Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Responses to Information Requests

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Guatemala: Information on the political party LIDER (Libertad Democrática Renovada) during and after the elections of 2011, including treatment of its members and associated groups and individuals; information on the election results at the municipal and national levels; relationship between the LIDER Party and the Patriotic Party (Partido Patriota) during the 2011 municipal and national elections, including instances of conflict between the two parties (2011-May 2013)

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1. LIDER (Libertad Democrática Renovada), Overview

The political party LIDER (Libertad Democrática Renovada) [also known as LIDR (IPD 4 Nov. 2011)] was created in 2008 (GHRC n.d.; ASIES Nov. 2012, 70). It was officially registered on 25 December 2010 (ibid.). Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES), a think-tank based in Guatemala city, indicates that LIDER was formed by a group of 10 congressmen who broke away from the UNE [Unidad Nacional de la Esperanza (PHW 2011)] (ASIES Nov. 2012, 70). In the 2011 national election, Manuel Baldizón, who left UNE in 2009 (ASIES Nov. 2012, 70), was the presidential candidate of LIDER (ibid., 71; IPD 4 Nov. 2011). Raquel Bandon was the LIDER candidate running for the vice presidency (ibid.; ASIES Nov. 2012, 71).

Sources describe Manuel Baldizón as a wealthy businessman (Al Jazeera 11 Sept. 2011; Reuters 7 Nov. 2011). During his campaign, Baldizón advocated for improved security, the creation of a new national guard and the introduction of the death penalty (BBC 12 Sept. 2011; Mirador Electoral 12 Sept. 2011; ASIES Nov. 2012, 71). He also reportedly promised to "boost salaries and social programs" (Fox News Latino 12 Sept. 2011).

2. Elections

2.1 National Election

Sources report that municipal (IPD 4 Nov. 2011) and first round national elections took place in September 2011 (ibid.; Creative 6 Apr. 2012, 5). Second round national election occurred in November 2011 (ibid.; US 19 Apr. 2013, 1). Sources indicate that leading candidates failed to secure 50 percent of the vote needed for a first round victory (Fox News Latino 12 Sept. 2011; BBC 12 Sept. 2011). International observers reportedly described the 2011 elections as "generally free and fair" (Freedom House 2012; US 19 Apr. 2013, 1).

76) and Manuel Baldizón (LIDER) 23 percent of the presidential vote (ibid., 100; BBC 12 Sept. 2011; Mirador Electoral 12 Sept. 2011).

In November 2011, Pérez Molina of the PP won the presidential election (US 19 Apr. 2013). Pérez Molina captured approximately 54 percent (Reuters 7 Nov. 2011; ASIES Nov. 2012, 76) and Manuel Baldizón 46 percent of the vote (ibid., 100; Reuters 7 Nov. 2011). ASIES reports that 14 members of Congress were elected from the LIDER party and 57 from the PP (ASIES Nov. 2012, 71, 94). Both parties attracted congressmen from other parties resulting in 26 LIDER and 62 PP members of Congress (ibid.).

2.2 Municipal Elections

IPD indicates that municipal elections took place on 11 September 2011 (4 Nov. 2011). According to the report, Guatemalans voted to elect mayors in all 333 municipalities (ibid.). Mayors of LIDER party were elected in 21 municipalities (ASIES Nov. 2012, 71) and PP mayors in 121 municipalities (ibid., 94). Further information on the results of the municipal elections could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response

2.3 Election-related Violence

Information about instances of conflict between the LIDER and the PP could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. However, the following information about election-related violence may be of interest.

The Creative Associates International (Creative), a Washington-based organization which operates in 85 countries encouraging democratic processes (Creative n.d.), reports that in general, the "voting was peaceful" (Creative 6 Apr. 2012, 13). However, the same source reports that municipal candidates, their families and supporters were targeted during the pre-election phase of 2011 national elections in order to "remove them from the contest by either a forced withdrawal or assassination" (ibid., 12-13). Two other sources also reported incidents of pre-election violence (GHRC n.d.; Christian Science Monitor 8 Sept. 2011). According to Creative, acts of violence targeting "most political parties" included threats, homicides and assaults, as well as raids on political parties' headquarters (6 Apr. 2012, 12). The report further indicates that 

electoral violence in Guatemala is a reflection of a rising level of societal violence in general. As such, in some cases it may be difficult to distinguish between violence perpetrated for electoral objectives and violence perpetrated for personal or economic reasons but occurring within the context of an electoral campaign. (Creative 6 Apr. 2012, 5)

The Christian Science Monitor reported in September 2011 that during the pre-election period, there were more than 20 political murders (8 Sept. 2011). Huffington Post reported in September 2011 that at least 35 people were killed in campaign-related violence (9 Sept. 2011). According to the Christian Science Monitor, many of the murders were linked to "organized criminal interests who [were] determined to win influence through having the candidate of their choice elected" (8 Sept. 2011). The same source described political party funding as a "serious source of concern," noting that parties may have been trying to conceal the source of their funding because the money came from "illicit sources" (Christian Science Monitor 8 Sept. 2011). The Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC) reports that, according to InSight Crime, "Baldizón [LIDER] may have connections to narco-trafficking groups and large petroleum extraction companies" (GHRC n.d.). According to Al Jazeera, Pérez Molina (PP) is also linked to drug traffickers (Al Jazeera 11 Sept. 2011). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

IPD linked violence to "results in municipal elections; particularly local populations being unhappy with the re-election of mayor in some towns" (4 Nov. 2011). According to the IPD, "this led the population to voice their discontent by retaining electoral staff, burning ballots, putting up roadblocks and damaging electoral centers, police and municipal infrastructure" (4 Nov. 2011). Corroborating information 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.

References

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