

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.

18 October 2013

GUY104616.E

Guyana: People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C), including whether members or supporters of the party are targeted because of their political beliefs (2010-October 2013)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview of PPP/C

The PPP/C is the ruling party in Guyana and the party of President Donald Ramotar (IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011; Freedom House 2013). Freedom House explains that in 1992, Guyana held its "first free and fair" elections following a 26-year period of "autocratic" rule mainly by the Afro-Guyanese People's National Congress (PNC) (Freedom House 2013). The PPP/C has been the ruling party of Guyana since winning that election in 1992 (IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011; *PHW 2012* 2012, 587-588). According to *Political Handbook of the World (PHW)*, the PPP was launched in 1950, and "began as an anti-colonial party speaking for the lower classes but subsequently came to represent almost exclusively the large East Indian racial group" (*PHW 2012* 2012, 589). The party has a history of promoting communism, but the leader retreated from his stance on state ownership in 1991, and in the same year joined forces with the Civic Party, which *PHW* describes as "a group of business owners and professionals" headed by the current prime minister Samuel Hinds (*ibid.*).

Sources indicate that Guyanese politics are divided largely along historical ethnic/racial lines, with the PPP/C drawing its support primarily from the Indo-Guyanese community (Freedom House 2013; IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011; *PHW 2012* 2012, 588). Freedom House notes that there is a "tense split" in Guyanese politics between the PPP/C and the main opposition party, the People's National Congress Reform (PNC-R), which draws support largely from the Afro-Guyanese population (Freedom House 2013). IHS Global Insight similarly states that there are "underlying tensions" persisting in Guyana between the majority Indo-Guyanese and the Afro-Guyanese (IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011).

The Small Arms Survey (SAS), an independent research project on armed violence supported by the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, notes that both the PNC and the PPP in Guyana have a history of ties to politically motivated gangs that intimidate opponents through violence and that "episodes of political gang violence generally occur in the run-up to national elections" (2012, 3, 17-19, 29-34).

In the November 2011 election, the PPP/C received 48.6 percent of the vote (IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011; US 19 Apr. 2012, 11; *Europa* 2013). The PPP/C also won 32 of 65 seats in the National Assembly (IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011; Freedom House 2013; *Europa* 2013). The 2011 election marked the first time that the PPP did not receive a majority government (IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011; US 19 Apr. 2013; *Europa* 2013). According to *Europa World*, the new cabinet is "largely unchanged" from the previous administration (*ibid.*). Ramotar was reportedly inaugurated as president of Guyana in December 2011, replacing President Jagdeo, also of the PPP/C (Freedom House 2013; IHS Global Insight 2 Dec. 2011). According to Agence France-Presse (AFP), there were no reports of violence or arrests during the voting (30 Nov. 2013). Sources corroborate that elections took place without incident (Freedom House 2013; US 19 Apr. 2013).

2. Targeting of PPP/C Members

Information about whether PPP/C members or supporters are targeted because of their political beliefs (during the period of 2010 to October 2013) was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Media sources report of cases in which the homes of politicians affiliated with the PPP/C were firebombed (*Stabroek News* 5 Jan. 2012; AP 6 Dec. 2011; CMC 12 Dec. 2011).

One target was Philomena Sahoye-Shury, whom the PPP reportedly described as "a member of the PPP's Central Committee and a leading personality in the PPP/C administration" (*Stabroek News* 9 Jan. 2011). Media sources report that Molotov cocktails ["channa bombs"] were thrown at her home on several occasions (*Stabroek News* 18 Feb. 2012; *ibid.* 10 Dec. 2011; *Kaieteur News* 10 Dec. 2011), including:

- On 7 January 2011, a channa bomb was thrown onto her property, but failed to explode (*Stabroek News* 8 Jan. 2011; *ibid.* 9 Jan. 2011; *Kaieteur News* 8 Jan. 2011);
- On 9 December 2011, another channa bomb was thrown into her yard (*Stabroek News* 10 Dec. 2011; *Kaieteur News* 10 Dec. 2011); two media sources say the device failed to ignite (*Stabroek News* 10 Dec. 2011; CMC 12 Dec. 2011), while another said it exploded but caused minimal damage (*Kaieteur News* 10 Dec. 2011).
- On 17 February 2012, another channa bomb was thrown at her home, but did not ignite or cause damage (*Stabroek News* 18 Feb. 2012).

In addition, Sahoye-Shury reportedly said that in March 2011, her office was broken into and doused with kerosene (*Stabroek News* 10 Dec. 2011). Sahoye-Shury claims that the attacks were "politically motivated" and acts of "terrorism" (*Stabroek News* 10 Dec. 2011; *Kaieteur News* 10 Dec. 2011). According to the Georgetown-based *Stabroek News*, the police have not held anyone in connection with these incidents (18 Feb. 2012).

Media sources report that on 5 December 2011, two Molotov cocktails were thrown at the home of PPP member Odinga Lumumba (*Kaieteur News* 6 Dec. 2011; AP 6 Dec. 2011), who is also a presidential advisor (*ibid.*; *Stabroek News* 5 Jan. 2012). According to the Georgetown-based *Kaieteur News*, the bombs caused a small fire in his yard and "minor damage" to the house (6 Dec. 2011). Associated Press (AP) reports that no one was injured (6 Dec. 2011). *Stabroek News* reports that another Molotov cocktail was thrown onto his premise on 5 January 2012, causing damage to his fence and kennel (5 Jan. 2012). According to *Kaieteur News*, Lumumba has claimed to be a target of opposition forces at election time, and faced attacks in 2001 and 2006 (6 Dec. 2011). In response to the December 2011 attacks on both Lumumba and Sahoye-Shury, the PPP/C reportedly stated that their party "vehemently condemns these violent acts of terrorism perpetrated on its members" (qtd. in *Stabroek News* 9 Dec. 2011).

Media sources indicate that in July 2012, a PPP office was burned down by protesters in Linden (CMC 20 July 2012; AP 20 July 2012). The incident occurred during general unrest that followed in the wake of a confrontation between protesters and police, in which three protesters were shot and killed when the police fired at demonstrators (CMC 20 July 2012; AP 20 July 2012). In addition to the three deaths, sources report that approximately 20 people were injured during the protest (*ibid.*; Freedom House 2013). The protesters in Linden were reportedly demonstrating in response to an increase in electricity rates (AP 20 July 2012; CMC 20 July 2013). According to Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC), the police fired at protesters who had occupied a bridge (*ibid.*). *Kaieteur News* further reports that on 10 August 2012, a building where a PPP supporter had his office was one of five buildings destroyed by fires in Linden, which occurred during protests that continued after the shootings by police (*Kaieteur News* 10 Aug. 2012).

The Alliance for Change (AFC), one of Guyana's opposition parties, reportedly claimed that the PPP/C government had ignored the concerns of Linden's residents that they were unable to pay more for electricity due to unemployment and poverty, and stated that the situation "should never have been allowed to escalate to the point where the residents of Linden had to use extreme measures to gain the government's attention" (qtd. in CMC 19 July 2012). In turn, the government blamed the opposition groups AFC and A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), whom they claimed "organized and allowed their Members of Parliament (MPs), activists and extremists to lead protest against a thoughtful and sensitive programme for the gradual reform of the provision of electricity to the Linden community to deteriorate to such a point of violence and destruction" (qtd. in CMC 19 July 2012). According to Freedom House, the Linden Commission of Inquiry appointed to investigate the incident in Linden found the police responsible for the killings but cleared the Minister of Home Affairs of blame (2013).

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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