

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

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8 February 2013

### **BDI104297.E**

Burundi: Front for Democracy in Burundi (Frodebu), including treatment of its members and their families by government authorities (November 2004-February 2013)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

#### **1. Background**

The Front for Democracy in Burundi (Front pour la démocratie au Burundi, Frodebu) is a political party that has been in existence in the country since 1992 (*PHW* 2012, 211; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 91). Sources indicate that it is seen as a Hutu-dominated party (Independent Consultant 28 Jan. 2013; Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013; Human Rights Watch 4 Nov. 2005, 2). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, an independent consultant based in Burundi who has worked over the last 25 years for international and domestic NGOs operating in Central Africa and who has written on the political situation in the country, stated that Frodebu could be considered the [translation] "progenitor" of Hutu political movements in Burundi (Independent Consultant 28 Jan. 2013).

Prior to elections held in 2005, a transitional government formed principally by Frodebu and the Union for National Progress (Union et Progrès National, UPRONA), a Tutsi political party, governed the country (*PHW* 2012, 206-208; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 91, 93; Human Rights Watch 4 Nov. 2005, 2). Frodebu's Domitien Ndayizeye served as president of the country from April 2003 to August 2005, as part of a power-sharing agreement with UPRONA (*PHW* 2012, 207; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 91).

#### **2. Period from the 2005 Elections to the 2010 Elections**

##### **2.1 2005 Elections**

In the 2005 National Assembly elections, Frodebu received approximately 21.7 percent of the vote and obtained 30 of the 118 seats, second only to the Council for the Defence of Democracy -Forces [also Front (IPU n.d.a)] for the Defence of Democracy (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de défense de la démocratie, CNDD-FDD) (*ibid.*; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 91-92). Frodebu also won 3 elected seats in the 49-seat Senate, compared to the CNDD-FDD's 30 (*ibid.*, 91; IPU n.d.b). The CNDD-FDD's Pierre Nkurunziza became president of the country (*PHW* 2012, 208; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 91). *Political Handbook of the World (PHW)* describes the CNDD-FDD as "a former rebel group" that became "the country's dominant political force," notably by gaining Hutu support, to the detriment of Frodebu (2012, 208).

As part of a new unity government, members of Frodebu were appointed to serve in Nkurunziza's government (*PHW* 2012, 208; *Political Parties of the World* 2009, 92). UPRONA was also represented (*PHW* 2012, 208). However, *PHW* reports that there was dissatisfaction among Frodebu members, who claimed they deserved more representation in the government due to their second-place standing (2012, 211-212). *PHW* reports that Frodebu withdrew from the government in March 2006, and that three Frodebu members that opted to stay as Cabinet ministers were expelled from the party (2012, 211-212). In November 2007, after negotiations with the CNDD-FDD, Frodebu obtained more cabinet posts and rejoined the government, although *PHW* reports that there was still dissension among party members about the extent to which they should collaborate with the CNDD-FDD (2012, 212).

##### **2.2 Frodebu Nayakuri Faction**

In June 2008, 12 Frodebu elected representatives, led by former Frodebu president Jean Minani split off and formed Frodebu Nayakuri (*PHW* 2012, 212; AFP 8 June 2008). The Frodebu Nayakuri, or the Real Frodebu, is also known as "Frodebu nyakuri iragi rya Ndayaye" (Afrique Express n.d.) or "Sahwanya Frodebu Nyakuri" (*PHW* 2012, 208). Frodebu

Nayakuri is seen as a supporter of the CNDD-FDD (Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013; *PHW* 2012, 212; *Afrique Express* n.d.).

According to the independent consultant, the split in Frodebu was a result of efforts by the governing party to divide its opponents and to fracture opposition parties (28 Jan. 2013). For his part, a professor emeritus of Political Science at the University of Florida, who has written extensively on Burundi, stated in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that the split was a result of certain members of Frodebu seeking to receive patronage from the CNDD-FDD by supporting it (29 Jan. 2013).

### 2.3 Treatment of Frodebu Members and Supporters

Sources report the following incidents of attacks toward Frodebu.

The US *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2005* reports that, in June 2005, two Frodebu candidates for the upcoming elections and eight supporters were killed in Bubanza Province, while two Frodebu members were killed and a dozen were injured in a grenade attack on a bar owned by a "prominent" Frodebu politician in Bujumbura (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 1a). Reportedly, no official action was taken following these cases (ibid.).

*Country Reports 2005* also states that the Frodebu secretary general claimed that unidentified assailants attacked Frodebu supporters throughout Burundi during the 2005 electoral campaign (ibid., Sec. 3). *Country Reports 2005* adds that "[t]ensions between the CNDD-FDD and FRODEBU remained high during the campaign, and FRODEBU accused the CNDD-FDD of using 'intimidation and terrorism' to win votes" (ibid). Frodebu members accused of links with the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People/National Liberation Front ([Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu-Forces nationales de libération (AI 19 Dec. 2011)], PALIPEHUTU-FNL) "rebel group" were also reportedly detained following the inauguration of the CNDD-FDD government (ibid., Sec. 1d).

Human Rights Watch reports that, following local elections in September 2005, intelligence agents "detained dozens of persons from the Kinama neighborhood of Bujumbura and beat some of them" after voters in the neighbourhood had voted for Frodebu candidates rather than CNDD-FDD candidates (2006). Human Rights Watch notes that three newly elected officials and the husband of another official were among those targeted (2006).

According to Human Rights Watch, there were instances of provincial and local authorities affiliated with the CNDD-FDD using their influence and the police "to hinder political meetings or to shut down press conferences by opposition parties," such as Frodebu (5 Nov. 2008).

Human Rights Watch also reports that four Frodebu members were assassinated in Bujumbura between January and April 2009 (2010). According to Human Rights Watch, three of the four were former members of the CNDD-FDD, and at least two were reportedly killed by individuals linked to the CNDD-FDD and the country's intelligence service (2010).

Human Rights Watch states that Frodebu was among opposition parties claiming that members of *Imbonerakure*, the CNDD-FDD's youth league, "physically attack[ed] their members" in the run-up to 2010 elections (14 May 2010).

### 2.4 2010 Elections

Former president of the country Domitien Ndayizeye was to be Frodebu's candidate in the 2010 presidential elections (*PHW* 2012, 212). According to the independent consultant, due to their candidate's status as a former president, Frodebu was perceived as a [translation] "threat" to the governing party's hold on power (28 Jan. 2013).

However, following local (communal) elections held in 2010, Frodebu, along with other opposition parties, withdrew from the electoral process and refused to participate in the presidential and legislative elections later that year (Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013; Independent Consultant 28 Jan. 2013; Professor of Philosophy 28 Jan. 2013), claiming that electoral fraud had occurred (ibid.; Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013). CNDD-FDD won a majority of the local seats (*PHW* 2012, 208). However, sources report that international observers did not find evidence of fraud (Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013; Professor of Philosophy 28 Jan. 2013). A professor of Philosophy at the University of Sudbury, who is originally from Burundi and who has written on the political situations in Central Africa and Burundi, noted in a telephone interview that domestic observers also did not find evidence of such fraud (28 Jan. 2013).

The CNDD-FDD went on to win the presidential elections and President Pierre Nkurunziza returned to power (*PHW* 2012, 208; *Afrique Express* n.d.). *PHW* says that, as the only candidate, he took almost 92 percent of the vote (2012, 208). The CNDD-FDD likewise won a majority in the national assembly (*PHW* 2012, 208; *Afrique Express* n.d.), taking 81 seats (ibid.). Frodebu Nayakuri obtained five seats (ibid.; Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013). Frodebu Nayakuri also became part of the CNDD-FDD-led government (ibid.; *PHW* 2012, 211). However, the Professor Emeritus stated that Frodebu Nyakuri [translation] "doesn't hold much political weight" in the government (29 Jan. 2013).

### 2.5 Frodebu and the Alliance Démocratique pour le Changement (ADC)

The Democratic Alliance for Change (Alliance Démocratique pour le Changement, ADC) [also Alliance des Démocrates pour le Changement (*PHW* 2012, 212)] is a grouping of opposition parties that withdrew from the electoral process after the communal elections in 2010 (Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013; *Afrique Express* n.d.). According to *PHW*, Frodebu was the instigator of the creation of the ADC (2012, 212). The ADC is led by Léonce Ngendakumana, the president of Frodebu (*PHW* 2012, 212; *Afrique Express* n.d.).

### 3. Period Since 2010

#### 3.1 Situation of Frodebu

Several sources concur that, since the 2010 elections, Frodebu has lost influence in Burundi and is no longer a major political player in the country (Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013; Independent Consultant 2013 28 Jan. 2013; Professor of Philosophy 28 Jan. 2013). The independent consultant (28 Jan. 2013) and the Professor Emeritus (29 Jan. 2013) both stated that, by withdrawing from the electoral process, Frodebu marginalized itself and no longer has much influence. Sources describe the party as [translation] "divided" (Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013) and [translation] "disorganized" (Independent Consultant 28 Jan. 2013). According to the Professor Emeritus, the party is [translation] "a shadow of its former self" (29 Jan. 2013).

The independent consultant expressed the view that Frodebu has [translation] "little credibility" among the electorate and is therefore [translation] "not threatening" to the governing party (28 Jan. 2013). Other sources agree that the party in power does not see Frodebu as a [translation] "threat" (Professor of Philosophy 28 Jan. 2013; Professor Emeritus 29 Jan. 2013). According to the independent consultant, while some opposition parties could still be seen as having the potential to mobilize a rebellion, it is seen as [translation] "unlikely" for Frodebu (28 Jan. 2013). However, the Professor of Philosophy noted that two former presidents of Burundi with links to Frodebu are senators for life, like all former presidents of the country, and that one of these, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, continues to be highly respected and influential (28 Jan. 2013).

#### 3.2 Treatment of Frodebu Members and Supporters

The independent consultant (28 Jan. 2013) and the Professor of Philosophy (28 Jan. 2013) agreed that, as Frodebu is marginalized and is not seen as a threat by the regime, its members are not in danger or victims of violence. According to the Professor of Philosophy, Frodebu's members are [translation] "ignored" by the regime (28 Jan. 2013). As an example, the Professor of Philosophy indicated that, unlike other opposition leaders, who are in exile, the leader of Frodebu is still in Burundi and has continued to criticize the government (28 Jan. 2013). In his view, this demonstrates that Frodebu is [translation] "not in the cross-hairs" of the regime (Professor of Philosophy 28 Jan. 2013).

However, some sources report instances of mistreatment of members of Frodebu following the 2010 elections (RFI 19 Nov. 2012; COSOME 19 Nov 2012; Human Rights Watch May 2012, 37-38). Human Rights Watch reports that, in December 2010, a local Frodebu official in Kivenzi, in the commune of Kanyosha, was killed by armed men (ibid.). According to Human Right Watch, the official started to receive threats from members of the CNDD-FDD soon after he became a Frodebu official in 2005, including threats against his family if he did not leave Frodebu and join the CNDD-FDD (ibid.). Some of the official's family members were reportedly also threatened in the weeks following his death (ibid.).

In addition, sources report that, in November 2012, police disrupted a political meeting organized by Frodebu in the town of Gatumba, to the west of Bujumbura (RFI 19 Nov. 2012; COSOME 19 Nov. 2012). According to Radio France International (RFI), Frodebu had invited representatives of parties belonging to the ADC coalition to the meeting and they were blocked from travelling to the location by approximately 100 policemen (RFI 19 Nov. 2012). As many as ten people were wounded, including Frodebu members, according to sources (ibid; COSOME 19 Nov. 2012). Police reportedly used tear gas (ibid; RFI 19 Nov. 2012). RFI also reports that police used batons, sticks, and water cannons (19 Nov. 2012).

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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### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral Sources:** An investigator with the Ligue des Droits de la personne dans la région de Grands Lacs did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response. A professor emeritus at the Catholic University of Louvain, a professor of Sociology and Demography at the University of Burundi, and a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Antwerp Faculty of Law were unable to provide information for this Response. Attempts to contact a researcher at the Institut de recherche pour le développement, the head of an NGO based in Burundi and a representative of the Ligue Burundaise des Droits de l'Homme Itaka were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** Agence de Presse Africaine; AllAfrica; Burundi – Bureau de l'Obudsman, Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante; *Burundi Bwacu*; *Burundi Réalités*; ecoi.net; Factiva; Freedom House; Frodebu – section Belgique; International Crisis Group; Iwacu; Radio Isanganiro; Radio Télévision Nationale du Burundi; United Nations – Integrated Regional Information Networks, Refworld.

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