



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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02 December 2008

### HTI102987.E

Haiti: The Assembly of Progressive National Democrats (Rassemblement des démocrates nationaux progressistes, RDNP) party; the socio-economic and geographic areas of Haiti that support it; the part of the country its elected members represent; political activities and organizational structure; treatment of its members by the Préval government

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#### The Rassemblement des démocrates nationaux progressistes (RDNP)

The Assembly of Progressive National Democrats (Rassemblement des démocrates nationaux progressistes d'Haïti, RDNP) was founded by history professor Leslie F. Manigat (France 15 Oct. 2005, 29), who is described as a "Christian democrat" in a 2006 report by the International Crisis Group (11 May 2006, 3). In 1988, Manigat served briefly as the president of Haiti following an election which was boycotted by opposition parties (*ibid.*; France 15 Oct. 2005, 29). *Political Handbook of the World 2008* describes him as "[s]trongly anti-[c]ommunist" (*PHW 2008* 2008, 546). Mirlande Hyppolite Manigat, the wife of Leslie Manigat, became party leader (secretary general) in 2007 (Haiti Democracy Project 31 Dec. 2007; RDNP n.d.).

#### RDNP supporters

The RDNP is described as a [translation] "centrist" and [translation] "anticommunist" party in a report by France's Refugee Appeals Board (Commission des recours des réfugiés, CRR) (France 15 Oct. 2005, 29). Prior to the 2006 elections, Leslie Manigat was seen as one of the main rivals of René Préval (International Crisis Group 11 May 2006, 3). When Préval received less than fifty percent of the vote, Manigat, who had received eleven percent, insisted on a second round (*ibid.*, 4). Manigat called on his party to withdraw in protest after the Provisional Electoral Council (Conseil électoral provisoire, CEP) declared Préval the winner (*ibid.*, 4-5; *Haiti Progrès* 10-16 May 2006).

Data provided by the CEP indicate that in the first round of presidential elections held in February 2006, the RDNP candidate Leslie Manigat finished second to Préval with approximately 12 percent of the vote (20 Feb. 2006a; see also *PHW 2008* 2008, 546). According to the CEP, the RDNP's weakest showing in the presidential election was in the departments of Grand-Anse and Nord-Est, where it finished fifth and sixth respectively, and in Nord, where it finished third with approximately 5 percent of the vote (20 Feb. 2006b). The RDNP placed either second or third in the other seven departments, with its strongest showing in Nord-Ouest and Artibonite, where it won approximately 18 and 16 percent of the vote respectively (*ibid.*).

In correspondence dated 21 November 2008, the Executive Director of Haiti Democracy Project, a Washington, DC-based independent research group with a board of former US ambassadors and politicians, members of the Haitian-American community and policy analysts (Haiti Democracy Project 6 July 2003), advised the Research Directorate that the RDNP maintains a presence throughout Haiti but that its greatest strength rests in the city of Petit-Goâve, a transit point to Île de la Gonâve. According to the CEP, Leslie Manigat placed third in Petit-Goâve with approximately 19 percent of the vote in the presidential race (20 Feb. 2006c), while his wife, Mirlande Manigat, placed first in the constituency of Petit-Goâve in the senatorial race with approximately 28 percent of the vote (CEP 25 Feb. 2006). She also placed first in both constituencies on Île de la Gonâve (*ibid.*), while in those constituencies her husband placed first in Anse-à-Galets and second in Pointe-à-Raquettes (*ibid.* 20 Feb. 2006c). Mirlande Manigat withdrew from the second round of the senatorial elections in support of her husband's protest of the presidential results (International Crisis Group 11 May 2006, 5).

Information on the socio-economic groups that support the RDNP could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

#### Elected Members

The RDNP won four seats in the Chamber of Deputies (Chambre des députés) in the elections held in 2006 (International Crisis Group 18 July 2007, 11; IPU 10 Oct. 2008). According to the CEP second round election results, the RDNP finished first in the following constituencies: Terre-Neuve/l'Anse-Rouge, Artibonite department;

Léogane, Ouest department; Jérémie, Grand-Anse department; and Grand-Gosier/Thiotte, Sud-Est department (CEP 26 Apr. 2006).

The RDNP does not hold any seats in the Senate (Sénat) (IPU 3 Nov. 2008; International Crisis Group 18 July 2007, 11; Haiti Democracy Project 21 Nov. 2008).

### **Political activities and organizational structure**

According to Haitian press sources, in late February 2008, eight members of the Chamber of Deputies, including two RDNP members, co-sponsored a no-confidence motion against then Prime Minister Jacques-Édouard Alexis (*Haiti Liberté* 9 Mar. 2008; *Le Nouvelliste* 1 Mar. 2008), reportedly a close ally of Préval (*LA Times* 13 Apr. 2008). Alexis was subsequently dismissed from office in April 2008 (ibid.). Information on the sponsorship of the no-confidence motion against former Prime Minister Alexis could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Further information on the political activities of the RDNP and information on the organizational structure of the RDNP could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

### **Treatment of RDNP members by the Préval government**

The Executive Director of Haiti Democracy Project told the Research Directorate that political gangs "deployed" by President Préval and his party posed an "undefined but increasing" threat to members of other parties, including the RDNP; however, he stressed that this does not mean that all members of opposition parties are in "imminent physical danger" (21 Nov. 2008). Haiti Democracy Project has received reports of politically motivated gang activity linked to Préval or his allies in Port-au-Prince and in the city of Cap-Haïtien (Haiti Democracy Project 21 Nov. 2008). This information could not be corroborated among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. Further information on the treatment of the RDNP by members of the Préval government 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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral source:** Representatives of the Rassemblement des démocrates nationaux progressistes (RDNP) did not respond within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sources, including:** Agence haïtienne de presse, AlterPresse, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery (CRNM), CNN.com, Derkeiler.com, Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), HaitiAnalysis.com, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti (IJDH), International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE), One Tear, Réseau national de défense des droits humains (RNDDH), Television nationale d'Haïti (TNH), United Kingdom (UK) Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), United States (US) Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

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