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Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Burundi: Membership cards of the National Liberation Forces (Forces nationales de libération, FNL) party [BDI104779.FE]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Issuance of FNL Membership Cards

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate on 24 February 2014, a doctoral student at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne who has studied the emergence and evolution of political and political-military movements in Burundi, including the FNL, and who did her research in Burundi, stated that almost all FNL members have a party membership card (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014). However, during a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a Burundian journalist and former editor-in-chief of African Public Radio (Radio publique africaine, RPA) (CPJ 3 Aug. 2011; Journalist 27 Feb. 2014) stated that the membership card is not mandatory and that some members prefer to not have one (*ibid.*). RPA is community radio that was founded in 2001 and that practices [translation] "local journalism by reaching out to the communities" (RPA 28 Feb. 2013).

The doctoral student stated that, since the party's creation in 1980, FNL members [translation] "could" request and obtain a membership card, even when the party operated underground (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014). However, she stated that when the party was underground, the cards were issued exclusively by a member of the [translation] "steering committee" of the party, although in 2009, when the party set up offices "almost everywhere in the country" [the FNL obtained political party status in April 2009] (*PHW* 2013, 215), the cards were issued by the "local level steering committee" (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014).

However, the Doctoral student added that, after the 2010 elections, certain party offices were closed while others were taken over by the FNL faction close to the party in power [there being, according to sources, several FNL factions (Consultant 20 July 2013; Professor 19 July 2013; Research officer 19 July 2013)] (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Documents Required for Issuance of the Membership Card

The doctoral student stated that no identification is required to obtain the membership card (*ibid.*). The journalist stated that no identification documents are required if the applicant is [translation] "known" by the party officials in the commune or region (Journalist 27 Feb. 2014). According to the journalist, if the applicant is [translation] "not known" by the party officials, "it is possible" that the applicant may be asked for their national identity card (carte nationale d'identité, CNI) (*ibid.*). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Description of FNL Membership Cards

According to the doctoral student, the membership card contains the surname and given name of the bearer, as well as the region and [translation] "home" commune (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014). The doctoral student added that there is no photograph of the bearer on the membership card and that, before 2009, the bearer's clan name was indicated on it (ibid.). The journalist stated that only the bearer's name is indicated on the card and [translation] "that, in principle," there is no photograph of the bearer (Journalist 27 Feb. 2014). The journalist added that the colours black, red, white and green are on the card (ibid.). In addition, the party logo, an axe, is on the card, and that the party slogan ("Ubigabo Buribwa") is indicated inside the logo (ibid. 5 Mar. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The journalist stated that he did not know the precise cost of the FNL membership card, but that membership cards of Burundian political parties cost between 500 Burundian francs (BIF) [C\$0.36 (XE 25 Feb. 2014a)] and 1,000 BIF [C\$0.71 (XE 25 Feb. 2014b)] (Journalist 27 Feb. 2014).

4. Use of Membership Cards

According to the doctoral student, during meetings or internal party votes, participants do not [translation] "necessarily" show their membership card "because the president has a list of the names of all the members" (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014). Similarly, the journalist pointed out that a person attending an FNL meeting would not be asked to present their membership card (Journalist 27 Feb. 2014). In addition, the doctoral student added that, in order to participate in the FNL activities, a person generally must be a party member, although sometimes individuals are introduced by another member or are [translation] "simply known" in order to participate (Doctoral student 24 Feb. 2014).

The doctoral student stated that the activists who she met often did not have their membership card on them out of fear of being [translation] "caught by the police" or by "activists" of the party in power (ibid.). The doctoral student explained that, in such circumstances, it was possible that FNL members could go to party meetings without their card (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Reference

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). 3 August 2011. "Le gouvernement burundais harcèle des stations de radio indépendantes." <<http://www.cpj.org/fr/2011/08/le-gouvernement-burundais-harcele-des-stations-de.php>> [Accessed 27 Feb. 2014]

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_____. 25 February 2014b. "Convertisseurs de devises XE." <<http://www.xe.com/fr/currencyconverter/convert/?Amount=1000&From=BIF&To=CAD>> [Accessed 25 Feb. 2014]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the following organizations were unsuccessful: Coalition de la société civile pour le monitoring électoral; Institut de recherche pour le développement; International Human Rights Law Group; Ligue burundaise des droits de l'homme; Mouvement pour les libertés individuelles; Organisation des médias d'Afrique centrale; Université du Burundi; Université catholique de Louvain. Representatives of the following organizations did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response: Burundi – Commission électorale nationale indépendante, ministère de l'Intérieur; Former director of the Réseau européen pour l'Afrique centrale; Ligue des droits de la personne dans la région des Grands Lacs; Net Press.

Internet sites, including: Abarundi; Africa; Africa Intelligence; Africa Time; Afrik; Agence de presse africaine; All Africa; Amnesty International; ARIB; Burundi – burundi-gov.org, Commission électorale nationale indépendante; Burundi Information; Burundi News; Burundi Post; Burundi Réalités; Burundi Sites; ecoi.net; EIN News; Factiva; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme; Freedom House; Human Rights Watch; Index Mundi; Info Burundi; Institute for War and Peace Reporting; International Crisis Group; International Foundation for Electoral Systems; ITEKA; *Jeune Afrique*; Net Press; News Now; Observatoire de l'Afrique centrale; Panapress; Radio France internationale; Topix; Umuco; United Kingdom – Country-of-origin information (COI) report; United Nations – High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Development Program, Refworld, Integrated Regional Information Networks; United States – Department of State, Overseas Security Advisory Council.

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