**Link: http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?page=type&type=QUERYRESPONSE&publisher=&coi=DJI&docid=3ae6aac550&skip=0**

**Djibouti: Political opposition parties (This Response replaces an earlier version dated 13 January 1999)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Publisher | [Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](http://www.refworld.org/publisher/IRBC.html) |
| Author | Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Canada |
| Publication Date | 1 February 1999 |
| Citation / Document Symbol | DJI31018.FE |
| Cite as | Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Djibouti: Political opposition parties (This Response replaces an earlier version dated 13 January 1999)*, 1 February 1999, DJI31018.FE , available at: http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6aac550.html [accessed 14 December 2015] |
| Disclaimer | This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States. |

As this revision was being prepared, the Research Directorate received unconfirmed reports that PRD president Abdillahi Hamareiteih had been dismissed and the governing council of the party replaced by another faction of the PRD. An update to this Response will be issued once additional information is available to the Research Directorate.]

There are several political parties in Djibouti (Political Handbook of the World: 1998 1998, 262-263; Europa 1998, 1163-1164). However, the Djibouti constitution of 1992 provides for only four legally recognized parties (ibid.; Country Reports 1997 1998, 95; AFP 13 Nov. 1997). As a result, only the following political parties currently enjoy legal status: the Popular Movement for Progress (Rassemblement populaire pour le progrès, or RPP), which has been in power since the country became independent in June 1977, the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy-Daoud (Front pour la restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie, ou FRUD-Daoud); the Party for Democratic Renewal (Parti du renouveau démocratique, or PRD); and the National Democratic Party (Parti national démocratique, or PND) (Europa 1998, 1163; Specialist 22 Dec. 1998). A historical overview of each of these opposition parties follows:

1. Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD)

The FRUD resulted from the merger of Afar militant groups in 1991 (Minorities at Risk 25 June 1998, 1; La Lettre hebdomadaire de la FIDH Sept. 1997, 3; FRUD-Dini 15 Dec. 1998). It immediately began an armed struggle against the government in Djibouti, which was dominated by members of the Issa clan (ibid.).

A peace agreement was signed on 26 December 1994 between the Djibouti government and the FRUD-Daoud faction, led by Ali Mohamed Daoud (known as Jean-Marie) and Kifleh Ahmed (Minorities at Risk Projet 25 June 1998, 1; Europa 1998, 1163; FRUD-Dini 15 Dec. 1998). The faction was given two government positions in June 1995 and achieved legal status as a political party in March 1996 (ibid.). In the 19 December 1997 legislative elections, the RPP-FRUD-Daoud alliance won 78.5 per cent of the vote and all 65 parliamentary seats (Political Handbook of the World: 1998: 1998, 261). According to the Minorities at Risk Project, 28 of the 65 seats are held by members of the Afar clan (25 June 1998, 7). The 2 January 1999 issue of Tne Indian Ocean Newsletter (ION) reported that FRUD-Daoud member of parliament Abatte Ebo Adou was expelled from the party because he announced his candidacy for the May 1999 presidential elections without first obtaining the party executive's approval (6).

The other FRUD faction, known as FRUD-Dini and led by Ahmed Dini, chose to continue the armed struggle (FRUD-Dini 15 Dec. 1998; Minorities at Risk Project 25 June 1998, 7). Further dissension erupted within the FRUD-Dini faction on 23 March 1996 (ibid.; Europa 1998, 1166), as a result of which Ibrahim Chehem Daoud, a former assistant secretary of communications, created a new political and military organization known as FRUD-Renaissance (Minorities at Risk Project 1998, 7; Europa 1998, 1166). However, in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate on 15 December 1998, a senior FRUD-Dini official stated that FRUD-Renaissance never became operational as its leader, Ibrahim Chehem Daoud, quickly threw his support behind the Aptidon government and is now working within the Djibouti administration.

The FRUD-Dini faction is continuing the armed struggle, and on 7 September 1998, according to The Indian Ocean Newsletter (ION), Ahmed Dini's men launched two attacks on the localities of Soutbali and Mideho, 14 km from the town of Obock in the north of the country, targeting economic infrastructures and military garrisons (12 Sept. 1998, 7). A senior FRUD-Dini official stated that the FRUD-Dini would intensify the fighting until the present government agreed to share power (FRUD-Dini 15 Dec. 1998). A 2 November 1998 AFP article quoted a FRUD-Dini press release in which the faction reported that it had carried out attacks on 31 October  and 1 November 1998 in Médého in the north and Dagguirou in the south; several people were reportedly killed and many others wounded as a result of these attacks.

For safety reasons, FRUD-Dini members and supporters do not carry membership cards or any other identity documents (FRUD-Dini 15 Dec. 1998). The movement is mainly composed of  members of the Afar clan but also includes members of other ethnic groups such as the Issas and other Somali clans (ibid.).

In an 8 December 1998 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris who is a specialist in Djibouti affairs said that some members of the Afar clan, especially those associated with the FRUD-Dini faction, might well be in serious difficulty and be suffering repression at the hands of the Djibouti authorities or the military, particularly in the northern regions, where the FRUD-Dini faction is making incursions.

In its report entitled Afars of Djibouti, Minorities at Risk Project noted that members of the Afar clan were still at risk in Djibouti (25 June 1998, 8).

2. Party for Democratic Renewal (PRD)

Mohamed Djame Elabe, former minister of public health  in President Aptidon's cabinet, founded the PRD in Djibouti on 27 September 1992 (PRD 29 Dec. 1998; Political Handbook of the World:1998, 1998, 263). In the 1992 legislative elections, the PRD won 24.41% of votes cast but no seats in parliament (ibid.).

Following Djame's death on 26 November 1996, rifts appeared within the party in May 1997 (ibid., 264, PRD 29 Dec. 1998). At the PRD's 23 May 1997 convention, Abdillahi Hamareiteih was elected party chairman, Maki Houmed Gaba, first vice-chairman, and Carton Dibeth Oblik, second vice-chairman (ibid.).

In the legislative elections of 19 December 1997, the PRD did not win any seats in parliament even though it obtained 19.2 per cent of the votes cast (Political Handbook of the World: 1998 1998, 261).

A joint communiqué signed on 25 November 1998 by Abdillahi Hamareiteh, Moumin Bahdon Farah and Mahdi Ibrahim God, chairmen of the PRD, the Group for Democracy and the Republic (GDR) and the Djibouti United Opposition Front (FUOD) respectively (a copy was faxed to the Research Directorate on 25 December 1998), established a common platform and the main points of an alliance between the three parties (Communiqué 25 Nov. 1998). In the 19 December 1997 legislative elections GDR leaders exhorted their supporters to vote for the PRD because  the GDR was not a legally recognized party (Political Handbook of the World:1998 1998, 203).

According to PRD leader, Abdillahi Hamareiteih , the members of his party carry a membership card with a passport-sized photograph (PRD 29 Dec. 1998). He stated that since 1996 only the chairman has had the authority to sign membership cards; before then, cards were signed by the general treasurer (ibid.). A specimen PRD membership card is attached.

Information on the non-legal faction of the PRD led by Daher Ahmed Farah can be found in DJI31107.E of 25 January 1999.

3. National Democratic Party (PND)

PND leader Aden Robleh Awalleh founded the party in Paris in 1992 (Europa 1998, 1163, Political Handbook of the World: 1998 1998, 264). Formerly vice- chairman of the governing RPP and  an ex-cabinet minister, Awalleh founded the National Djiboutian Movement for the Establishment of Democracy (MNDID) in 1986, and was its leader (ibid.).

The PND advocates the establishment of a government of national union which would introduce democratic reforms (Europa 1998, 1163). In the 19 December 1997 legislative elections, the party won 2.3 per cent of the votes cast (Political Handbook of the World: 1998 1998, 261). According to Political Handbook of the World: 1998, Aden Robleh's May 1997 decision to suspend party spokesperson Farah Ali Wabert has served only to heighten tensions within the party (ibid.).

In November 1998, the Djibouti Internet site, quoting AFP, reported a grenade attack on PND headquarters for which no one has claimed responsibility (Actualité: Djibouti Nov. 1998, 1). According to the report, the headquarters had recently come under the control of Aden Robleh's opponents following a split within the party; the interim party executive was headed by Mahdi Ahmed Abdillahié (ibid.). Another AFP report quoted on the site in December 1998 stated that Aden Robleh had disappeared but did not specify what had happened to him (ibid. Dec. 1998). This news has not, however, been corroborated by other sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to a professor who is a specialist in Djibouti affairs, the government is trying to [translation] "sink" its adversaries before the 1999 election (Professor 8 Dec. 1998). The professor stated that the climate is one in which people expect the government to fall, and would-be successors are waging an all-out fight to win the 1999 presidential election (ibid.). The government  is firing in all directions at once and dissidence is not tolerated (ibid.). Traditionally the Afars have been the government's prime targets, but now members of  the other clans, even the Issas, are being targeted too (ibid.).

In a  resolution passed on 18 December 1997, the European Parliament described the alarming human rights situation in Djibouti and voiced particular concern over the government's violent attacks against members of opposition parties (ION 3 Jan. 1998). Regarding dissidence, the authors of Mondes rebelles wrote the following in 1996:

[Translation]

The breakup of the armed Afar opposition is no guarantee of stability. On the contrary, storm clouds seem to be gathering over the tiny republic. After joining forces against the Afars, the Issas have started to settle accounts among themselves. If  the Issa powder keg blows up, the country may be caught up in conflict, if not civil war.... (1996, 446).

The same source had already stated that the various Issa militia groups  might be used to win the presidency (ibid.).

In May 1996, two people who had once played  major roles in the government-Moumin Bahdon Farah, former minister of justice, and Ahamed Boulaleh Barreh Aka, former minister of defence-founded the Group for Democracy and the Republic (Groupe pour la démocratie et la République, or GDR) after a rift had developed within the governing RPP party (Europa 1998, 1164; Africa Research Bulletin 22 June 1998, 13118). The first is a member of the Odah Gob, an Issa subclan, while the second is a member of the Furlaba, who also belong to the Issa clan (ION 5 Sept. 1998, 5; ibid. 19 Sept. 1998, 7).

Both men were recently charged and convicted for their role in an attempted coup d'état carried out with ten or so military men, including eight Odah Gob Issas and two Furlaba Issas (ibid. 5 Sept. 1998, 5; ibid. 19 Sept. 1998, 7).

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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Actualité : Djibouti. December 1998. [Internet] [Accessed 12 Jan. 1999].

\_\_\_\_\_. November 1998. [Internet] [Accessed 11 Jan. 1999).

Africa Research Bulletin. 22 June 1998. Vol. 35, No. 5. "Djibouti: Opposition Under Pressure."

Agence France Presse (AFP). 13 November 1997. "Djibouti Opposition Rallies Against 'Grotesque' Election." (NEXIS)

\_\_\_\_\_. 2 November 1998. "Actions armées dans la nuit de samedi à dimanche à Djibouti, selon le FRUD." [Internet] [Accessed 2 Nov. 1998].

Communiqué sent to the Research Directorate by PRD Chairman Abdillahi Hamareiteh. 25 November 1998.

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997. 1998. United States Department of State. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office.

The Europa World Year Book 1998. 1998. Vol. 1. London: Europa Publications.

FRUD-Dini. 15 December 1998. Telephone interview with a senior official.

The Indian Ocean Newsletter [Paris]. 2 January 1999. No. 839. "Djibouti: Flap in FRUD."

\_\_\_\_\_. 19 September 1998. No. 825. "Djibouti: An Opportune Plot".

\_\_\_\_\_. 12 September 1998. No. 824. "Two Small Operations by FRUD".

\_\_\_\_\_. 5 September 1998. No. 823. "Djibouti: Military in Detention".

La Lettre hebdomadaire de la FIDH [Paris]. September 1997. No. 248. "Djibouti, 20 ans après l'indépendance: une république en perdition."

Minorities at Risk Project. 25 June 1998. "Afars of Djibouti." [Internet] . [Accessed 7 Dec. 1998].

Mondes rebelles: acteurs, conflits et violences politiques. Vol. II. 1996. Edited by Balencie and La Grange. Paris: Éditions Michalon.

Parti du renouveau démocratique (PRD). 29 December 1998. Telephone interview with Abdillahi Hamareiteih .

Political Handbook of the World: 1998. 1998. Edited by Arthur S. Banks. Binghamton, NY: CSA Publications.

Professor, École des hautes études des Sciences sociales, Pariis. 8 December 1998. Telephone interview.

Specialist in Djibouti affairs and author of publications on Djibouti. 22 December 1998. Telephone interview.

Attachment

Party for Democratic Renewal (PRD), Djibouti. 20 October 1998. Specimen copy of membership card sent to Research Directorate.

Copyright notice: This document is published with the permission of the copyright holder and producer Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB). The original version of this document may be found on the offical website of the IRB at [http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/](http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/). Documents earlier than 2003 may be found only on Refworld.