



Nigeria – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 21 April 2015

General information on AC - Action Congress Party in Nigeria in 2010 and currently.

A document published on the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) website states:

“The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), formerly known as Action Congress (AC), is a classical liberal Nigerian political party formed via the merger of the Alliance for Democracy, the Justice Party, the Advance Congress of Democrats, and several other minor political parties in September 2006. The Party controls six States Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Oshun and Ekiti States in the South West Zone and Edo State in the South South. It also has very strong presence in Anambra, Benue, Adamawa, Kogi, Kwara and Jigawa States.” (Action Congress of Nigeria (29 September 2012) *Our Party*)

An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information on the CAN, in a section headed “Brief History”, states:

“The *Political Handbook of the World* (PHW), 2011 states that the Action Congress party was formed in 2006 from the Alliance for Democracy, the Justice Party, the Advanced Congress of Democrats and other smaller parties. In 2007, Atiku Abubakar, who was the country's vice-president and a former member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), ran for president as the Action Congress candidate. Abubakar ‘placed third in the balloting with 7.25 percent of the vote’. The party was afterwards invited to join the PDP's ‘national unity government,’ but it declined, which led to the resignation of the party's national secretary, Bashir Dalhatu. In 2009, the Action Congress joined the Patriotic Electoral Alliance of Nigeria, an electoral alliance created by the opposition parties. The party changed its name in 2010 to the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in order to attract a ‘national following’. According to the ACN website, the party's platform focuses on security of life, job creation, education, health, transportation, economic planning, social development and small-scale business development.” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (6 March 2012) *NGA104032.E – Nigeria: The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), including its structure, name of president and principal leaders; treatment of its members by the authorities (2008-February 2012)*)

An International Crisis Group report on the 2011 elections in Nigeria states:

“A major winner was the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), whose success in the South-West has returned this region to its tradition of being in opposition to the ruling party at the centre.” (International Crisis Group (15 September 2011) *Lessons from Nigeria's 2011 Elections*, p.1)

See also Freedom House report which states:

“Jonathan, the PDP's candidate, won the 2011 presidential contest, defeating Buhari of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), 59 percent to 32 percent. The vote appeared to reflect the ethnic and religious fault lines of the country, with Buhari, a northern Muslim, winning primarily in the northern states, and Jonathan, a Christian from the southern Niger Delta region, gaining an overwhelming majority in the south. PDP candidates won a reduced majority in the legislative elections. In the House of Representatives, the PDP claimed 202 of 360 seats, while the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) won 66, the CPC took 35, and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) garnered 25. In the Senate, the PDP lost its two-thirds majority, taking 71 of 109 seats; the ACN won 18 seats, and the CPC and ANPP won 7 each. The PDP captured 18 of the 26 contested state governorships.” (Freedom House (28 January 2015) *Freedom in the World 2015 – Nigeria*)

An article published by the New York based media group Bloomberg refers to the ACN merging with other parties in 2013 to become the All Progressives Congress.

“Nigeria’s four biggest opposition political parties are merging to contest the 2015 elections against President Goodluck Jonathan’s People’s Democratic Party. The parties ‘have resolved to merge forthwith and become the All Progressives Congress and offer to our beleaguered people a recipe for peace and prosperity,’ according to a statement handed to reporters today. ‘At no time in our national life has radical change become more urgent.’ The two biggest parties in the merger are the Action Congress of Nigeria, whose governors control most of the country’s southwestern states including Lagos, the commercial capital, and the Congress for Progressive Change, led by the north’s biggest opposition figure, former military ruler Muhammadu Buhari. (Bloomberg (7 February 2013) *Nigeria’s Four Biggest Opposition Parties Agree to Merge*)

See also Voice of America News report which states:

“Nigeria's electoral commission has approved the merger of the three main opposition parties, a move that sets the stage for a potentially stiff challenge to President Goodluck Jonathan's People's Democratic Party in the 2015 presidential elections. The commission said on Wednesday the opposition parties had ‘met all statutory requirements’ to merge into the All Progressive Congress. The new coalition is comprised of the All Nigeria Peoples Party , the Congress for Progressive Change and the Action Congress of Nigeria. Nigeria is split almost evenly between Muslims and Christians. The All Progressive Congress includes influential Muslims from the country's north and Christians from southern Nigeria.” (Voice of America News (31 July 2013) *Nigerian Commission Approves Opposition Coalition*)

A report published by the Washington-based think tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in a section headed “The APC”, states:

“The APC was formed in February 2013 as a coalition of four opposition parties: the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP), and part of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA). The APC describes itself as a leftist,

progressive party, although the party includes diverse geographical and political constituencies reflecting its founding parties' bases:

- The ACN's base was the South West. In 2011, even as South West states voted for Jonathan in the presidential contest, the ACN consolidated its control over all six governorships in the region.
- The ANPP and CPC had their base in the north. The ANPP has held governorships in North West states like Kano (2003–2011) and Zamfara (1999– 2008, 2011–present) and North East states like Borno (1999–present) and Yobe (1999–present). The CPC broke away from the ANPP in 2009. Buhari ran on the ANPP ticket in 2003 and 2007, but switched to the CPC in 2011. The CPC captured one governor's seat in the North Central zone—Nassarawa—in 2011.
- The APGA's base is the South East, where it controls two governorships: Anambra and Imo. The Anambra APGA is aligned with the PDP. Imo Governor Rochas Okorochoa leads the APGA faction that joined the APC.

After its formation, the APC scored defections from the PDP. Former Vice President Abubakar had already defected to the ACN in 2006 and became its candidate for his unsuccessful 2007 presidential bid (he placed third, scoring 7 percent of the official vote). Other APC defections capitalized on discontent with Jonathan and his perceived disruption of zoning (see below). In November 2013, five governors, four of them from the north, defected from the PDP to the APC:" (Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) (26 January 2015) *Background to Nigeria's 2015 Elections*, pp. 8-9)

A research paper published by the UK House of Commons Library, in a section titled "Main political parties" (sub-section headed "The All Progressives Congress (APC)"), states:

"The APC is the latest combination of forces opposed to the PDP and hoping to end its grip on power. Established in 2013, its factions mainly consist of the 'legacy parties' that have come together in search of victory in the 2015 elections.

The Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) is the party of ex-military leader Muhammadu Buhari, who has unsuccessfully contested the last three presidential elections. It is overwhelmingly a party of the north. Buhari formerly led the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), another northern party, but he left it after the party accepted the 2007 election result. The party has since re-joined the opposition ranks but has it lost support since Buhari's departure.

The Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) is a predominantly southwestern party. Its leading figures have been Bola Tinubu, former governor of Lagos state, and until August 2014, Nuhu Ribadu, who contested the 2011 presidential election for the party.

A faction of another party, the All Progressives Grand Alliance, has also joined the APC.

All of these parties have formed governments at state-level. The main planks of the APC are anti-corruption, job creation and the restoration of internal peace and security. However, sceptics allege that not much distinguishes it ideologically from the PDP. Muhammadu Buhari will be its candidate in the February 2015 presidential contest.” (UK House of Commons Library (19 January 2015) *Nigeria 2015: analysis of election issues and future prospects*, pp.61-62)

The Introduction to an International Crisis Group report on the 2015 elections in Nigeria states:

“The 2015 elections will be particularly challenging as the first nationwide contest essentially between two parties – the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) – since the return to democratic rule. The emergence last year of the APC, a merger of the four largest opposition parties, altered the political landscape, potentially posing a serious challenge to the PDP, which has held the presidency and majority of state governorships for fifteen years.” (International Crisis Group (21 November 2014) *Nigeria’s Dangerous 2015 Elections: Limiting the Violence*, p.1)

In footnote 5 this report states:

“The APC was formed in 2013, when the four biggest opposition parties – the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) – merged.” (ibid, p.1)

In a section headed “Tensions within Parties” this report states:

“The APC also faces serious internal problems. First, drawing its membership from four political parties (now known as the ‘legacy parties’), it was, from the onset, a marriage of strange bedfellows and bound to be a difficult union. As a commentator described it, the party ‘is like a church which has Catholic priests, Pentecostal pastors, juju priests, cultists and even magicians as members’. The party has also been stressed by an underlying leadership struggle between Muhammadu Buhari, a former military head of state (1983-1985), and Bola Tinubu, a former Lagos state governor who still commands significant political influence in the south west. Moreover, the fact that the party’s two most prominent leaders – Buhari and Tinubu – are Muslims, initially raised some apprehension among Christian members, who feared the party may eventually be Muslim-dominated. The party has never been able to dispel those initial suspicions entirely.” (ibid, pp.10-11)

A report published by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, in a section headed “Who are the major political parties and candidates?”, states:

“The APC ticket will be led by Major General Muhammadu Buhari for president and Yemi Osibanjo for vice president. Gen. Buhari, a Muslim from the far northern state of Katsina, ruled the country from 1983 to 1985. He also unsuccessfully campaigned for president in 2003, 2007, and 2011. Osibanjo is a Christian from Lagos State in the south who served as that state’s Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice from 1999 to 2007. He also is

a pastor at the Redeemed Christian Church of God.” (US Commission on International Religious Freedom (January 2015) *Religious Freedom and Nigeria’s 2015 Elections*, p.2)

In a section headed “What is the connection between religion and the elections?” this report states:

“The APC is portrayed and seen by many as a Muslim alliance with a strong presence in northern areas. In fact, the PDP has labelled the APC the ‘Muslim Brotherhood’ or ‘Janjaweed’ ticket and accused some of its leaders of fueling the Boko Haram insurgency and the terrorists’ goal to Islamize the country. Many Christians view Gen. Buhari himself as a radical Muslim. While Gen. Buhari is known to be devout, there is no evidence to support these accusations and he has been the target of a Boko Haram assassination attempt.” (ibid, p.4)

The UK House of Commons Library research paper referred to above, in a section headed “Aspects of the 2015 election campaign”, states:

“The 2015 election campaign has been characterised more by low politics than by highminded pledges on policy. PDP leaders have persistently suggested that the APC is a pro-Shari’a law ‘Muslim party’ which is in not-so-secret sympathy with Boko Haram. This potentially combustible allegation was vociferously denied by the APC, which countered with accusations of PDP incompetence and complacency in dealing with Boko Haram. Muhammadu Buhari has been clear in his condemnation of Boko Haram, which carried out a suicide attack against his convoy in July 2014. Buhari survived. In November 2014, an email emerged, purportedly from Muhammed Abubakar Shekau, claiming that President Jonathan was in cahoots with Boko Haram. It was swiftly dismissed as a fake. Another PDP line of attack on Buhari has been to question his democratic credentials. The party has contrasted his past as a former military leader with President Jonathan’s experience as a ‘tested and trusted democrat’, who emerged in the aftermath of the country’s return to civilian rule in 1999. The large-scale sale of Western oil company assets to Nigerian counterparts in the summer of 2014 was viewed by some as indicating that the electoral campaign was about to begin in earnest – the divide between state and party expenditure, blurred at the best of times, becomes extremely fuzzy when elections approach. The APC has its own oil company links. Both the PDP and the APC have thrown enormous amounts of money at the campaign. A significant proportion has been raised from their own candidates, who have been charged ‘eye-watering fees’ to obtain nomination forms. Standing for office is far beyond the means of ordinary Nigerians.” (UK House of Commons Library (19 January 2015) *Nigeria 2015: analysis of election issues and future prospects*, pp.8-9)

An Agence France Presse report states:

“Nigeria’s main opposition party claimed on Sunday that security agents had ransacked its office in Lagos, arresting workers and seizing documents, in the latest flareup ahead of February elections. The All Progressives Congress (APC) said 28 workers were arrested during the raid on its data centre in Lagos early Saturday, which the party likened to the Watergate burglary in the United States in the 1970s. ‘Over 50 security operatives drafted from Abuja blocked the two major street entrances to the APC data entry centre, pulled

down the gates, and spent over two hours ransacking and vandalising the centre,' APC spokesman Lai Mohammed told AFP." (Agence France Presse (23 November 2014) *Nigeria security agents raid opposition office: party*)

A BBC News report on the 2015 elections states:

"The APC has made historic gains, relegating the once-powerful PDP to a regional party. The PDP failed to get a national spread of votes, doing well only in the south-east and the oil-rich Niger Delta. Most states in the north went to the APC, along with Nigeria's commercial hub, Lagos, in the south-west." (BBC News (13 April 2015) *Nigeria's APC win landslide over PDP in state polls*)

See also Agence France Presse report which states:

"The party of Nigeria's president-elect Muhammadu Buhari has won governorship elections in a majority of the country's 36 states, building its strength nationwide after a historic presidential win, official results on Monday showed. The All Progressives Congress (APC) held at least 21 governor's seats following Saturday's regional polls but could add to that tally with results from a handful of states still pending. President Goodluck Jonathan's Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) had controlled the federal and most state governments since the end of military rule in 1999 but has suffered sweeping losses in the ongoing election cycle. Jonathan's loss to Buhari in the presidential vote two weeks ago was the first ever democratic change of power at the federal level since Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960." (Agence France Presse (13 April 2015) *Buhari party wins majority of Nigeria states in regional vote*)

An article from the Abuja-based newspaper Sunday Trust states:

"Following the defeat suffered by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the March 28 presidential election, the Nigerian political landscape has been witnessing a gale of mass defection of politicians from the PDP to the All Progressives Congress (APC) which has become the new political bride. Barely eight days after General Muhammadu Buhari defeated President Jonathan in the presidential election, the coordinator of the Goodluck Jonathan campaign in Edo State and former governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Maj. Gen. Charles Airhiavbere (retired), dumped the party and moved over to the All Progressives Congress (APC)." (Sunday Trust (12 April 2015) *Over 70,000 PDP bigwigs defect to APC in two weeks*)

This article also states:

"By the last count, over 70,000 members of the PDP from across the country had defected to the APC. Some of them are former PDP national legal adviser, Mr. Olusola Oke; former governor of Edo State, Prof. Osarhiemen Osunbor; former Minister of Justice Michael Aondoakaa, Prof. Tony Ijobor (SAN) and Major General Lawrence Onoja (rtd). Kebbi State in North-West Nigeria appears to have recorded the highest harvest of PDP defectors for the APC in the past two weeks. On April 4, 2015, Mansir Musa Shehu, immediate past chairman of the PDP in the State denounced his membership of the party. He was accompanied by 43,000 members who also reportedly

defected from the ruling party. Other bigwigs of the PDP from Kebbi State; who also joined in the defection train included Alhaji Hussaini Adamu, a PDP gubernatorial aspirant in the State, State.” (ibid)

An editorial published by the Lagos-based newspaper This Day states:

“The only reason APC's General Buhari is a president-in-waiting today while the PDP's President Goodluck Jonathan got shellacked on March 28, is because of the desire of Nigerians to try out a new leader in the hope that he will provide them real hope and change. The APC won not because of any credible programme it offered but because it was able to tap into the ‘anybody but Jonathan’ frenzy created by allegations of corruption and the failure of government to halt the Boko Haram insurgency. It remains to be seen if the APC is able to deliver. Let's hope it does. To be able to deliver for Nigerians, the APC needs to get it right starting with re-jiggling itself as a party. As it is now, the APC is a big puzzle with pieces that don't fit together. The APC was formed in February 2013 as merger of defectors from the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party) and factions of the ACN (Action Congress of Nigeria), ANPP (All Nigeria People's Party), APGA (All Progressive Grand Alliance), and the CPC (Congress for Progressive Change). The 14 political governors aligned with the APC, who can be referred to as its political princes, are anything but leading lights of democracy. Having lost out in their former political parties on selfish grounds rather than democratic principles, they joined the APC out of desperation to either elongate their political lives or save themselves from comeuppance, or both. The pedigrees of these governors are in the public domain and Nigerians are familiar with them. Aside from the governor of Lagos State and his Edo State counterpart, who have some record of good performance that Nigerians can attest to, the rest are a cesspool of corruption. Consequently, the APC has no credibility on the corruption question.” (This Day (21 April 2015) *Nigeria: Buhari's Fourth Time Charm Victory*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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 read in full all documents referred to.

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