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18 November 2004

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Dominican Republic: Treatment of members of the Reformist Social Christian Party (Partido Reformista Social Cristiano) before and during the elections (January-November 2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Although violent events occurred during the election campaign, no specific information on the treatment of members of the Reformist Social Christian Party (Partido Reformista Social Cristiano, PSRC) before and during the May 2004 presidential elections could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information could be useful.

ACAN-EFE pointed out the internal tensions that shook up the PRSC in 2003, when it split into six factions, creating "one of the worst internal crises in its history" (ACAN-EFE 23 July 2004). The same source also indicated that this crisis was reflected in the party's poor results at the May 2004 election, when its presidential candidate, Eduardo Estrella, won only 8 per cent of the vote (ibid.).

Shortly before the elections, the *Latin American Weekly Report* indicated that some comments made by the Revolutionary Democratic Party (Partido Revolucionario Democrático, PRD) leaders gave the impression that the party might resort to violence in order to ensure that its candidate, Leonel Fernandez, was elected (27 April 2004).

Despite this information, the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the Dominican Republic and the non-partisan Citizen Participation (Participación Ciudadana) believe that the

16 May 2004 elections were conducted in an orderly manner (OAS 16 May 2004; Participación Ciudadana 19 May 2004). In addition, the OAS Electoral Observation Mission's second report reported the signing of an accord, the title of which indicates that it is a "compromise for a civilized election campaign and for the strengthening of democracy" (*Compromiso por una Campaña Electoral Civilizada y por el Fortalecimiento de la Democracia*) among the three leaders of the political parties involved in the 16 April 2004 campaign (n.d.).

However, sources refer to violent incidents that occurred during the campaign or on polling day (AFP 16 May 2004; BBC News 17 May 2004; *La Nación* 17 May 2004; OEA n.d.). These incidents involved supporters from both main parties, the PRD and the Dominican Liberation Party (Partido de la Liberación Dominicana, PLD) (AFP 16 May 2004; BBC News 17 May 2004). *La Nación* reported a total of 12 violent deaths during the election campaign and on polling day (17 May 2004).

According to Freedom House, corruption and the rejection of transparency are eroding political rights in the Dominican Republic (n.d.). Furthermore, Amnesty International denounced the arbitrary arrests of supporters, the excessive use of force and the illegal execution of demonstrators and passers-by at demonstrations in response to the economic crisis at the beginning of 2004 (2 Mar. 2004).

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.

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Internet sites, including: Derechos Human Rights; *Diario Libre* ; Ecoi.net; *El Caribe* ; Human Rights Watch; Instituto de Derechos Humanos Santo Domingo; Instituto de Investigación, Documentación y Derechos Humanos de la República Dominicana; Latin American Information Network Center (LANIC); Resource Center of the Americas; Reformistadigital.com.



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