

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

[Home](#)

> [Research Program](#)

> Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests

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6 January 2015

ETH104975.E

Ethiopia: membership cards of the Union for Democracy and Justice party (UDJ), including issuance requirements and procedures, details of their format, security features and production
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. UDJ Membership Cards Issued by UDJ in Ethiopia

Information about the Union for Democracy and Justice party (UDJ) [also known as the Andinet party (UDJ n.d.a)] membership cards was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the UDJ party's website, to become a "sustaining member" of the party, a person needs to donate \$30.00 a month (ibid. n.d.b). The website states that sustaining members receive a one-year subscription to a newsletter and a "customized membership card" identifying the person as a UDJ member (ibid.). The website further indicates that a person can become a "life member" with a donation of \$500 or more (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the President of Unity for Human Rights and Democracy in Toronto, an NGO with the primary objective of raising awareness about human rights violations in Ethiopia (Unity for Human Rights and Democracy 29 Nov. 2014) and an affiliate of the UDJ party, provided the following information with regards to UDJ membership, which was obtained from the UDJ's Foreign Affairs head in Addis Ababa (ibid. 18 Dec. 2014):

when a person applies to be a member of UDJ, he or she would be candidates/recruits for 3 months before they become regular members. Then their application would be sent to district or branch offices for follow up and assessment. According to [UDJ's Foreign Affairs head in Addis Ababa], membership matters are decided at the district level. Hence, members can make their application for membership at the district level. The executive body of each district evaluates the candidate's performance for three months and at the end of the period it decides whether to recommend that person for membership.

Under normal circumstances, a person must be recommended by the district (or they call it "Wereda" in Amharic) for regular membership. Once the district recommends the person for membership, the person pays 50 Ethiopian birr [approximately C\$2.86] and becomes a member for [a] one year term. Membership is for one year and it should be renewed every year. (ibid.)

The same source provided the following information on the appearance of the UDJ membership card:

With regard to the format of the membership card, the card is one fourth of an A4 size paper [1]. If you fold an A4 size paper into two, one horizontal and one vertical fold, the last rectangular size you find is the size of

UDJ's membership card. The final product, the membership card, is again folded once and it will have two pages on the inside facing each other.

On one side (left side) is written the member's profile such as name, age, gender, duration of membership or the date when membership started, full address such as Kebele (local), Wereda (district), City and sub city. On the opposite side (right side) there is a table with 12 rows for the 12 months of the year and a space to tick when the person pays his or her monthly dues.

The language used on the card is Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia.

The color of the card is yellow on the outside and white on the inside.

The membership card is not laminated. However, the external part is glossed over with yellow material that has a plastic nature. It is a material commonly used in Ethiopia for identity cards by local administrations.

There are no security features on the cards. (ibid.)

Information regarding the production and printing of UDJ membership cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Membership Cards Issued by UDJ Support Organizations in North America

According to the President of Unity for Human Rights and Democracy in Toronto, North American support organizations for the UDJ do not follow one formal membership application procedure (ibid. 29 Nov. 2014). He said that "[e]ach chapter is independent and administers membership or other matter autonomously" (ibid.). He explained that, in the case of Unity for Human Rights and Democracy, someone becomes a member by completing an application, declaring their background, and paying annual fees (ibid.). He said that the organization does not issue membership cards, but does issue certificates to show that the person is a member and to explain their involvement with the support organization since joining (ibid.). He explained that many of the UDJ North American chapters were founded and are supported by people who have citizenship in other countries, and since Ethiopia does not allow for dual citizenship, those individuals are not legally allowed to become members of UDJ in Ethiopia (ibid.). He said that within the Toronto organization, they do not have "any known regular UDJ members" but also explained that

[o]ur understanding of the process is that people have to make application directly to the party to be regular members. However, because of resource problems, inexperience in political activities or organizations, and for fear that direct membership application might be a problem for some people, and given that many things are done informally in Ethiopian institutions, it is possible that someone in North America can apply to be a member of UDJ through the chapters and receive a membership card. (ibid.)

Similar to the UDJ website, the website of the Andinet North American Association of Support Organizations (ANAASO), an association of support groups in the USA and Canada for the UDJ party (Columbia University, n.d.), states that someone who donates \$30 a month becomes a "sustaining member" and receives "Awde Ethiopia" newsletters and a "customized membership card" identifying the person as a UDJ member (ANAASO n.d.). The website also states that with a \$500 donation, the person becomes a "life member" and gets lifetime subscription to the newsletter (ibid.). Corroborating or further information about ANAASO membership cards, or UDJ membership cards issued through ANAASO, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

For further information about the UDJ party, including information about support organizations in North America and treatment of UDJ members by authorities, see Response to Information Request ETH104127.

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.

Note

[1] A4 paper size is 8.3 x 11.7 inches (210 x 297 mm) (papersizes.org n.d.).

References

Andinet North American Association of Support Organizations (ANAASO). N.d. "Membership." <<http://www.andinetusa.org/membership-center-2/membership-forms>> [Accessed 30 Sept. 2014]

Columbia University. N.d. Columbia University Libraries, Information Services. <http://library.columbia.edu/locations/global/virtual-libraries/african_studies/countries/ethiopia/gov.html> [Accessed 22 Dec. 2014]

Papersizes.org. N.d. "Dimensions of A Series Paper Sizes." <<http://www.papersizes.org/a-paper-sizes.htm>> [Accessed 22 Dec. 2014]

Unity for Democracy and Justice Party (UDJ). N.d.a. "About Us." <<https://www.andinet.org/about-us>> [Accessed 22 Dec. 2014]

_____. N.d.b "Contact UDJ." <http://www.andinet.org/AmharicNews/?page_id=182> [Accessed 30 Sept. 2014]

Unity for Human Rights and Democracy. 18 December 2014. Correspondence from the President to the Research Directorate.

_____. 29 November 2014. Correspondence from the President to the Research Directorate.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives of the following organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Andinet North America Association of Support Organizations (ANAASO), Boston Chapter; UDJ Ethiopia. Representatives of the following organization were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response: ANAASO, Washington DC. A professor of political science who specializes in Ethiopian politics was unable to provide information for this Response.

Internet sites, including: Africa Confidential; Africa Research Bulletin; AllAfrica; eci.net; Ethiomedia; Ethio Netsanet; Europa World Online; Factiva; Horn Affairs; International Crisis Group; International Federation for Human Rights; *Political Handbook of the World*; United Nations – Refworld.

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[Top of Page](#)

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