Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Responses to Information Requests

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Burkina Faso: The political party Congress for Democracy and Progress (Congrès pour la démocratie et le progress, CDP), including its structure and membership card; the treatment of its members since the attempted coup in September 2015 (September 2015-March 2016)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Africa Confidential provides the following information concerning the circumstances of the attempted coup of September 2015:

Burkina's latest putsch drama, started on 16 September [2015] when the private bodyguard, secret police and death squad of ousted President Blaise Compaoré, the RSP [Presidential Guard], interrupted a cabinet meeting of the interim government at Kosyam Palace.

[...]

The RSP took Interim President Kafando and his Prime Minister, Yacouba Isaac Zida, hostage and after a night of confusion, declared the transitional institutions dissolved. [...]

On hearing the news of the coup, the public took to the streets, setting up barricades and massing for demonstrations (25 Sept. 2015).

In its final report on the presidential and legislative elections of November 29, 2015, in Burkina Faso, the European Union Election Observation Mission describes the events related to the attempted coup of 16 September 2015 as follows:

[translation]

An intrusion by the Presidential Guard (Régiment de sécurité présidentielle, RSP), the former regime's elite unit, during the Council of the Ministers, ended with the illegal confinement of transition President Michel Kafando, Prime Minister Isaac Zida and two ministers. All the transition institutions were unilaterally dissolved by the junta, on 17 September, and substituted by a "National Council for Democracy" (Conseil national pour la démocratie, CND) led by General Gilbert Diendéré, a close associate of ousted President Blaise Compaoré. The strong popular mobilization, supported by Burkinabé civil society, enabled the rallying of the regular army and the surrender of the putschists on 1 October, including General Gilbert Diendéré.

[...]

President Kafando and the Transition institutions returned on 23 September 2015 (EU 10 Feb. 2016, para. 3, 5).
In an article published in September 2015, researchers from the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) working in Dakar called [translation] "the failed power grab of the RSP," the period from 16 to 23 September 2015, the "most serious crisis [known to Burkina Faso] since the insurrection of October 2014, that led to the fall of Blaise Compaoré" (ISS 28 Sept. 2015). In its 2015 annual report, Amnesty International (AI) reports that the RSP killed 14 people and injured [AI English version] "hundreds of others" during protests opposing the attempted coup (23 Feb. 2016, 123). According to the European Union (EU), this [translation] "repression" resulted in 15 deaths and over 300 people injured (EU 10 Feb. 2016, para. 4).

An October 2015 article in the Burkina Faso magazine FasoZine states that the failed coup [translation] "weakened the former ruling party, [the CDP]" (25 Oct. 2015). In an article from the same time, the Burkina Faso news portal LeFaso.net, explains that the CDP [translation] "is evolving in a very hostile environment because of its alleged involvement in the coup attempt of 17 September 2015, or at least the alleged involvement of some of its influential members" (26 Oct. 2015). In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, a doctoral candidate of the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick, whose dissertation examines the opposition parties in Burkina Faso, stated that

[translation]

[s]ome CDP leaders were charged for various reasons related to the failed coup on September 2015, namely, Eddie Komboigo, CDP president, and Léonce Koné, Vice-President of the party. Furthermore, the party assets were frozen; this was a significant obstacle during the campaign for the 29 November 2015 legislative elections (Doctoral candidate 6 Mar. 2016).

During a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a political governance program administrator who follows the political developments in Burkina Faso due to of his affiliation with the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) [1] stated that, in his opinion, [translation] "the CDP's poor results in the elections seem to be partly ... because the citizens associated the CDP with the coup" (Administrator, 29 Feb. 2016). Sources state that despite difficulties, the CDP came third in the legislative elections of November 2015, obtaining 18 seats in the parliament (Doctoral candidate 6 Mar. 2016; EU 10 Feb. 2016, para. 38).

Sources state that Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, of the People’s Movement for Progress (Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès, MPP), won the presidential election of November 2015 (ibid., para. 37; Africa Confidential 8 Jan. 2016). An article published in the Washington Post in December 2015 states that the MPP was created in January 2014, following the resignation of Mr. Kaboré from the CDP, as well as the resignations of over 75 other party members (6 Dec. 2015). According to International Crisis Group, Mr. Kaboré and two other [translation] “bigwigs of the Campaoré regime” were central figures in the creation of the MPP (7 Jan. 2013, 3 (note 1)).

According to that same source, the CDP considers the MPP members to be its [translation] "worst enemies" (ibid., 2). The doctoral candidate stated that the CDP [translation] "did not unite with President ... Kaboré’s majority formed after the elections," and thus became an opposition party (6 Mar. 2016). However, according to the administrator of the program, the CDP was [translation] "forced to remain in the opposition," given the majority coalition formed by the first two political forces (29 Feb. 2016).

### 2. Party Structure and Membership Card

Information on the CDP membership card could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The doctoral candidate stated that, to her knowledge, the CDP did not carry out any [translation] "official restructuring" after the attempted coup (6 Mar. 2016). In an interview granted to the Burkina Faso newspaper Le Quotidien in October 2015, Boubacar Sanou, presented as the eighth vice-president of the CDP, stated that while [translation] "the question of reorganizing the [CDP],” resurfaced after the events of 16 September 2015, it was in the “review” stage (29 Oct. 2015).

Sources note that [translation] “the expansion” of the CDP permanent secretariat was on the agenda of the 56th ordinary session of the CDP national office in October 2015 (LeFaso.net 26 Oct. 2015; CDP 24 Oct. 2015). FasoZine states that the national policy office is the site of the CDP debates [translation] "between two [party] congresses” (25 Oct. 2015). Further information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraint of this Response.

A February 2016 statement of the CDP, published by FasoZine, that formalizes [translation] "[the party’s] membership in the opposition” refers to the position of interim president, held by Achille Marie Joseph Tapsoba (CDP 26 Feb. 2016). The doctoral candidate specified that Achille Tapsoba is the “first vice-president” of the CDP and that he is serving as president in the interim (6 Mar. 2016).

Burkina24 states that the [translation] "high council of the party" is an extension of the executive office of the CDP (ibid. 20 Oct. 2015). Sources published in May 2015 report the creation of a high council of the CDP, formed by the [translation] "previous members" of the party, and that the "honorary president" is former president Blaise Compaoré (ibid. 10 May 2015b; RFI 11 May 2015).

Further information on the organizational structure of the CDP as a whole could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Treatment of CDP Members Since the Attempted Coup

Information on the treatment of CDP members was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The doctoral candidate stated the following about the treatment of CDP members since the coup attempt:

[translation]
To my knowledge, no threat or form of violence has been carried out by the Burkinabe authorities against members of the CDP. The individuals arrested in the investigation of the failed coup of September 2015 are still imprisoned and awaiting their trial. The CDP parliamentary group of the National Assembly recently called for their release, while calling those imprisoned individuals “political prisoners.” The CDP parliamentarians seem to be free to do their work and I have not seen any mention of cases of police or popular violence against CDP members because of their membership in the party. However, it seems that the assets of the party and of some key figures have been frozen because of the investigation (6 Mar. 2015).

The Burkinabe daily Faso Actu states that, during the meeting of the CDP parliamentary opposition group, Alfred Sanou, president of that group, asked for the release of [translation] “comrades” in prison “for a number of months without a sentence” as a step towards beginning national reconciliation (Faso Actu 4 Mar. 2016).

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

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.

Note

[1] OSIWA is a foundation that provides funding to state and non-state actors working in the areas of democracy, good governance and human rights (Administrator 29 Feb. 2016).

References


Doctoral candidate, Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick. 6 March 2016. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.


Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Centre pour la gouvernance démocratique; Mouvement burkinabé des droits de l’homme et des peuples; Research Associate, Sahel Research Group, University of Florida.
**Internet sites, including:** Afrik.com; AllAfrica; Centre pour la gouvernance démocratique; Chatham House; ecoinet; Factiva; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l’homme; Freedom House; The Guardian; Human Rights Watch; Intellivore; IRIN; Koaci.com; Le Monde; L’Observateur Paalga; Le Pays; Political Handbook of the World; Sidwaya; United Nations – Security Council, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld; United States – Department of State; World Organization Against Torture.


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