch interviewed 86 victims, family members, and other witnesses, in addition to gathering information from other sources. Human Rights Watch received numerous accounts of incidents in which members of the Republican Guard presidential security detail, the police, and other security forces fired on groups of people in the street who may have been protesting the election result, were preparing to protest, or were simply bystanders. In other incidents, suspected opposition supporters were targeted and killed. At least 24 people were killed by security forces between December 9 and 14, including 20 in Kinshasa, two in North Kivu, and two in Kasai Occidental province.” (Human Rights Watch (21 December 2011) *DR Congo: 24 Killed since Election Results Announced*)

A report published by the Association Africaine des Droits de l'Homme (ASADHO) and other organisations states:

“Abuse by Congolese security forces extends beyond immediately conflict-affected zones. The abuse has been most visible in the brutal suppression of political protest or internal unrest, notably in the suppression of the Bundu dia Kongo group, the crushing of MLC forces loyal to Jean-Pierre Bemba in Kinshasa, and heavy-handed responses to political protests around the 2011 elections. It has also been felt in the arbitrary arrest or killing of regime opponents, human rights activists and journalists, as well as day-to-day predation and lack of access to even-handed justice.” (Association Africaine des Droits de l'Homme (ASADHO), et al (16 April 2012) *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Taking a Stand on Security Sector Reform*, pp.7-8)

A Pambazuka News article states:

“Since 26 November 2011, the police and the security forces have, in Kinshasa and elsewhere, continued to pick up young people, whose destination and fate are unknown. On 16 February 2012, when the Catholic Church asked its faithful to march in commemoration of the 1992 March of Christians and in protest against electoral fraud, the police and the militia of Kabila's party, the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD), went into churches even before the march was to start to beat up on worshippers, and their weapons included tear gas and clubs.” (Pambazuka News (22 March 2012) *Congo-Kinshasa: Congolese Vote, but Who Decides?*)

See also a report from All Africa which states:

“Security forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo on Thursday fired teargas to break up a ‘March of Christians’ organized by the local Roman Catholic Church to protest alleged fraud in the recent presidential and legislative elections, news reports said. Police in the capital, Kinshasa, used armored vehicles and water cannon to patrol the neighborhoods where the protesters were to demonstrate. They were prevented from marching and gathered in churches, Radio France Internationale reported. There were no immediate reports of deaths, although Agence France-Presse reported that thugs entered a church and beat women inside. There were also reports that three priests, two nuns and two protesters were detained.” (All Africa (16 February 2012) *Congo-Kinshasa: Security Forces Fire Teargas at Peaceful Demonstrators*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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.

References:

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(UDPS), including its status, its relationship to the government in power, and the treatment of its members by the authorities and security forces

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Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

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