

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	384
Land:	DR. Congo
Kilde:	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Titel:	UDSP, including its status, its relationship with the current government and the treatment of its members by the authorities and the security forces
Udgivet:	10. april 2015
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	8. maj 2015

[EN](#) | [DE](#)

- **Source:**
IRB - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
- **Title:**
Democratic Republic of the Congo: Union for Democracy and Social Progress [Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS], including its status, its relationship with the current government and the treatment of its members by the authorities and the security forces (June 2012-April 2015) [COD105112.FE]
- **Publication date:**
10 April 2015
- **ecoi.net summary:** Query response on political party Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS - Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social) (senior officials; tensions within the party; relations between UDPS and current government; treatment of UDPS members and political opposition by authorities and security forces) [ID 300965]
- **Countries:**
Congo, Democratic Republic
- **Original link** <http://www.irb.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=455833&pls=1>

Recommended citation:

IRB - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Democratic Republic of the Congo: Union for Democracy and Social Progress [Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS], including its status, its relationship with the current government and the treatment of its members by the authorities and the security forces (June 2012-April 2015) [COD105112.FE], 10 April 2015 (available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net))
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/300965/423667_en.html (accessed 22 April 2015)



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

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

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Union for Democracy and Social Progress [Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS], including its status, its relationship with the current government and the treatment of its members by the authorities and the security forces (June 2012-April 2015) [COD105112.FE]

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1. Overview

According to a document published by the UDPS, the party was established in 1982 (UDPS 14 Dec. 2010), although the *Political Handbook of the World (PHW)* states that the party has been in existence since 1980 (2014, 318). According to the Xinhua News Agency, the UDPS is the oldest opposition party in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (15 Oct. 2014). Sources describe the UDPS as the [translation] "main" opposition party in the country (*Le Monde* and AFP 7 Jan. 2014; Radio Okapi 5 March 2015).

2. Senior Officials

The leader of the UDPS is Étienne Tshisekedi [also known as Étienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba] (*La Prospérité* 23 Feb. 2015; Xinhua 15 Oct. 2014; *Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014). The party's general secretary is Bruno Mavungu Puati (*ibid.*; KongoTimes! 8 Dec. 2014; *Œil d'Afrique* 5 Nov. 2012), who replaced Jaquemin Shabani (*ibid.*; KongoTimes! 13 Mar. 2015). Jaquemin Shabani was apparently relieved of his duties in 2012 after having been suspended (*ibid.*). He was supposedly relieved of his duties following accusations of [translation] "embezzlement," the nature of which the source does not specify (*Œil d'Afrique* 5 Nov. 2012). Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo is the national secretary with responsibility for external relations (*ibid.*; *Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014).

In a November 2012 article about the changes in the leadership of the UDPS, *Œil d'Afrique*, a website covering news from the continent of Africa, indicated that the new general secretary, Bruno Mavungu Puati, had four assistants, namely, Me Tshibala Bruno, Ebamu François, Iliba Willy and Tabu Jean Felix (*Œil d'Afrique* 5 Nov. 2012). The *Œil d'Afrique* article adds that

[translation]

Kapay Anatole, Kapika Joseph, Mulumba Corneille and Kamulombo Sylvain will take charge of, respectively, the organization, communications, information and mobilization, planning and party finances.

These department heads will be backed by nine assistants with specific tasks. Mantuila Léon and Ilunga Tshilombo will take charge of the security and intelligence departments respectively, while the responsibility for overseeing the general treasury has been placed in the hands of Muwala Désiré. (ibid.)

3. Tensions Within the Party

Sources mention internal tensions related to the control of the party (KongoTimes! 13 Mar. 2015; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Mar. 2015; *Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014). These tensions have apparently increased since Étienne Tshisekedi left the country for health reasons (ibid.; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Mar. 2015). Sources explain that he had to be transported to Brussels for medical care (*La Prospérité* 23 Feb. 2015; *Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Mar. 2015), in August 2014 (ibid.).

The internal tensions have apparently pitted the family and others loyal to Étienne Tshisekedi, especially Bruno Mavungu Puati, against other party officials (*Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Mar. 2015), such as Valentin Mubake and Albert Moleka, former [translation] "close advisors" to Étienne Tshisekedi (ibid.). According to *Jeune Afrique*, Étienne Tshisekedi's wife and son [translation] "are specifically suspected of wanting to soften the party line, which has traditionally been intransigent," while his former advisors want to prepare for the president's successor (ibid.).

4. Relations Between the UDPS and the Current Government

Sources indicate that Étienne Tshisekedi was Joseph Kabila's main opponent in the 2011 presidential elections, finishing second in the results (Xinhua 15 Oct. 2014; *PHW* 2014, 320; Freedom House 2013). Since those elections, the UDPS has considered Étienne Tshisekedi to be the president-elect of the DRC (*Jeune Afrique* 29 Dec. 2014; Xinhua 15 Oct. 2014; *Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014). Party members claim that the election was [translation] "stolen" by Joseph Kabila (ibid.). Sources also note that the conduct of the 2011 presidential elections has drawn criticism from observers (US 27 Feb. 2014, 1, 20; Freedom House 2013).

According to *Jeune Afrique*, although it [translation] "once powered the opposition and was able to get its supporters into the streets en masse," the party's influence has been much reduced since Étienne Tshisekedi left the country (*Jeune Afrique* 3 Mar. 2015). As an example, sources note that the Congolese people did not respond to the call for a demonstration that the party made in January 2015 (ibid.; *La Prospérité* 23 Feb. 2015).

Sources indicate that, in December 2014, the UDPS called for a [translation] "political dialogue" with the government (*Jeune Afrique* 29 Dec. 2014; *Congo indépendant* 20 Dec. 2014). According to *La Prospérité*, Étienne Tshisekedi repeated that call at a public appearance in Brussels in February 2015 (23 Feb. 2015). However, *PHW* notes that, in July 2013, the UDPS rejected a call from Joseph Kabila for a [translation] "national dialogue," describing it as a [translation] "masquerade" designed to give his regime legitimacy (2014, 320).

According to *La Prospérité*, Étienne Tshisekedi is preparing to run in the 2016 presidential election (23 Feb. 2015).

5. Treatment of Members of the UDPS by the Authorities and the Security Forces

5.1 Treatment of Members of the Opposition in General by the Authorities and the Security Forces

Sources indicate that members of opposition parties have been arrested (AI 25 Feb. 2015; US 27 Feb. 2014, 17; Freedom House 2014) and imprisoned (ibid.; AI 25 Feb. 2015). Some sources indicate that political opponents suffer harassment at the hands of the authorities (US 27 Feb. 2014, 17; AI 25 Feb. 2015). Sources note that the authorities have prevented opposition party members from holding public demonstrations (ibid.; US 27 Feb. 2014, 17; Human Rights Watch Jan. 2014, 4). The authorities have also supposedly made threats to political opponents (US 27 Feb. 2014, 1; Human Rights Watch Jan. 2014, 4).

According to Human Rights Watch, [Human Rights Watch English version] "[p]olitical tensions have increased across the country [in 2014] with protests against proposals to change Congo's constitution and allow President Joseph Kabila to run for a third term" (ibid. Jan. 2015, 4). Amnesty International (AI) also indicates that those tensions may be observed, adding that [AI English version] "opposition to the prospective amendment of the Constitution was severely repressed" and "[a] number of political opposition supporters who attended demonstrations calling for political dialogue and protesting against attempts to amend the Constitution were arbitrarily arrested and ill-treated" (25 Feb. 2015).

5.2 Treatment of Members of the UDPS by the Authorities and the Security Forces

Freedom House states that, in July 2012, the government arrested, then released two days later, the assistant secretary general of the UDPS on charges that have been described as [Freedom House English version] "politically motivated" and "arbitrary" by party officials and supporters (2013).

Sources indicate that, on October 13, 2012, during the Summit of the Francophonie in the DRC, opposition supporters were arrested near Étienne Tshisekedi's residence in Kinshasa as they were preparing to accompany him to a meeting he was to have with the French president, François Hollande (Human Rights Watch Sept. 2013; Radio Okapi 13 Oct. 2012). According to Human Rights Watch, [Human Rights Watch English version] "[m]ost were badly beaten and detained for several days, without being brought before a court" (Sept. 2013). Radio Okapi, the United Nations radio station in the DRC (Radio Okapi n.d.), added that [translation] "some UDPS supporters were dispersed with tear gas by the police" (ibid. 13 Oct. 2012). According to Radio Okapi, clashes between UDPS supporters and security forces that led to arrests also took place on 13 October 2012 in Kananga, Kasai-Occidental, and in Lubumbashi, Katanga, when UDPS supporters wanted to show their support at the meeting between Étienne Tshisekedi and François Hollande (ibid.). The police denied making arrests at those two places, stating that they acted in order to prevent the UDPS supporters from [translation] "disturbing the peace" (ibid.).

According to Human Rights Watch, [Human Rights Watch English version] "[o]n 10 March [2013], police and Republican Guard soldiers beat or threatened four journalists for covering Tshisekedi's return to Kinshasa from South Africa" (Jan. 2014, 5).

Radio Okapi reports that the national police force was accused of injuring three people on 18 February 2015, during the [translation] "repression" of a protest march organized by the UDPS against the mayor of Tshikapa, a city in Kasai-Occidental, 265 km from Kananga (Radio Okapi 18 Feb. 2015). According to Radio Okapi, the police wanted to [translation] "avenge" one of their number who had allegedly been injured by UDPS militants during the march (ibid.). Radio Okapi reports that the UDPS members stated that the mayor of Tshikapa was [translation] "muzzling" their activities, specifically when the UDPS was seeking to organize a demonstration to mark its 33rd anniversary earlier in the month (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.

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Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following organizations within time constraints were unsuccessful: Centre des droits de l'homme et du droit humanitaire; Ligue pour la paix, les droits de l'homme et la justice; Toges noires.

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