



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

The Board		14 June 2005
About the Board	RDC100214.FE	
Biographies		
Organization Chart	Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC): Whether a presidential decree requires that only a person's family name be recorded on official documents or registers; if so, whether this decree applies to school documents, particularly elementary school certificates; whether the students' grades are indicated as a percentage on these certificates (1992-2005)	
Employment		
Legal and Policy References		
Publications	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa	
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	During 13 June 2005 telephone interviews, a journalist from the Belgian daily <i>Le Soir</i> who is also an expert in the African Great Lakes region, and a representative of the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (Centre des droits de l'homme et du droit humanitaire, CDH) in Lubumbashi provided the following information.	
Immigration Division		
Immigration Appeal Division		
Decisions	In the early 1970s, President Mobutu prohibited the use of Christian first names. Citizens had to replace their Christian first names with one or more ancestral names.	
Forms		
Statistics		
Research		
Research Program	However, in the early 1990s, this directive was abolished and the Zairians could use their Christian first names once again, but not for official identification purposes. Consequently, Christian first names could not appear on official documents or registers. In other words, they could be used only in daily life.	
National Documentation Packages	However, when Laurent Désiré Kabila came into power in 1997, Christian first names could again be used on official documents and registers.	
Issue Papers and Country Fact Sheets	The CDH representative indicated, however, that some people still prefer to use their post-names (<i>post-noms</i>) instead of their Christian first names (see the definition of "post-name" in the excerpt from the <i>Politique africaine</i> article below) (CDH 13 June 2005).	
Responses to Information Requests		
Recent Research	With regard to school documents (school diplomas, report cards and certificates), the CDH representative explained that these kinds of documents currently bear either the student's family and Christian first name, or the student's family name, followed by his or her post-names (<i>ibid.</i>). Prior to 1997, it was [translation] "mandatory" that all school documents indicate the student's family name, followed by his or her post-names (<i>ibid.</i>).	
Media Centre		
News		
Information Sheets		
Media Relations		
Proactive Disclosure	The CDH representative explained that, on the elementary school certificates that he has seen, students' overall grades are indicated in the form of a percentage (<i>ibid.</i>).	

In describing the circumstances in which the use of Christian first names was prohibited and then re-established in the RDC, Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, from the University of Kinshasa, noted the following in an article titled "De l'authenticité à la libération : se prénommer en République démocratique du Congo," published in *Politique africaine* in December 1998:

[translation]

on 27 October 1971, by decision of the Political Office of the single party, the Popular Movement of the Revolution (*Mouvement populaire de la révolution*), "Congo," the name of the country and the river, was changed in both instances to "Zaire." On this occasion, it was announced that the names of the monuments from the colonial period were to disappear by 1 January 1972 (102).

...

On 15 February [1971], the Political Office decided that "*all Zairians (as of that date) shall bear typically Zairian names and must add one or more ancestral names to their family names.*" This addition was called the "post-name" (*post-nom*), because of its position after the family name and its opposition to the French term for the first name, "*prénom*" (*Politique africaine* Dec. 1998, 103).

...

The ordinance-law of 30 August 1972 even introduced an article to the Penal Code threatening that any minister who baptized a Zairian citizen with a foreign first name would be subject to criminal penalties (*ibid.*).

...

The extremes of the authenticity policy were abolished by Mobutu himself on 24 April 1990 in his democratization speech, which the National Sovereign Conference confirmed; but the use of post-names was still not abandoned. The change was due to the fact that a citizen's identity, which consisted of the family name and the post-name, could still be preceded by a first name, as noted earlier. In practice, this trend resulted in officializing the "underground" practices of the authenticity era. Although a person's "written" identity continued to ignore first names, they were used more freely than ever in everyday speech (*ibid.*, 104).

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

Centre des droits de l'homme et du droit humanitaire (CDH), Lubumbashi. 13 June 2005. Telephone interview with a representative.

Politique africaine [Paris]. December 1998. No. 72. Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem. "De l'authenticité à la libération : se prénommer et République démocratique du Congo." <<http://www.politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/072098.pdf>> [Accessed 13 June 2005]

Le Soir [Brussels]. 13 June 2005. Telephone interview with a journalist who is an expert in the African Great Lakes region.

Additional Sources Consulted

Publications : *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, *Jeune*

Afrique/L'Intelligent, Resource Centre country file.

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica, Amnesty International, Digitalcongo.net, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI.net), Human Rights Watch (HRW), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), International Crisis Group (ICG), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), MISNA, ReliefWeb, United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), United States Department of State.

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.

 [Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)