



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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SEN42213.FE

Senegal: The Association Singhère-Bissine that was reportedly created in November 1991 with the union of two other associations, Singhère and Bissine; whether the Association Singhère-Bissine is suspected by the Senegalese authorities of financing the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC); general information on the MFDC (2001-2003)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No information on the Association Singhère-Bissine could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

However, the following information may be of some interest. According to a researcher in the Department of Geography at King's College London who did some research in the Casamance area and, in February 2003, published a paper titled "Ni paix ni guerre: The Political Economy of Low-level Conflict in the Casamance,"

Bissine and Singhère are two villages that face each other across the tributary of the Casamance River that separates Ziguinchor and Kolda regions south of the River. Along with much of that area, which borders Guinea-Bissau, Bissine was displaced by MFDC guerilla action and resulting conflict with Senegalese government forces in 1992-93. . . . Bissine remains entirely abandoned . . . I can't tell you the status of Singhère, but given its proximity to Bissine and that displacement extended some way further east along the border, it is quite possible that it too remains abandoned (25 Nov. 2003).

With regard to the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance, MFDC), in addition to the information available in SEN36980.F of 20 June 2001 and SEN30138.F of 29 September 1998, the BBC indicated that there has been little follow-up to the provisional peace accord signed in 2001 between the leaders of the MFDC and the Senegalese government (8 Jan. 2003). In January 2003, offensive operations were launched against government forces and the MFDC separatist army in the capital of Casamance, Ziguinchor, and the MFDC was reported to be "bitterly" divided (BBC 8 Jan. 2003). Due to its weak leadership, the MFDC has lost control over some groups who apparently continue to ambush passenger vehicles and kidnap civilians (ibid.).

MFDC meetings were held recently in Ziguinchor between 6 and 8 October 2003 (*Sud Quotidien* 9 Oct. 2003). The *Sud Quotidien* reported that

[translation]

the governor of the region, the prefect, the town mayor, the Regional Council president, and numerous other civilian and military public figures attended the closing ceremony, during which MFDC leaders reaffirmed their movement's determination to re-open peace negotiations with the government and put an end to the conflict in Casamance. The MFDC also wanted to put opponents of the peace process out of commission (ibid.).

During the meetings, MFDC Secretary-General, Jean Marie François Biagui, reportedly invited [translation] "all communities, including the international community, to join in the quest for peace and the revival of the economic and social development of Casamance" (ibid.). For his part, MFDC President, Reverend Augustin Diamacoune Senghor, said that, [translation] "from now on, the MFDC will fight against the opponents of peace in Casamance so that we may quickly achieve a lasting peace in Senegal" (ibid.). However, the Senegalese government apparently summoned a French journalist, a permanent correspondent for Radio France Internationale (RFI) to Dakar, for questioning; she later received an order to expel her from Senegalese territory (ibid. 24 Oct. 2003; *Le Soleil* 8 Oct. 2003; International Federation of Journalists 30 Oct. 2003). The journalist was covering the MFDC meetings and was accused of [translation] "trying to sabotage the peace process launched by the Senegalese government" (*Le Soleil* 8 Oct. 2003).

Nevertheless, *Afrique Express* indicated that, during 2001, the MFDC was shaken by internal conflicts (30 Nov. 2001). The MFDC Secretary-General at the time, Reverend Diamacoune, reportedly announced [translation] "the dismissal of Sidy Badji, another historic leader of the movement, from his position as military advisor" (*Afrique Express* 30 Nov. 2001). But in June 2001, Reverend Diamacoune had apparently [translation] "reconciled" with Sidy Badji (ibid.). In August 2001, during the MFDC meetings in Banjul, Gambia, Reverend Diamacoune was reportedly removed as leader of the movement and relegated to the rank of [translation] "honourary president" (ibid.). According to the same source, Diamacoune was replaced by Jean-Marie Biagui, [translation] "who lived in Lyon, France, and was elected Secretary-General in his place. Sidy Badji was named Secretary of Military Affairs; and Abdoulaye Diédhiou, one of his colleagues, as Secretary of the Domestic Contingent. Alexandre Djiba, who lives in Banjul, Gambia, is the spokesperson for the MFDC" (ibid.). The new administration was as follows:

[translation]

- Honourary President: Reverend Augustin Diamacoune Senghor
- Secretary-General: Jean-Marie François Biagui
- Secretary of Military Affairs: Sidy Badji
- Secretary of Economic Affairs: Ousmane Tamba (former representative to Switzerland)
- Secretary of the Domestic Contingent: Abdoulaye Diédhiou
- Secretary of the Foreign Contingent: Mamadou Goudiaby (in Paris)
- Spokesperson: Alexandre Djiba (in Gambia) (ibid.).

The change was apparently rejected by Nkrumah Sané, former head of the MFDC's Foreign Contingent, who [translation] "always considered himself the foreign representative for the MFDC and Diamacoune's assistant" (ibid.). On 5 November 2001, Jean-Marie Biagui resigned from his position as Secretary-General in [translation] "protest of the 'obstructions' from the Secretary of the Domestic Contingent, Abdoulaye Diédhiou. But he was quickly 'reappointed' to this position in person by Reverend Diamacoune Senghor, who used the opportunity to announce a new leadership" (ibid.). The following persons were named to the new administration on 16 November 2001:

[translation]

- Jean-Marie Biagui: Secretary-General
- Ansoumana Badji: Assistant Secretary-General for the Economy and Communications, Spokesperson for the movement
- Bertrand Diamacoune (the Reverend's brother): National Delegate
- Raymond Badji: Delegate General to Europe
- Daniel Daiatta: Chargé de Mission (ibid.).

Sidy Badji was made the new interim Secretary of the Foreign Contingent (ibid.). During the 17 November 2001 special session, MFDC supporters [translation] "assented to Badji's acting as MFDC Secretary-General until new meetings could be held to elect a new Secretary-General" (ibid.).

Nkrumah Sané, [translation] "the hawk of the MFDC Foreign Contingent," was not expected to attend the meeting that took place in Ziguinchor between 6 and 8 October 2003 (*Wal Fadjri* 4 Oct. 2003). Furthermore, according to *Wal Fadjri*, [translation] "Salif Sadio would not be among the expected one thousand participants either, and Sidy Badji's supporters may not attend because they were not involved in the preparations for the inter-MFDC meetings" (ibid.).

For information on the MFDC's financing, please consult the attached document.

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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Africa Confidential

Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series

Amnesty International

Country Reports 1992-2002

Encyclopedia of the Third World

Europa World Year Book 1992-2002

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Institut de recherche pour le développement

IRB Databases

National Human Rights Organization, Thies, Senegal

PANA Senegal

Ploughshares, Canada

Attachment

King's College London. February 2003. Martin Evans. HPG Background Paper. "Ni paix ni guerre: The Political Economy of Low-level Conflict in the Casamance." <http://www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/bkgground_Casamance.pdf> [Accessed 21 Nov. 2003], 23 pp.

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