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Responses to Information Requests

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

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Sources indicate that the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) is the leading opposition party in Uganda (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 595; Freedom House 2010; VOA 15 Apr. 2010). It was founded in 2004 as a merger between opposition groups including the Reform Agenda, the Parliamentary Advocacy Forum and the National Democratic Forum (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 595; *PHW* 2010 2010, 1507; *Europa* 2009, 4604). Sources report that in the February 2006 election, the FDC presidential candidate Kizza Besigye won 37 percent of the vote and FDC candidates won 37 seats in the parliament (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 595; African Elections Database n.d.), out of a total of 284 directly elected seats (ibid.).

Information about the structure of Forum for Democratic Change can be found in their constitution, which is posted on the FDC website (FDC n.d.a) (see attachment). It contains information about membership, local organizational structures and national organizational structures (ibid.).

The FDC 2006 Manifesto, which is posted on the FDC website, outlines their top priorities in five areas for 2006 to 2011 as "rebuilding trust in government, providing security for all, delivering economic opportunity for all, investing in our people, and restoring international credibility and respect" (FDC 2006). The FDC Strategic Plan can also be found on the FDC website; it provides a plan for 2006-2011 that emphasizes "the development of [FDC] Party structures, membership recruitment, creation of a functional National Secretariat and resource mobilization" (FDC 20 Mar. 2007). The FDC Strategic Plan states its mission as follows:

FDC is a political party that seeks to change Uganda into a truly prosperous and united nation in which people live in peace and dignity under an honest government through:

- a. Building institutions that promote democratic governance and accountability.
- b. Developing a sense of nationalism based on justice and equality.
- c. Creating opportunities that will empower people socially, politically and economically. (ibid.)

Leaders

Several sources indicate that Kizza Besigye is the leader (or president) of the FDC (*Europa* 2009, 4604; *PHW* 2010 2010, 1507; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 595; *New Vision* 19 Aug. 2009) and that Alice Alaso Asianut is the secretary-general (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 595; FDC 20 Mar. 2007; *PHW* 2010 2010, 1507). *Political Parties of the World* states that Ogenga Latigo, Sam K. Njuba and Salaamu Musumba are deputy presidents of the FDC, but *Political Handbook of the World (PHW) 2010* states that Salaamu Musumba is the FDC's vice president (2010, 1507). *PHW 2010* also notes that Ofwono Opondo is the spokesperson, John Butime is the acting national chair, and that Geoffrey Ekanya and Nuwe Amanyana Mushega are also among the leaders of the FDC (2010, 1507). Ugandan media sources indicate that Ingrid Turinawe is the FDC Women's League chairperson (*Daily Monitor* 20 Mar. 2010; *The Independent* 23 Mar. 2010; *Daily Monitor* 30 Mar. 2010). The United States (US) Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009* states that Abedi Nasser Obole is the FDC youth leader (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 3).

Sources report that Besigye will be the presidential candidate representing the FDC in the 2011 presidential election (FDC n.d.b; VOA 15 Apr. 2010). It will be his third time running against the incumbent president (ibid.; FDC n.d.b). He also ran in the 2001 and 2006 elections (VOA 15 Apr. 2010; *Daily Monitor* 25 July 2008). One Ugandan media source indicates that Besigye left Uganda in 2001 after losing the election because he "feared for his life" (ibid.). Sources indicate that when he returned in 2005 to run in the 2006 presidential election, he was arrested and charged with treason and rape (ibid.; Freedom House 2009). Freedom House notes that he was cleared of the rape charge (ibid.), but 2010 sources indicate that the treason charge remains pending (AI 2010; US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 1e)

Treatment of its members by authorities

According to a Ugandan media source, Besigye stated that three members of the FDC died while in police custody in the first half of 2007; he also noted that sixteen other FDC supporters were detained without trial at that time (*Daily Monitor* 25 June 2007). Information on the situation of these 16 people since Besigye's speech could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Freedom House reports that in June 2008, FDC claimed that several FDC members were arrested during training workshops in Kampala, Mbarara and Naguru, although authorities had been given prior notice of the events (Freedom House 2010).

Country Reports 2009 indicates that in January 2009, security agents allegedly "tortured to death" an FDC member for illegal gun possession (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 1a).

A Ugandan media source reports that in June 2009, an FDC activist who campaigned for the FDC in demonstrations and on radio talk shows was killed (*New Vision* 8 June 2009). According to the article, FDC officials allege that he was killed by state authorities, while police deny the allegations (ibid.). *Country Reports 2009* notes that in June 2009, the FDC deputy spokesperson was detained overnight for allegedly "spreading propaganda" (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 3).

Media sources report that in June 2009, a police officer who had opened fire on an FDC rally in February 2006, which killed two people and paralyzed another, was sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment on charges of manslaughter (BBC 25 June 2009; *Daily Monitor* 25 June 2009; ISI 26 June 2009). FDC and human rights organizations reportedly criticized the ruling as being too lenient (ibid.).

Sources indicate that in August 2009, several FDC members were arrested during a protest in Kampala and charged with holding an illegal assembly (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 3; Human Rights Watch Jan. 2010; AFP 18 Aug. 2009). This charge can reportedly carry a three-year prison term (*New Vision* 19 Aug. 2009). According to Human Rights Watch, demonstrators were beaten by the police (Human Rights Watch Jan. 2010). *Country Reports 2009* states that 11 FDC youth members were arrested (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 3), while two media sources state that there were 10 members arrested (AFP 18 Aug. 2009; *New Vision* 19 Aug. 2009).

Country Reports 2009 indicates that an FDC member was allegedly abducted in August 2009 while on his way to an FDC press conference and that human rights groups claimed that the government was responsible; his whereabouts were unknown until he reappeared in December 2009 (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 1b). *Country Reports 2009* states that the FDC youth leader Abedi Nasser Obole was charged in September 2009 with allegedly organizing and participating in unlawful assemblies; he was also arrested for threatening the Electoral Commission's chairman and four commissioners (ibid., Sec. 3).

One Ugandan media source reports that in December 2009 police sprayed teargas on Besigye and beat FDC supporters in Hoima when a large crowd gathered there to receive Besigye's motorcade (*Daily Monitor* 7 Dec. 2009). Further information about this incident could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Ugandan media sources report that police allegedly beat the FDC Women's League Chairperson Ingrid Turinawe into a coma, after she and other FDC supporters confronted the police about the treatment of FDC youth who had been detained earlier in the week (*Daily Monitor* 20 Mar. 2010; *The Independent* 19 Mar. 2010; *Daily Monitor* 30 Mar. 2010). The police reportedly denied the allegations (ibid.; *Daily Monitor* 20 Mar. 2010; *The Independent* 19 Mar. 2010).

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

Internet sites, including: European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), International Crisis Group, Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refworld, Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC).

Attachment

Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). N.d.a "Constitution of Forum for Democratic Change."

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