

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

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Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

20 February 2015

**TCD105068.FE**

Chad: The National Union for Development and Renewal (Union nationale pour le développement et le renouveau, UNDR), including its composition, activities and regions of influence; the treatment of its members and sympathizers by authorities, including during the 2016 election campaign (2014-January 2015)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### 1. The UNDR's Creation and Political Involvement

Sources use various names to refer to the UNDR:

- National Union for Development and Renewal (Union nationale pour le développement et le renouveau) (Tchadinfos.com 6 Apr. 2014; Tchadonline 21 Mar. 2011);
- National Union for Democracy and Renewal (Union nationale pour la démocratie et le renouveau) (RFI 15 Apr. 2014; EISA Mar. 2011; CSAPR n.d., 11);
- National Union for Development and Renewal (Union nationale pour le développement et le renouvellement) (*PHW* 2014, 263).

According to the *Political Handbook of the World 2014 (PHW)* and the Chadian Monitoring Committee of the Appeal for Peace and National Reconciliation (Comité de suivi de l'appel à la paix et à la réconciliation nationale au Tchad, CSAPR) [1], which is a group of individuals who [translation] "help build sustainable peace in Chad" (CSAPR n.d., 2), the UNDR is the main opposition party in Chad and is led by Saleh Kebzabo (CSAPR n.d., 66; *PHW* 2014, 263). According to the *PHW*, Saleh Kebzabo has been a minister several times in Chad (ibid.).

According to CSAPR, the UNDR was created in 1992 (CSAPR n.d., 37).

According to an International Crisis Group report, Saleh Kebzabo founded *N'Djamena [Bi-]Hebdo* (International Crisis Group 24 Sept. 2008, 44). According to the same source, this newspaper is considered to be [International Crisis Group English version] "one of the main opposition newspapers" (ibid.).

*PHW* indicates that Saleh Kebzabo was a candidate in the 1996 presidential election, and he ran third in the first round (winning 8.6 percent of the vote) before throwing his support behind Idriss Déby Itno for the second round (*PHW* 2014, 263). According to the same source, after the latter was re-elected as president of the Republic of Chad, Saleh Kebzabo joined the government and was responsible for various ministerial portfolios (ibid.). During the 2001 presidential elections, Saleh Kebzabo again ran against Idriss Déby (ibid.).

Sources indicate that the vice-president of the UNDR is Célestin Topona (Coalition 9 Sept. 2014; Tchadonline 2010). According to the website of The Socialist International (Internationale socialiste, IS) [IS English version] "the worldwide organisation of social democratic, socialist and labour parties" that "brings together 153 political parties and organisations from all continents" (Internationale socialiste n.d.a), the UNDR is an "observer party" in their organization (ibid. n.d.b).

According to the *PHW*, in the 2002 election, the UNDR won six seats and was subsequently referenced as being “firmly” in the opposition camps (*PHW* 2014, 263). According to the same source, in the most recent election in 2011, the UNDR successfully elected ten representatives to the national assembly, obtaining 5.5 percent of the vote (*ibid.*).

According to a 2012 report by the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l’homme, FIDH), the UNDR is the main opposition party in Chad, closely followed by the Union for Renewal and Democracy (Union pour le renouveau et la démocratie, URD) (FIDH Mar. 2012, 13). Similarly, in telephone interviews with the Research Directorate, the secretary of the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights (Convention tchadienne pour la défense des droits de l’homme, CTDDH) and the president of the Social Youth Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Association sociale des jeunes pour la défense des droits humains, ASJDH), two Chadian human rights organizations, stated that the president of the UNDR was the leader of the opposition (CTDDH 2 Feb. 2015; ASJDH 2 Feb. 2015).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the secretary of the CTDDH said that the UNDR is [translation] “one of the most structured parties in terms of organization; without knowing the exact membership numbers from its national office, we can say that at the national scale, it is a large party” (CTDDH 2 Feb. 2015).

According to a report published by CSAPR, the UNDR is associated with numerous other political opposition parties within the primary opposition coalition known as the Coordination of Political Parties for the Defence of the Constitution (Coordination des partis politiques pour la défense de la constitution, CPDC) (CSAPR n.d., 27).

The same report indicates that the CPDC, whose spokesperson is Saleh Kebzabo, president of the UNDR, appears to be [translation] “the only organization that truly rivals the [Patriotic Salvation Movement (Mouvement patriotique du Salut, MPS)] from a media standpoint. In addition, it is the most visible coalition, whereas the majority coalitions have no media presence” (*ibid.*, 27, 57).

## 2. The UNDR’s Involvement in Political Life in Chad

According to an interview granted to Radio France internationale (RFI) by Saleh Kebzabo, the UNDR held its fifth congress in Moundou, southern Chad, in April 2014 (RFI 15 April 2014). During that interview, the party’s president declared that he [translation] “firmly” believes in political change and stated that “we even believe it will come in 2016” (*ibid.*). Saleh Kebzabo was re-elected as party president at that congress (*ibid.*).

According to RFI, the UNDR organized its entry into the new parliamentary session in November 2014 through a congress that included party militants, several [translation] “key” figures from the opposition, as well as union and association representatives who met at the party’s invitation (RFI 8 Nov. 2014). During a speech at that event, Saleh Kebzabo criticized the way the country was being managed by Idriss Déby, stating that [translation] “he and his family have been holding Chad hostage for 24 years” (*ibid.*).

In September 2014, in a press release issued by a coalition of opposition political parties, the 32 other parties in the CPDC indicated that they wished to end all collaboration with the UNDR (Coalition 7 Sept. 2014). According to the press release issued by the parties, the root cause of suspending activities between the UNDR and the other parties in the CPDC was disagreement about designating delegates to participate, on behalf of the opposition, in the National Independent Electoral Commission (Commission électorale nationale indépendante, CENI) (*ibid.*). A memo released by the UNDR in response indicates that [translation] “claiming to end all collaboration with the UNDR is nonsense. There has never been any collaboration between the UNDR and these political parties, many of which switch between the majority and the opposition” (UNDR 10 Sept. 2014). The UNDR states the following about the parties:

[translation]

[I]t is clear that they cannot agree on plans such as the division of CENI, which involves only those political parties that are interested in and participate in the election. That is why these political parties raise such a fuss about the inconsistency with respect to Law 20 through the creation of an undeclared opposition group known as the Opposition Collective. (*ibid.*)

The memo adds that the UNDR [translation] “is awaiting confirmation from the individual political parties whose names appear on the nominal roll of 32 parties, as submitted by the collective, before taking the necessary measures” (*ibid.*).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the National Coordinator of the Chadian Human Rights League (Ligue tchadienne des droits de l’homme, LTDH), an association that aims to [translation] “defend and promote the human rights set out in international and national legal instruments” (LTDH n.d.),

stated that the structure of CENI and the representation of the various Chadian political parties within the commission remains problematic because the commission does not function transparently (LTDH 6 Feb. 2015).

### 3. The UNDR's Regions of Influence

According to the LTDH National Coordinator, the UNDR does not have cells in every region of the country, but it does have activists throughout Chad (ibid.). The same source indicated that the UNDR also has activists in the north, which is the stronghold of MPS, the majority party, despite the UNDR's issues gaining traction in that part of the country (ibid.).

For his part, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, the secretary of the Chadian Convention for Human Rights (Convention tchadienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme, CTDDH), a Chadian human rights organization, stated that [translation] "although it does not cover the entire national territory, the UNDR has cells in nearly three-quarters of the country, namely, all of the south and the centre of the country, but not in the far north, where it has yet to set up cells" (CTDDH 2 Feb. 2015).

A report published by CSAPR about all of the political parties in Chad (2013) states the following:

[translation]

However, if we look at Chadian political life through the political families involved, it is quite clear that they comprise political forces which represent the entire country. In fact, the MPS and the presidential majority, as well as the CPDC, are quite representative of the Chadian people from a geographical, religious and community point of view. In that context, common critiques of the lack of real representation in the country are not as relevant. (CSAPR n.d., 31)

According to the same source, the geographic representation of the MP who are members of the UNDR is as follows: Mayo-Kebbi Est (two seats) and Ouest (three seats), Salamat (two seats), N'Djamena (two seats), and Mandoul Occidental (one seat) (ibid. 67). According to the same report, Célestin Topona, a UNDR representative, stated the following:

[translation]

[i]t is difficult to state how many members we have throughout the country ... We have strong representation in the southwest, Mayo-Kebi Est and Ouest, in Kelo, Tandjilé as well as Moundou and Sarh. Then there are the districts of N'Djamena. We also have a presence in Lac and the area of Bokoro, and east of Salamat ... Membership cards should give us an idea of the number of members, but since we often give them out free of charge... it is not an effective method. (ibid.)

The LTDH National Coordinator noted that it is difficult to know exactly how many members are in a political party because the parties do not necessarily keep a comprehensive record of their members (LTDH 6 Feb. 2015).

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the President of the ASJDH made similar statements (ASJDH 6 Feb. 2015).

### 4. Treatment of UNDR Members and Sympathizers

The LDTH National Coordinator indicated that UNDR members face difficulties in fully participating in CENI activities in view of the 2015 legislative election and the 2016 presidential election (LDTH 6 Feb. 2015). According to the same source, those difficulties do not involve the use of physical or police force against UNDR members who are designated to sit on the CENI (ibid.). The source specified that the difficulties are of a procedural nature and result in verbal jousts between the various protagonists (ibid.). The Coordinator provided the example of a member who was supposed to sit on the CENI who [translation] "mistakenly" did not receive his invitation to the meetings, which was to be sent by the electoral administration (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In a 9 May 2013 publication, the FIDH and its Chadian member organizations, the LTDH and the APTDH stated that they

[FIDH English version]

are concerned about the wave of arrests, intimidation and harassment aimed at political opposition members, journalists and civil society in Chad after the failure of what authorities described as an attempted coup [1 May 2013]. (FIDH 9 May 2013)

In a notice published on 19 September 2012, Amnesty International (AI) stated that the Chadian government [AI English version] "must stop using the judiciary to harass political opponents." The same source explains that three unionists and a journalist [AI English version] "received heavy suspended prison sentences and fines for initiating and publishing a petition" ((AI 19 Sept. 2012). The newspaper for which the journalist was working, *N'Djamina Bi-Hebdo*, was also [AI English version] "banned for three months" (ibid.).

Another AI publication indicates that Chadian officials [AI English version] "continued to use the criminal justice system to harass political opponents and influence the judiciary" (AI 2013, 311).

According to *Jeune Afrique*, in 2013, an application was made to lift Saleh Kebzabo's parliamentary immunity after the prosecutor's office accused him of [translation] "contempt of court, undermining the authority of the justice system and defamation" (*Jeune Afrique* 3 Sept. 2013).

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] The CSAPR is a coalition of more than 150 public figures who [translation] "mobilized to discuss the resurgence of conflict in Chad. The participants decided to establish a collective negotiation process in order to set the political foundation for lasting peace" (CSAPR n.d.).

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact the following people and organizations within the time constraints of this Response were unsuccessful: ACAT Tchad; Association des Femmes Juristes du Tchad; Association tchadienne pour la promotion et la défense des droits de l'homme (ATPDH).

**Internet sites, including:** *Africain.info*; *Afrik.com*; Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development; *AllAfrica*; *Courrier international*; *Factiva*; Freedom House; *Journal du Tchad*; *N'Djamena Matin*; *Tchadactuel*; UK – Home Office; UN – Refworld, *Reliefweb*; US – Embassy in N'Djamena, Department of State.

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