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13 February 2018

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Rwanda: The United Democratic Forces-Inkingi (UDF-Inkingi) [Forces démocratiques unifiées, FDU-Inkingi], including structure, leadership, objectives, and activities; requirements and procedures to become a member of the party, including membership cards; treatment of party members by authorities (2016-February 2018) Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Sources indicate that the United Democratic Forces-Inkingi (UDF-Inkingi) [Forces démocratiques unifiées (FDU-Inkingi)] is a non-registered political opposition party in Rwanda (Pambazuka News 6 Apr. 2017; Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Reuters 6 Sept. 2017). According to sources, UDF-Inkingi is not allowed to

register (Attorney at law 17 Jan. 2018; Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017). Other sources state that the party is illegal (*The New York Times* 6 Aug. 2017; Al Jazeera 3 Aug. 2017; UN 21 Dec. 2017, para. 42).

The *Political Handbook of the World* indicates that in 2006, UDF-Inkingi absorbed the Rally for Return and Democracy [Rassemblement pour la démocratie et le retour, RDR] (*Political Handbook of the World* 2015, 1227). According to sources, UDF-Inkingi is part of the opposition coalition called the Permanent Consultative Council of Opposition Parties, alongside the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda [Parti démocratique vert du Rwanda] and the Social Party Imberakuri [Parti social Imberakuri] (*PHW* 2015, 1225; Reuters 6 June 2010). Sources indicate that in 2010, UDF-Inkingi unsuccessfully attempted to run in the presidential election (*Political Handbook of the World* 2015, 1227; Pambazuka News 6 Apr. 2017; Reuters 6 Sept. 2017). According to Human Rights Watch, UDF-Inkingi is not allowed to take part in elections (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017).

2. Structure and Leadership

According to sources, the leader of UDF-Inkingi is Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza (Pambazuka News 6 Apr. 2017; Freedom House 12 July 2017; Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017), whom Freedom House describes as "one of Kagame's strongest opponents" (Freedom House 12 July 2017). Sources report that Victoire Ingabire Umuhuza is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence for conspiring to undermine the government and genocide denial (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Reuters 6 Sept. 2017; Human Rights Watch 10 Oct. 2017, 25). Some sources describe the charges as "politically motivated" (Freedom House 12 July 2017; Human Rights Watch 10 Oct. 2017, 25).

Sources report that other members of UDF-Inkingi include:

- Justin Bahunga, who is the Spokesperson (Al Jazeera 3 Aug. 2017; UDF-Inkingi 15 Mar. 2017);
- Sylvain Sibomana, who is the Secretary General (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018)
- Boniface Twagirimana, who is the Vice President (Reuters 6 Sept. 2017; RFI 7 Sept. 2017; UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018);
- Joseph Bukeye [Buceye], who is the second Vice President (Jambonews 2 Apr. 2016; RFI 7 Sept. 2017);

- Fabien Twagirayezu, who is the Head of Party Mobilization (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017) or "Deputy Commissioner for Mobilization" (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018);
- Martin Ntavuka, who is the former UDF-Inkingi Representative for Kigali (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2018);
- Léonille [Léonie] Gasengayire (Reuters 6 Sept. 2017; Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017), who is the Assistant Treasurer (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017; Jambonews 2 Apr. 2016; UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018);
- Gratien Nsabiyaemye, who is the Assistant Commissioner (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017; UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018);
- Théophile Ntirutwa, who is the UDF-Inkingi Representative for Kigali (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017; UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018);
- Venant Abayisenga, who is the UDF-Inkingi Representative of the Western Province (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018);
- Illuminée Iragena, who is a member (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of UDF-Inkingi stated that the party is made up of the following organs:

- Congress: the highest decision-making organ of the party that has the final say on all matters of the party
- Executive Committee (Comité directeur): the decision-making body after the Congress
- The Political Bureau (Bureau politique): day-to-day running of the party
- Specialised commissions:
 - I. Commissioner for Party Audit (monitoring and evaluation)
 - II. Commissioner for Party Standards (discipline and conflict resolution)
 - III. Council of Advisors
 - IV. Electoral Commission. (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018)

3. Objectives

According to its website, UDF-Inkingi is a "political party opposed to the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) [Front patriotique rwandais, FPR] regime in Rwanda" (UDF-Inkingi 15 Mar. 2017). According to the same source, UDF-Inkingi has seven objectives, namely:

[translation]

1. To put in place a democratic multi-party political regime

2. To create conditions that foster inclusive Rwandan dialogue
3. To put an end to impunity and guarantee fair and impartial reparations to victims
4. To put an end to discrimination and guarantee equality of opportunity for all Rwandan citizens
5. To repatriate refugees and ensure their reintegration
6. To restructure and revive the national economy
7. To put an end to expansionism and assist in the restoration of peace and regional security. (UDF-Inkingi n.d.)

4. Activities

Information on the activities of UDF-Inkingi was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. In an opinion piece published in *The Guardian*, Alexander Betts, who is Director of the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford (*The Guardian* n.d.), mentions that UDF-Inkingi "relies on transnational mobilisation, operating between London, Paris, Brussels, Kampala and Johannesburg. It quietly organises political meetings and low-level protest" (Betts 22 Jan. 2017). According to the UDF-Inkingi representative,

[t]he work of the leadership outside [of Rwanda] consists mainly of lobbying and advocacy to bring to the attention of key stakeholders the deteriorating socio-political situation in Rwanda and suggest solutions. It organises awareness raising events, i.e. conferences, public debates, etc. Inside the country, it is about clandestinely spreading the word about [UDF]-Inkingi. (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

5. Requirements and Procedures to Become a Member of the Party

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, another representative of UDF-Inkingi stated that

[translation]

to be a member of UDF-Inkingi, it is sufficient to make a request to the Executive Committee. If the request is approved, each member is required to take up its duties. The main requirements are: adherence to the values and ideology of the party, committing oneself to participate in the activities of the party and paying membership fees. (UDF-Inkingi 17 Jan. 2018)

According to the first UDF-Inkingi representative,

[a]ny Rwandan can join the party if he/she accepts the statutes and regulations of the party, believes in its ... political programme and espouses the values of [UDF]-Inkingi, as well as commit[s] to abide by the code of good conduct of members, and pays the party subscription fee. No issuance of party ID in Rwanda for security reasons. (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on membership cards for persons outside of Rwanda could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6. Treatment of Party Members by Authorities

The New York Times cites the Spokesperson of RPF as stating that Rwanda has a "free and open environment for freedom of expression" (*The New York Times* 6 Aug. 2017). However, other sources indicate that in Rwanda, dissenting views are suppressed (*The New York Times* 6 Aug. 2017; Freedom House 12 July 2017) through "pervasive surveillance, intimidation, and suspected assassinations" (Freedom House 12 July 2017).

According to Human Rights Watch, UDF-Inkingi members "have been arrested and harassed repeatedly" since 2010 (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017). Sources indicate that in 2016, individuals affiliated with UDF-Inkingi were subject to arbitrary arrests, physical abuse (Freedom House 12 July 2017; US 3 Mar. 2017, 28) and forced disappearance (Freedom House 12 July 2017). Human Rights Watch states that since the 2017 presidential elections, "Rwandan authorities have arrested, forcibly disappeared, and threatened political opponents", including "several leaders and members" of UDF-Inkingi (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept.

2017). In its *Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Rwanda*, the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) states that it has received "reports that enforced disappearance continues to occur, targeting, in particular, members of opposition political parties" such as members of UDF-Inkingi (UN 21 Dec. 2017, para. 42). Without providing further information, the UN CAT indicated that "[a]ccording to several reliable sources," UDF-Inkingi members have been "detained unlawfully and ill-treated" while being detained by Rwandan authorities (UN 21 Dec. 2017, para. 52). The first UDF-Inkingi representative indicated that, in the time period of 2016 and January 2018, at least 12 members have been imprisoned, at least 7 members have been disappeared, and at least 10 members have been killed (UDF-Inkingi 25 Jan. 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an attorney at law of the Amsterdam-based law firm Stapert Advocaten, who is the lawyer of Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza, stated that "many [UDF]-Inkingi party-members have been murdered in the last few years" (Attorney at law 17 Jan. 2018). According to Al Jazeera, the government denies political killings (Al Jazeera 3 Aug. 2017).

According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016*, UDF-Inkingi members stated that "authorities denied the issuance of or confiscated the passports of party members and their relatives" (US 3 Mar. 2017, 23). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

6.1 Incidents

Sources report the following incidents involving members of UDF-Inkingi:

- In March 2016, Illuminée Iragena disappeared (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Freedom House 12 July 2017).
- On 26 March 2016, the Assistant Treasurer was arrested and detained for three days (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Freedom House 12 July 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017), during which she was beaten (Freedom House 12 July 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017). She was arrested again in August 2016 and charged with "inciting insurrection" (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Freedom House 12 July 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017). According to Human Rights Watch, "[r]esidents who tried to testify on her behalf at her trial were intimidated" (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017). She was acquitted and released on 23 March

2017 (Amnesty International 26 Mar. 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017).

- In September 2016, the UDF-Inkingi Representative for Kigali was arrested, beaten, questioned about his party membership, and released after two days (Freedom House 12 July 2017; Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017). According to Human Rights Watch, he was allegedly arrested "by the military, in Nyarutarama, a Kigali suburb" (Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017).
- In January 2017, the Vice-President of UDF-Inkingi was "questioned by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Rwandan police about his alleged role in publishing information on extrajudicial killings" (Human Rights Watch 18 Aug. 2017). Further information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.
- Al Jazeera cites the spokesperson of UDF-Inkingi as stating that, in May 2017, a UDF-Inkingi member was tortured and killed for "protesting enforced government crop farming projects" (Al Jazeera 3 Aug. 2017).
- In September 2017, members [or "supporters" (Reuters 6 Sept. 2017)] of UDF-Inkingi were arrested (Reuters 6 Sept. 2017; Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017) and eight UDF-Inkingi members were charged with "forming an irregular armed group and offenses against the president" (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017). According to sources, the members are accused of allegedly creating an armed group called Platform 5 (P5) (Attorney at law 17 Jan. 2018; *The East African* 7 Oct. 2017), which, according to the Attorney at law, is not an armed group, but a Belgium-based political platform composed of Rwandan opposition parties, including UDF-Inkingi (Attorney at law 17 Jan. 2018).
- On 6 September 2017, the Kigali Representative of UDF-Inkingi was "forcibly disappeared and held incommunicado for 17 days" (Human Rights Watch 28 Sept. 2017). Further 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.

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