



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Democratic Republic of Congo: A newspaper called *NUMERICA* published in Kinshasa, particularly an article titled "La famille n'a plus revu Géraldine Ndundu depuis plus de six mois," which appeared in issue No. 664 of 22 February 2005; the existence of a reporter whose initials are "A.B." (2005-April 2006)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The information in the following three paragraphs was provided by the president of Journaliste en danger (JED) in correspondence sent to the Research Directorate on 12 April 2006. JED is based in Kinshasa, and describes itself as [translation] "an independent, non-partisan organization that defends and promotes freedom of the press and the Alert Network [Réseau d'alerte] of the Central African Media Organization [Organisation des médias d'Afrique centrale, OMAC]" (JED 12 Apr. 2006; see also IFEX n.d.). JED is a member of the Tunisia Monitoring Group, which is part of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX-TMG 27 June 2005).

NUMERICA is a bi-weekly newspaper published in Kinshasa. Its head office is located on the 5th floor of the Botour Building in Gombe Commune, Kinshasa. The publication is described as [translation] "a newspaper that supports the promotion of republican virtues." *NUMERICA*, like the radio and television channels TROPICANA TV and *NUMERICA* TV, belongs to the press group owned by Jean-Pierre Kibambi Shintwa [or Kibambe Shintwa (Projet ARGO Oct. 2004, 43)]. Kabeya Pindi Pasi is the editor.

The President of JED stated, after verification, that on page 3 of issue No. 664 of *NUMERICA*, dated 22 February 2005, there is an article entitled "*Portée disparue! La famille n'a plus revu Géraldine Ndundu depuis plus de six mois*" ["Reported missing! Family has not seen Géraldine Ndundu for more than six months"]. A copy of that article, accompanied by a passport photograph of a woman with the caption [translation] "Géraldine has shown no signs of life" is attached to this Response to Information Request. That article is signed "A.B." Those initials belong to Anicet Basilua, a reporter and the editor-in-chief of *NUMERICA*.

According to the President of JED, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a person can pay to have an article published in a Congolese newspaper, and, despite complaints from journalists, this is common practice in Kinshasa.

This practice is also mentioned in *La Presse en République démocratique du Congo*, a report from the joint mission to Kinshasa conducted by the Belgian

Commissioner General's Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons (Commissariat général aux réfugiés et apatrides, CGRA), the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides, OFPRA) and the Swiss Federal Office for Refugees (Office fédéral des réfugiés, ODR) in May 2004 (Projet ARGO Oct. 2004, 9). According to the report, [translation] "advertising inserts or false missing person notices published in newspapers . . . often appear in relation to refugee claims" (Projet ARGO Oct. 2004, 9). The authors of the report explain that the situation is a result of the low income earned by journalists, which fosters [translation] "widespread corruption . . . [and] a lack of professional ethics" (Projet ARGO Oct. 2004, 9). The same authors, citing JED, indicate that

[translation]

the missing person notices are apparently being replaced by the insertion names in articles about topics of general interest or about actual events. In any case, while it is possible that some newspaper articles have been manipulated for a particular issue, most of the fraudulent articles appear throughout an edition, which makes it difficult to determine the authenticity of any issue submitted as evidence in asylum cases. On the other hand, the use of a different font from one article to another - or within the same article - does not necessarily indicate fraud: typesetting changes have been noted in major newspapers and in articles with no references to "victims of persecution." (Projet ARGO Oct. 2004, 9)

The report of a mission to Kinshasa from 16 June to 15 August 2002, published by the Documentation Centre for Asylum Agencies (Centre de documentation des instances d'asile, CEDOCA), which falls under Belgium's Commissioner General's Office for Refugees and Stateless Persons, cites several unidentified observers in noting that, in the DRC,

[translation]

dishonest people sometimes pay journalists to write articles. Such an article could say that a Mr. X or a Ms. Y has disappeared without a trace and that his or her life is at risk. It is difficult to detect these lies because, upon verification, these articles turn out to be "authentic" and have in fact been published. In-depth, on-site research is often required. (Oct. 2002, 16)

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.

References

Belgium. October 2002. Centre de documentation des instances d'asile (CEDOCA). *Rapport de mission à Kinshasa (République démocratique du Congo) du 16 June au 5 août 2002.*

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Attachment

Journaliste en danger (JED). 12 April 2006. Copy of the article "Portée disparue! La famille n'a plus revu Géraldine Ndundu depuis plus de six mois," published on page 3 of *NUMERICA* No. 664 of 11 February 2002, 2 pp.

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