

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

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Nigeria: The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), including its structure, name of president and principal leaders; treatment of its members by the authorities (2008-February 2012)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Brief History

The *Political Handbook of the World (PHW)*, 2011 states that the Action Congress party was formed in 2006 from the Alliance for Democracy, the Justice Party, the Advanced Congress of Democrats and other smaller parties (*PHW* 2011, 1064). In 2007, Atiku Abubakar, who was the country's vice-president and a former member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), ran for president as the Action Congress candidate (*ibid.*). Abubakar "placed third in the balloting with 7.25 percent of the vote" (*ibid.*). The party was afterwards invited to join the PDP's "national unity government," but it declined, which led to the resignation of the party's national secretary, Bashir Dalhatu (*ibid.*). In 2009, the Action Congress joined the Patriotic Electoral Alliance of Nigeria, an electoral alliance created by the opposition parties (*ibid.*, 1063-1064). The party changed its name in 2010 to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in order to attract a "national following" (*ibid.*, 1064). According to the ACN website, the party's platform focuses on security of life, job creation, education, health, transportation, economic planning, social development and small-scale business development (ACN [n.d.b](#)).

1.1 Location of ACN Offices

The ACN website locates the party in Maitama, Abuja state (ACN [n.d.b](#)). A US chapter indicates that state branches have been established in Arizona, California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington (ACN-USA [n.d.](#)). There is also a United Kingdom chapter based in London (ACN-UK [n.d.](#)). Further information on the party's structure could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

2. Leaders

For the years 2008 to 2010, the annual edition of the *PHW* has identified the following people as the party's leaders:

- 2008 -- Hassan Zurmi (Chair), Bumi Omoeyindemi (National Secretary), Atiku Abubakar (2007 presidential candidate), and Lai Mohammed (Spokesperson) (*PHW* 2009, 1000);
- 2009 -- Bisi Akande Hassan Zurmi (Chair), Usman Bugaji (National Secretary), Atiku Abubakar (2007 presidential candidate), and Lai Mohammed (Spokesperson) (*PHW* 2010, 1087); and
- 2010 -- Bisi Akande Hassan Zurmi (Chair), Usman Bugaji (National Secretary), Atiku Abubakar (2007 presidential candidate), and Lai Mohammed (Spokesperson) (*PHW* 2011, 1064).

The website of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the organization created by law to organize federal and state elections in Nigeria (INEC [n.d.a](#)), lists the following people as the leaders of the currently registered ACN party:

- Adebisi Bamidele Akande, National Chairman;
- Lawal Shuaibu, National Secretary;
- K. K. Kobani, National Treasurer;

- Ndionyenma Nwankwo, Financial Secretary; and
- Muiz Banire, National Legal Adviser (ibid. n.d.b).

The *Nigerian Voice* (TNV), an online Nigerian news site established in 2005 (TNV n.d), also indicates that Bisi Akande was the ACN national chairman in 2011 (TNV 28 Feb. 2011). Information on the ACN leaders in 2012 could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

3. ACN Candidates for 2011 Elections

The National Democratic Institute (NDI), an international election observer to Nigeria's 16 April 2011 presidential election, reports that Nuhu Ribadu was the ACN candidate for the presidency (18 Apr. 2011, 5). Ribadu was the "former head of Nigeria's anti-corruption authority," according to a US Congressional Research Service report (US 19 Jan. 2012, 5). Sources report that Ribadu came in third, with about five percent of the vote (NDI 10 May 2011; *Nigeria Elections Coalition* n.d.; US 19 Jan. 2012, 5). The BBC writes that, in February 2012, President Jonathan Goodluck of the PDP appointed Ribadu as chair of a new task force to track corruption in the oil industry (9 Feb. 2012). According to the BBC, "[t]he ACN has dissociated itself from his new appointment, saying Mr. Ribadu was taking it in his 'personal capacity'" (9 Feb. 2012).

The US Department of State reports that, in addition to the presidential elections in April 2011, Nigeria also held gubernatorial and legislative elections in which the ACN "captured additional governorships and National Assembly seats, although the majority of such positions continued to be held by the ruling PDP" (US 20 Oct. 2011). The Congressional Research Service report also indicates that the ACN dominated 2011 state elections in the southwest of the country (ibid. 19 Jan. 2012, 5).

According to the ACN website, the following people were elected as governors: Adams Oshiomole (Edo state), Kayode Fayemi (Ekiti state), Babatunde Fashola (Lagos state), Ibikunle Amosun (Ogun state), Rauf Aregbesola (Osun state), and Abiola Ajimobi (Oyo state) (ACN n.d.a).

4. Treatment of Members by Authorities

The US Department of State's 2009 human rights report indicates that, in January 2008, 10 people were injured as a result of a clash between members of the PDP and the Action Congress in Ibadan, Oyo State (US 11 Mar. 2010, Sec. 3). According to the report, authorities did not conduct an investigation (ibid.). In 2009, again in Oyo state, police arrested an Action Congress candidate who challenged the 2007 election results and imprisoned him for confronting the ruling PDP local government chairman. The candidate was released, but police continued to harass him. (ibid.)

The BBC also reported that, in 2009, "Nigerian soldiers ... confronted opposition supporters demonstrating about an election result in south-western Ekiti state" (BBC 6 May 2009). The article indicates that the soldiers "fired shots and tear gas to disperse demonstrators outside the Action Congress ... headquarters in the state capital, Ado Ekiti" (ibid.). The Action Congress candidate for governor, Kayode Fayemi, said that "[o]ur ballot boxes were snatched in daylight [and] our monitors were beaten up" (qtd. in BBC 6 May 2009). According to a 2010 Freedom House report, [a]ttacks on political opponents and peaceful activists have mainly been localized and have largely occurred in states where the courts invalidated 2007 election results. In early 2009, the Court of Appeal invalidated the gubernatorial election in Ekiti and called for fresh elections. It also ruled against the sitting governor in Ondo and in favor of the opposition candidate. These rulings triggered politically motivated attacks against members of opposing political parties, sometimes involving the Nigerian police. (Freedom House 2010)

The US Department of State's *Country Report* for 2010 says that Ndubuisi Nwobu, the Action Congress party chairman for Anambra state, was kidnapped on 27 June 2010 and safely released two days later (8 Apr. 2011, Sec. 1b).

In April 2011, the Edo state governor, Adams Oshiomole, "expressed deep concern over the use [by some PDP leaders] of the Armed Forces to intimidate and harass members and leaders of the ... ACN in the state" (*The Nigerian Observer* 8 Apr. 2011). According to the *Nigerian Observer*, the Army occupied communities in Edo state known to strongly support the ACN in order to "drive fear into eligible voters in the communities" (8 Apr. 2011). Neither corroborating nor further information on the treatment of ACN members by state authorities could 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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Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the Action Congress of Nigeria, Alliance for Africa, Imelda Foundation, the Independent National Electoral Commission, the National Democratic Institute, and the Nigeria Election Coalition, were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Action Congress; *Africa Confidential*; *Afrik.com*; Alliances for Africa; Amnesty International; CNN.com; Factiva; *GlobalPost*; Holler Africa; Human Rights Watch; Nigeria Office of the Speaker, House of Representatives; *NigeriaWorld*; *PM News*; *Sahara Reporters*; United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; University of Toronto; *USAfricaonline*; York University.

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