



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

26 July 2005

KEN100268.E

Kenya: Information on an organization called Release Political Prisoners, including its current status and membership, the names of its officers, and whether its members are being targeted by the state (August 2002/July 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The information in this Response was provided in correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by the coordinator of the Coalition on Violence Against Women - Kenya (COVAW) (28 June 2005), the executive coordinator of Release Political Prisoners (RPP) (19 July 2005) and the coordinator of the Nairobi-based Human Rights House Project (15 July 2005). The Human Rights House Project, a member of the international organization known as the Human Rights House Network, comprises seven human rights groups, including Release Political Prisoners (RPP), the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), the Centre for Law and Research International (CLARION), the Child Rights Advisory Documentation and Legal Centre (CRADLE), the Coalition on Violence Against Women - Kenya (COVAW-K), the Federation of Women Lawyers - Kenya (FIDA-Kenya), and People Against Torture (PAT) (Human Rights House Network n.d.).

Status and Objectives of Release Political Prisoners (RPP)

Formed in 1991, Release Political Prisoners (RPP) is a human rights organization dedicated to promoting the rights of political prisoners (RPP 19 July 2005; Human Rights House Project 15 July 2005). However, RPP is not a legally registered entity and carries out its activities under a special licence obtained from the Kenyan Human Rights Commission (KHRC) (Human Rights House Project 15 July 2005). The coordinator of the Coalition on Violence Against Women - Kenya (COVAW-K) described RPP as "very resourceful and committed to the course of realising human rights for all people" (28 June 2005).

RPP has organized its activities into three main streams: "the Penal Reform Programme, the Constitution and Legal Programme and the Rights Promotion and Protection Programme" (RPP 19 July 2005). More specifically, RPP documents the situation in prisons and courts, raises public awareness through "workshops, publicity and cultural activities," undertakes research, promotes networking and publishes a newsletter (Human Rights House Project 15 July 2005).

RPP Membership and Structure

RPP counts 55 active members from across Kenya, five of whom are currently engaged in "academic studies in various parts of the world." (RPP 19 July 2005). Apart from its secretariat in Nairobi, it has no other offices (ibid.). While RPP does not issue membership cards, members obtain a receipt when they pay the annual membership fee (ibid.). RPP has annual general meetings and elections are held every two years (ibid.).

The following excerpt from correspondence sent by the executive coordinator of RPP on 19 July 2005 lists the members of RPP's executive committee (also known as the steering council (SC) or the steering board), the secretariat and the support staff.

a. Members of the Executive Committee or the the Steering Council (SC).

The Steering Council (Board) is composed of 7 members who include

1. Mr. Ng'ang'a Thiong'o – Chairman and a lawyer
2. Ms. Valerie Mugure Gituto- Vice Chair and a Lawyer
3. Mr. Joseph Kimani- Treasurer and a Social Worker
4. Mr. Gitau Wanguthi - Council Member and Trained Educationist
5. Ms. Leah Wamucii - Council member and a[n] Administrative Hotelier
6. Ms. Salima Njoki – Council Member, Social Worker and Thespian

7. Mr. Paul Mwaura – Council Member and a Trained Educationist
8. Mr. Stephen W. Musau – Council Secretary, the Executive Coordinator and a Social Scientist.

b. The secretariat has the following [staff]

- [1.] Kamonye Manje, the Deputy Executive Coordinator and officer Penal Reform
- [2.] Munga Gathogo, Programme Officer on Constitutional affairs
- [3.] Njoki Kamau, Programme officer, Rights Promotion and Protection
- [4.] Henry Maiyo, Assistant to Kamonye Manje
- [5.] Mithamo Kariuki, Assistant to Munga and Njoki in Programme work
- [6.] John Mathenge, Accounts
- [7.] Lucas Kimanthi- Newsletter editor.

c. Support staff

- [1.] Susan Wangari – Office Assistant
- [2.] Kamau Kaba – Driver
- [3.] Kimani Waweru – Documentation
- [4.] Waruiru Mungai – Security guard.

Relations between RPP and Government Authorities

The coordinator of the Human Rights House Project stated that particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, RPP was a "very controversial organization" (15 July 2005). He added that it has been the "target of harassment and intimidation by the authorities," and that in 1996 its secretary general was killed "in what had the signature [of] state involvement" (Human Rights House Project 15 July 2005). According to the coordinator, RPP is "still held in suspicion by the authority" (ibid.). He referred in particular to a 20 October 2004 incident during which RPP members were beaten up the Kenyan police and put on trial for holding a peaceful demonstration demanding the creation of a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation (TRJ) Committee to look into past human rights violations (ibid).

Similarly, in 19 July 2005 correspondence sent to the Research Directorate, the RPP's executive coordinator stated that RPP members were arrested during a 16 March 2005 protest against the Kenyan authorities' attempt to "bulldoze the constitution [through] without [a] proper legal process in place" (RPP 19 July 2005). The executive coordinator explained that the arrested RPP members must still appear in court as the trial has not yet ended (ibid.). Without specifying the dates when the arrests took place, the RPP Executive coordinator added that some RPP members were recently arrested in Nairobi for advocating a "people driven constitution" (RPP 19 July 2005).

Corroborating information on this subject 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

- Coalition on Violence Against Women - Kenya (COVAW-K). 28 June 2005. Correspondence from the Coordinator.
- Human Rights House Network. N.d. "Organizations." <<http://www.humanrightshouse.org/dllvis5.asp?id=2101>> [Accessed 25 July 2005]
- Human Rights House Project. 15 July 2005. Correspondence from the Executive Coordinator.
- Release Political Prisoners (RPP). 19 July 2005. Correspondence from the Executive Coordinator.

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications: Africa Confidential, Africa Research Bulletin, Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent.

Internet sites, including: AllAfrica, Amnesty International (AI), Daily Nation, East Africa, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI.net), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group (ICG), Kenya Times, United States Department of State.PAGE

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.