



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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23 February 2006

### UGA100952.E

Uganda: The Forum for Democratic Change (FDC); its structure, platform, leadership and executive members; and treatment of its members by authorities (2005 - January 2006)

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Various sources reported that the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) was established in 2004 as a result of a union between opposition parties the Reform Agenda, the Parliamentary Advocacy Forum, and the National Democratic Forum (*Political Parties of the World* 2005, 602; *Europa World Year Book 2005* 2005, 4386; *Political Handbook of the World 2005-2006* 2005, 1211). The FDC claims to be a "strong, democratic, mass organization" (ibid.), and has reportedly attracted a number of members of parliament (MPs) from the Democratic Party (DP) and Uganda People's Congress (UPC) to its organization (ibid.; *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 602).

The FDC's 31-page party platform appears on the FDC Website and comprises four sections: Introduction, Guiding Principles, Policies and Programmes, and Way Forward (Feb. 2005). The Policies and Programmes section is divided into 12 parts, including the party's stand on constitutionalism, the rule of law and democracy, human rights, peace and security, and public ethics, corruption and accountability (FDC Feb. 2005).

With regard to leadership, according to the Website of the FDC, the party's executive committee is comprised of the president, Kizza Besigye, and deputies Salaamu Musumba, Ogenga Latigo, and Sam Njuba (FDC n.d.). The FDC general secretary is Alice Alaso Asianut and other members include Administration Deputy Kassiano Wadri, Policy and Research Deputy Augustine Ruzindana, Treasurer General Jack Sabiiti, Budget Deputy Nandala Mafabi, Fundraising Deputy Elijah Okupa, and Organizing Secretary Mugisha Muntu (ibid.). A number of other members are listed on the FDC Website under the sections of "Office of the President," "Mobilisation and Recruitment Committee," "Discipline and Appointments Committee," International Envoys, "Chairman's Office," and "Electoral Commission" (ibid.).

Various sources corroborated that Kizza Besigye is the FDC leader and presidential candidate for Uganda's 23 February 2006 elections (US 10 Jan. 2006; *Political Handbook of the World 2005-2006* 2005, 1211; HRW 19 Dec. 2005; IWPR 9 Jan. 2006).

### Treatment of FDC members and supporters

International human rights and news sources reported in 2005 on various incidents of state-sponsored harassment (HRW 19 Dec. 2005) and intimidation (ibid.; ibid. 23 Nov. 2005; ibid. 27 Apr. 2005), including arrests, of FDC members and supporters (ibid.; AI 16 Nov. 2005), in particular the arrest of FDC leader Kizza Besigye (ibid.; HRW 14 Nov. 2005; ibid. 23 Nov. 2005; ibid. 12 Dec. 2005; ibid. 19 Dec. 2005; BBC 9 Dec. 2005; ibid. 25 Nov. 2005).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), in April 2005, police arrested two FDC MPs for what seemed to be "politically motivated charges" designed to hinder opposition campaigning for the 2006 elections (HRW 27 Apr. 2005). In addition, HRW pointed out that the two FDC MPs had previously encountered intimidation by members of the military in Pader district, northern Uganda in November 2004, when the army barred opposition members and supporters from attending a planned meeting and allegedly "beat several members of the group" (ibid.). Moreover, HRW stated that Rukungiri district FDC chairman was among the many political opponents being detained by state security forces in early 2005 (ibid.).

In May 2005, responding to allegations made by HRW and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, the Ugandan government declared that, among other things, the allegation of mistreatment of political opposition, including the FDC, was "unfounded" (HRW 17 May 2005).

In November 2005, Kizza Besigye, FDC leader and presidential candidate was arrested by authorities on

charges of treason and rape when he returned to Uganda after more than four years of self-imposed exile (HRW 14 Nov. 2005; AI 16 Nov. 2005; BBC 9 Dec. 2005). Amnesty International (AI) reported that the arrest triggered mass demonstrations in various cities and towns, including Kampala, where protestors were met by riot police with live ammunition, tear gas and water cannons, resulting in one fatality and "dozens" of arrests (AI 16 Nov. 2005; see also HRW 23 Nov. 2005). Subsequently, both HRW and AI called upon all sides to show restraint, and requested authorities to observe prompt and proper legal procedures in addressing Besigye's charges (AI 16 Nov. 2005; HRW 14 Nov. 2005). A follow-up report by HRW reproached the Ugandan government for its decision to ban demonstrations and to use commandos to intimidate members of the judiciary connected to Besigye's trial (23 Nov. 2005).

In a 25 November 2005 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) article, President Museveni defended his government's decision to arrest Besigye, stating that the FDC leader needed to answer for his alleged crimes. In the same article, the BBC noted that Besigye denied the allegations brought against him, and his supporters declared that the charges were politically motivated (25 Nov. 2005). Additionally, in December 2005, HRW stated that it was also concerned that Besigye was arrested in an attempt to disqualify him as a presidential candidate in the upcoming 2006 elections (HRW 12 Dec. 2005). HRW then urged the country's Electoral Commission to "uphold the presumption of innocence" in making its decision on whether to allow Besigye to run as a presidential candidate (*ibid.*). Conversely, Uganda's attorney general and minister of justice, Khiddu Makubuya, reportedly notified the Electoral Commission to disallow Besigye's candidacy because it was "'tainted with illegalities'" (BBC 9 Dec. 2005; HRW 12 Dec. 2005).

HRW also reported in December 2005 that the government was using Besigye's trial to silence the FDC's political campaign efforts for the 2006 elections (HRW 19 Dec. 2005). According to HRW, state "security forces have intimidated, harassed and physically assaulted [FDC] supporters since Besigye's return to Uganda in late October [2005]" (*ibid.*).

In early January 2006, various sources reported that Besigye was released from prison on bail (EIU 4 Jan. 2006; *New Vision* 3 Jan. 2006; BBC 2 Jan. 2006), although he was reportedly to return to court on 20 January 2006 to face the treason charges against him (IWPR 9 Jan. 2006). In the meantime, Kampala-based news source *New Vision* noted that Besigye continued his electoral campaign, and in addition to stating that "false allegations" were being made against him, Besigye noted that FDC supporters were facing increasing "political harassment" which included arbitrary arrests (20 Jan. 2006). Additionally, *Sunday Times* of Johannesburg reported that Besigye's wife, Winnie Byanyima and another FDC supporter "were charged with libel after Museveni complained that they had falsely accused him of bribing judges handling her husband's trial" (20 Jan. 2006).

Ugandan news sources of 26 January 2006 mentioned that Besigye's rape case was ongoing (*New Vision* 26 Jan. 2006; *The Monitor* 26 Jan. 2006), and that his trial for treason had been adjourned until 3 February 2006 (*ibid.*).

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.

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An oral source with the International Crisis Group could not provide the information requested.

**Internet sites, including:** *Country Reports 2004*, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), European Union, Factiva, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), International Crisis Group (ICG), ReliefWeb, United Kingdom Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), World News Connection, World Organization Against Torture (OMCT).

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