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Guyana : Whether criminal gangs target Indo-Guyanese on the basis of their ethnic origin (January - July 2008)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006*, ethnic tensions between citizens of African descent and citizens of South Asian origin still exist in Guyanese society and political life (US 6 Mar. 2007, Sec. 5; see also Freedom House 2007 and BBC 8 Feb. 2008).

On 26 January 2008, 11 people were killed in the village of Lusignan, about 15 kilometres from the capital, Georgetown (Indo-Asian News Service < 31 Jan. 2008). The majority of the village's population is Indo-Guyanese (BBC 8 Feb. 2008; *Global Insight Daily Analysis* 28 Jan. 2008).

A *Latin American Weekly Report* article indicates that gang leader Rondell Rawlins claimed responsibility for the killings in Lusignan (28 Feb. 2008; see also Indo-Asian News Service 19 Feb. 2008). Rawlins was from Buxton, a village "known as the hotbed for racial strife, killings and protests against the government led by people of Indian origin" (Indo-Asian News Service 31 Jan. 2008). Buxton is located near Lusignan, and its population is primarily Afro-Guyanese (BBC 8 Feb. 2008). According to an Associated Press (AP) article published by Newser on 28 August 2008, the police killed Rawlins that day.

An article in *Global Insight Daily Analysis* reports that Indo-Guyanese activists believe that the protection offered to their community by the Guyana Police Force (GPF), which is largely made up of Afro-Guyanese, is insufficient (28 Jan. 2008; see also Freedom House 2007). Moreover, according to an article in *Latin American Weekly Report*, Guyana's Minister of Finance said that the massacre in Lusignan had caused the government to accelerate reforms in the areas of justice and security (28 Feb. 2008). *Global Insight Daily Analysis* reports that since the massacre, President Bharrat Jagdeo, leader of the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which receives support from the Indo-Guyanese population, has been trying, without much success, to reduce the tensions between the ethnic groups (28 Jan. 2008). Further information on whether criminal gangs target Indo-Guyanese could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Guyana Association of Women Lawyers, Guyana Development Gateway, Guyana - Ethnic Relations Commission, Guyana - Government Information Agency (GINA), *Guyana Observer*, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, International Commission of Jurists, Minority Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

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