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Burundi: Treatment of members of the Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie, MSD) by the authorities; MSD membership card, including the party’s logo (2016-March 2019) [BDI106250.FE]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Treatment of MSD Members by the Authorities

1.1 Suspension of Party Activities

Sources report that on 4 April 2017, the government suspended MSD activities for six months because, according to the Minister of the Interior, the party was committed to forming [FIDH, et al. English version] “an armed group to fight” Burundi (FIDH, et al. June 2017, 24; Iwacu 12 Apr. 2017; *Jeune Afrique* 14 Apr. 2017). Sources add that the Minister also stated that MSD members displayed behaviour that incited violence and hatred (FIDH, et al. June 2017, 24; *Jeune Afrique* 14 Apr. 2017). Information on the resumption of MSD activities or the continuation of the suspension could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Treatment of Members

In June 2017, the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l’homme, FIDH) and the Iteka Burundian League for Human Rights (Ligue burundaise des droits de l’homme Iteka, Ligue Iteka), a Burundian human rights organization (Ligue Iteka n.d.), published a report on human rights in Burundi, with the participation of other NGOs, including the Burundian Association for Human Rights and Detainees Protection (Association burundaise pour la protection des droits humains et des personnes détenues, APRODH) (FIDH, et al. June 2017). According to this report, MSD members are [FIDH, et al. English version] “victims of attacks and harassment” at the hands of the authorities, notably the police and Imbonerakure [1], based on cases documented in the report (FIDH, et al. June 2017, 24). In its 2017 annual report, APRODH explains that victims [translation] “who have been deprived of the right to life and physical integrity” are “members of political opposition parties,” including the MSD (APRODH Jan. 2018, 31). According to the same source, such members [translation] “were brutally killed, while others were subjected to terrorist acts to

compel them to join the ruling party,” the National Council for the Defence of Democracy - Forces for the Defence of Democracy (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de défense de la démocratie, CNDD-FDD) (APRODH Jan. 2018, 31).

APRODH reports the following events in 2017:

- On 7 May 2017, a bus driver who was an MSD member was allegedly arrested by the [translation] “head of the [National Intelligence Service (Service national de renseignement, SNR)] in the Musaga area” and charged with preventing CNDD/FDD members from attending a recruitment party for new members;
- On 6 June 2017, an MSD member responsible for mobilization was allegedly arrested at his home by the police and charged with refusing to join the CNDD-FDD party (APRODH Jan. 2018, 22).

Ligue Iteka reports the following events, which occurred in 2017 or 2018:

- On 23 March 2017, Ferninand Vyimana, an MSD member, was reportedly kidnapped by [translation] “SNR people” in Rutana Province. According to information reported to Ligue Iteka by sources, this individual had allegedly received [translation] “extremely serious death threats” (Ligue Iteka Apr. 2017, 9);
- On 31 May 2017, SNR officers allegedly killed two MSD members, Léon Bangiricenge and Remy Ndagijimana in the Bujumbura Mairie Province, after arresting them on 24 and 25 May 2017, respectively. They were reportedly subjected to [translation] “acts of torture” before being killed. An MSD spokesperson told Ligue Iteka that the individuals were [translation] “victims because of their political affiliation” (Ligue Iteka June 2017, 9);
- On 7 June 2017, in the commune of Mugongo-Manga in Bujumbura Province, two MSD members were allegedly arrested by the Imbonerakure. Local sources told Ligue Iteka that the members were charged with insulting two police officers. While detained, the two men were reportedly beaten and tortured (Ligue Iteka June 2017, 17);
- On 3 July 2017, in the commune of Butaganzwa in Kayanza Province, two MSD members were allegedly beaten by the Imbonerakure, who accused them of not having participated in the celebrations commemorating the 55th anniversary of Burundian independence (Ligue Iteka July 2017, 17);
- On 25 July 2017, in the commune of Rango in Kayanza Province, an MSD member was allegedly arrested by plainclothes police officers for having participated in protests against the third term of Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza (Ligue Iteka July 2017, 18);

- On 27 July 2017, in the commune of Gihanga in Bubanza Province, an MSD member, Aimable Nibaruta, was allegedly arrested with two members of another political party, the National Liberation Forces (Forces Nationales de Libération, FNL) [2]. A week earlier, these three individuals had been released after spending one year in detention following charges of possession of military equipment, considered unfounded by the courts. Local sources told Ligue Iteka that the individuals had been arrested without a warrant (Ligue Iteka July 2017, 17-18);
- On 17 August 2017, in the commune of Rango in Kayanza Province, an MSD member, Jules Bikorimana, was allegedly tied to a tree and beaten by the Imbonerakure, because, according to local sources, he had not wanted to join the CNDD-FDD (Ligue Iteka Aug. 2017, 16);
- On 7 October 2017, a provincial SNR officer allegedly [translation] “arbitrarily” arrested and imprisoned the former president of the provincial MSD committee in Gitega, who was charged with recruiting fighters and “interfering in SNR business”; the man was released on 9 October 2017, “after the regional police commissioner in Gitega intervened” (Ligue Iteka Nov. 2017, 22).

Further information on the treatment of MSD members by the authorities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.3 May 2018 Constitutional Referendum

According to an article by *Jeune Afrique* with Agence France-Presse (AFP), in a May 2018 referendum, Burundians voted in favour of constitutional reform that would allow, among other things, President Pierre Nkurunziza to run for two seven-year terms beginning in 2020 and that would concentrate [translation] “all the levers of executive power” in the hands of the president (*Jeune Afrique* with AFP 22 May 2018). In a report on the referendum process and the period surrounding the referendum, FIDH and Ligue Iteka indicate that the MSD boycotted the referendum process (FIDH and Ligue Iteka May 2018, 9). In the same report, FIDH and Ligue Iteka indicate having

[FIDH and Ligue Iteka English version]

recorded dozens of instances of arbitrary arrests, beatings and even torture directed at alleged opponents of the referendum. Most of the political opponents targeted are from the FNL of Agathon Rwasa, the MSD, the Union for National Progress (l'Union pour le Progrès National (UPRONA)) of Charles Nditije and the Union for Peace and Democracy-Zigamibanga (l'Union pour la paix et la démocratie, UPD - Zigamibanga)). (FIDH and Ligue Iteka May 2018, 10)

For further information on the treatment of people who oppose the third term of President Pierre Nkurunziza and of their families, see Response to Information Request BDI106252 of February 2019.

2. MSD Membership Card

The MSD website states that [translation] “[a]ll Burundians who have reached the age of majority can join the MSD party” by making a request in writing to the leader of the party in their district (MSD n.d.). According to the same source, [translation] “[a] membership agreement is then entered into” and the new member is issued a membership card (MSD n.d.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the president of the MSD’s France branch stated that the chairperson of the communal committee [translation] “normally” issues the membership cards (MSD 24 Feb. 2019). According to the same source, cards may also be issued, albeit [translation] “less frequently,” by the chairperson of the provincial committee, and “very seldom” by the secretary general (who assists the MSD president) (MSD 24 Feb. 2019). With regard to Burundians outside the country, the president of the local branch, where the MSD is represented, issues the membership cards (MSD 24 Feb. 2019).

According to the president, there are four different versions of the membership card:

- The first version pre-dates the party’s official registration in June 2009 and contains the words “Mouvement pour la sécurité et la démocratie” [Movement for Security and Democracy]. To be able to register, the MSD was forced to change the term “sécurité” for “solidarité” by the Ministry of the Interior. A sample of the first version is attached to this Response (Attachment 1).
- The second version was in effect until the end of 2012 and featured a five-digit number (while the other versions have a four-digit number). A sample of the second version is attached to this Response (Attachment 2).
- The third version was in effect from 2013 until the end of 2017. A sample of the third version is attached to this Response (Attachment 3).
- The fourth version has been in effect since January 2018. A sample of the fourth version is attached to this Response (Attachment 4) (MSD 24 Feb. 2019).

The president also noted that a small amount of cards of another version, referred to as a “VIP card” and issued to [translation] “people able to make a significant financial contribution,” was printed and that few are in circulation (MSD 24 Feb. 2019). A copy of this card is attached to this Response (Attachment 5).

2.1 The Logo

A copy of the logo, as it appears on the MSD website, is attached to this Response (Attachment 6).

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.

Notes

[1] The Imbonerakure are members of the youth league of the ruling party, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy - Forces for the Defence of Democracy (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de défense de la démocratie, CNDD-FDD) (FIDH, et al. June 2017, 6). For further information on the Imbonerakure, see Response to Information Request BDI106060 of February 2018.

[2] For further information on the FNL, see Response to Information Request BDI105752 of March 2017.

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Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. “Comment adhérer” (<http://www.msdburundi.org/membres/comment-adherer/>). [Accessed 22 Feb. 2019]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Ligue burundaise des droits de l’homme Iteka; Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie – Belgium, Burundi.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; ecoi.net; Factiva; France – Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides; Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group; IRIN; Jane’s; Ligue des droits de la personne dans la région des Grands Lacs; Reuters; UN – Refworld; US – Department of State.

Attachments

1. Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. Membership card in effect before the party was officially registered. Sent to the Research Directorate by the president of the France branch, 24 February 2019.
2. Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. Membership card in effect post-registration until 2012. Sent to the Research Directorate by the president of the France branch, 24 February 2019.
3. Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. Membership card in effect from 2013 to 2017. Sent to the Research Directorate by the president of the France branch, 24 February 2019.
4. Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. Membership card in effect since 2018. Sent to the Research Directorate by the president of the France branch, 24 February 2019.
5. Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. VIP membership card. Sent to the Research Directorate by the president of the France branch, 24 February 2019.
6. Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie (MSD). N.d. Logo. (<http://www.msdburundi.org/wp-content/themes/msdburundi/images/logo.png>) [Accessed 22 Feb. 2019]

ecoi.net summary:

Query response on treatment of members of the Movement for Solidarity and Democracy (MSD - Mouvement pour la solidarité et la démocratie) (2016 - March 2019)



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