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Côte d'Ivoire: The Rassemblement des républicains (RDR), including its links to the Rassemblement des houphouétistes pour la démocratie et la paix (RHDP), its position in the political arena and the treatment of the RHDP and RDR members by the authorities

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Creation of the Rally of the Republicans (Rassemblement des républicains, RDR) and its links to the Rally of the Houphouetistes for Democracy and Peace (Rassemblement des houphouétistes pour la démocratie et la paix, RHDP)

According to two sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the RDR is a political party founded in September 1994 (US Nov. 2009; RDR n.d.). Its president is Alassane Ouattara (Afrik.com 22 Feb. 2010; *Le Nouveau Réveil* 16 Feb. 2010; UNOCI 11 March 2010), a former Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire (AFP 4 March 2010; *Le Monde* 20 Feb. 2010). The RDR belongs to a coalition of political parties-the RHDP-which includes the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire), the African Democratic Rally (Rassemblement démocratique africain, PDCI-RDA), the Movement of the Forces of the Future (Mouvement des forces d'avenir, MFA) and the Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire (Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire, UDPCI) (*Le Nouveau Réveil* 16 Feb. 2010; *Notre Voie* 28 April 2010; *AM* 1 March 2009). This coalition was reportedly founded in France in 2005 (*Notre Voie* 28 April 2010).

RDR's position in the Ivorian political arena

In correspondence sent to the Research Directorate on 4 May 2010, the director of the Amnesty International (AI) section in Côte d'Ivoire stated that, like members of a number of opposition parties, some RDR members [translation] "occupy...senior government positions." According to numerous sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the ministers of agriculture; of family, women and social affairs; of higher education and scientific research; and of new technologies, information and communication are RDR members (AFP 4 March 2010; APA 4 March 2010; Connectionivoirienne.net 4 March 2010; RFI 4 March 2010). According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the RDR won five seats out of 223 in the 2000 legislative elections (IPU n.d.).

Treatment of RHDP and RDR members by the authorities

Sources indicate that, in February 2010, four or five people were killed and a number of others wounded in the central-western town of Gagnoa during clashes between security forces and RHDP activists calling for the restoration of the Independent Electoral Commission (Commission électorale indépendante, CEI), but there is no indication as to which side the casualties were on (PANA 20 Feb. 2010; *Le Monde* 20 Feb. 2010; see also *Jeune Afrique* 23 Feb. 2010). The CEI was dissolved by President Laurent Gbagbo on 12 February 2010 (ibid.), and was reinstated shortly thereafter under the RHDP as before (AFP 4 March 2010). According to an article in the 23 February 2010 issue of *Jeune Afrique*, other clashes in the western town of Daloa caused two deaths. PANAPress (PANA) reported that, according to unidentified sources close to the opposition, security forces fired live ammunition at demonstrators during these confrontations (20 Feb. 2010). In an interview with Afrik.com regarding, among other things, the demonstrations in Côte d'Ivoire in February 2010, a political scientist and sociologist at the Paris-based Centre for Conflict Studies (Centre d'études sur les conflits) stated that [translation] "the security forces do not have the training or appropriate equipment to control the demonstrations and, unfortunately, they fire live ammunition" (20 Feb. 2010). PANA reported that demonstrators attacked local government offices and some offices of the governing Ivorian Popular Front (Front populaire ivoirien, FPI) in other towns, such as Abengourou, Dimbokro and Bondoukou, before being dispersed by security forces (PANA 20 Feb. 2010). As well, according to an article in the 28 January 2010 edition of the Burkina Faso daily *L'Observateur Paalga*, in January 2010, the youth of the Rally of Houphouëtistes for Democracy and Peace (Jeunesse du Rassemblement des houphouëtistes pour la démocratie et la paix, JRHDP) organized a demonstration against the monopolization of public media by allies of President Laurent Gbagbo and demanded fair and balanced access to State organs for all political parties. Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Regarding the treatment of RDR members by the Ivorian authorities, the director of the Amnesty International (AI) section in Côte d'Ivoire wrote the following in correspondence to the Research Directorate on 4 May 2010:

[Translation]

Since the signing of the Ouagadougou political agreement by the opposing sides [President Gbagbo and the secretary general of the New Forces (Forces Nouvelles)], there has been a period of calm in the country. To be sure, the human rights situation is not ideal, but the general view among my various colleagues in Côte d'Ivoire is that there is no persecution or discriminatory treatment of members of the RDR at this time.

However, the Human Rights Watch report on Côte d'Ivoire stated, without providing details, that in August 2008, some young government supporters attacked a hotel where the secretary general of the RDR was staying (Human Rights Watch 2009). According to the US Department of State *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009*, a teacher and RDR activist was arrested by members of the security operations command centre (CECOS) in September 2009 and held for about one month at the Abidjan correctional facility and penitentiary (Maison d'arrêt et de correction d'Abidjan, MACA) for "attempting to overthrow the government" (US 11 March 2010, s. 1.c). According to the RDR's secretary for human rights, who visited him in October, his body was scarred from the beatings he received while in detention (ibid.). Further information on the treatment of RDR members by the Ivorian authorities could not 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 the president of the Ivorian League for Human Rights (Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme, LIDHO), the office of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and members of the Rally of the Republicans (Rassemblement des républicains, RDR) executive in Abidjan were unsuccessful.

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(MEDIAP), Reuters, Voice of America (VOA).

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