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1 March 2007

COG102447.FE

Republic of the Congo: Mistreatment of members of the Mbochi ethnic group by other ethnic groups, by rebel groups or by government authorities (2005 - February 2007)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Reports of the mistreatment of members of the Mbochi ethnic group could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In 19 January 2007 correspondence, the programs manager at the Congolese Observatory of Human Rights (Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme, OCDH), a human rights organization affiliated with the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH), stated that [translation] "the Mbochi ethnic group as such has not been subjected to persecution by rebels or other authorities since 2005." The same source indicated that the current president of the Republic of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, is [translation] "himself a member of the Mbochi ethnic group" and that he "mainly relies on his family, who are Mbochi, and his friends, who are from other ethnic groups in the Congo, to stay in power" (OCDH 19 Jan. 2007).

Corroborating sources note that Congolese politics are dominated by ethnic groups from the north of the country, and particularly by President Denis Sassou Nguesso's Mbochi ethnic group (US 8 Mar. 2006) and its affiliated clans (ibid.; Freedom House 2006; *Africa Confidential* 30 Apr. 2004).

Further, according to a 2006 Amnesty International report, 25 members or former members of the Congolese security forces, almost all of whom were from the south and west of the country, were arbitrarily detained in early 2005; most of the opposition to the current government comes from the south and the west of the Congo, while support comes from the north (AI 13 Dec. 2006). Some of those detained were reportedly subjected to torture and other mistreatment (ibid.). They were also accused of attempting to overthrow President Denis Sassou Nguesso (ibid.).

Further recent information on the situation of the Mbochis could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Africa Confidential. 30 April 2004. Vol. 45, No. 9. "Brazzaville Breakdown: As the President Boosts his Family's Power, the Ruling Coalition is Cracking Up."

Amnesty International (AI). 13 December 2006. "Republic of Congo: Political Detainees in Legal Limbo." (AFR 22/003/2006)
<<http://web.amnesty.org/library/print/ENGAFR220032006>> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2007]

Freedom House. 2006. "Republic of Congo (Brazzaville)." *Freedom in the World 2006*. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/modules/mod_call_dsp_country-fiw.cfm?country=7093> [Accessed 19 Feb. 2007]

Observatoire congolais des droits de l'homme (OCDH). 19 février 2007. Correspondence from the program manager.

United States (US). 8 March 2006. Department of State. "Republic of Congo." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005*.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61564.htm>> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2007]

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications, including: *Africa Research Bulletin, Géopolitique africaine.*

Internet Sites, including: Afrique centrale info, AllAfrica.com, BBC Africa, Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), GlobalSecurity.org, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), International Crisis Group (ICG), Interdisciplinaire groupe de recherche sur l'Afrique contemporaine (IGRAC), Minorities at Risk Project, Reliefweb.

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