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Guyana: Whether Indo-Guyanese are targeted because of their ethnic origin by different sectors of society, such as the police, criminal gangs and political groups (October 2004 - September 2006)

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Information on the treatment of Indo-Guyanese was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

People of Indian origin in Guyana - or Indo-Guyanese - make up approximately half of the country's population (Freedom House 2006; *ibid.* June 2005) and are the largest ethnic group in Guyana (Guyana 4 May 2006; Leclerc 9 May 2005).

According to Freedom House, although violent incidents have diminished since 1996, the long-standing tensions between Afro- and Indo-Guyanese remain "a deep concern" (2006). The political and economic power exercised by the Indo-Guyanese population explains in part the "overt racial hostility" that is reportedly getting worse (Freedom House June 2005).

According to the *Americas Review World of Information*, members of the Indo-Guyanese community are the principle victims of ethnic violence (1 Aug. 2005). In 2003, hundreds of Indo-Guyanese were reportedly targets of attacks possibly by Afro-Guyanese militant groups (*Americas Review World of Information* 1 Aug. 2005). Without specifying the ethnic origin of small business owners, *Global Insight Daily Analysis* indicates that small businesses are often victims of ethnic violence and lootings (28 Aug. 2006).

Freedom House notes that many Indo-Guyanese report being victimized by Afro-Guyanese criminal groups and that many believe that the predominantly Afro-Guyanese police do not intervene adequately on their behalf (2006). Despite the recommendations of several official inquiries, the government has failed to implement measures that would make the police force more representative of Guyana's ethnic composition (Freedom House 2006). The public service and police force are traditionally made up of members from the Afro-Guyanese population (Leclerc 9 May 2005).

The government appointed an ethnic relations commission in May 2003 (Freedom House 2006; see also *Global Insight Daily Analysis* 28 Aug. 2006). The Commission's mandate is to serve "persons who believe they were discriminated against based on their ethnicity," persons who are witnesses to ethnic

discrimination and those who work "to promote harmonious ethnic relations" (Guyana n.d.). The Government Information Agency (GINA) reports that the Commission will consult with leaders of different communities in Guyana and that it has investigated certain ministries and other government agencies to ensure that there is no discrimination (Guyana 13 June 2005). However, the same source did not provide any information on the results of the Commission's inquiries.

Under the national drug strategy of June 2005, the government of Guyana plans to implement tough new laws against "race-based" violence and crimes (Freedom House June 2005). No information on whether these laws have come into effect since June 2005 could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Arrival Day, a holiday to commemorate the arrival of people of Indian origin in Guyana, is celebrated on 5 May (Guyana 4 May 2006; see also Freedom House June 2005). Each year with the government of Guyana's approval, a committee organizes a series of cultural activities (Guyana 4 May 2006).

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.

References

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<<http://www.ethnicrelations.org.gy/aboutus.php>> [Accessed 19 Sept. 2006]

Leclerc, Jacques. 9 May 2005. *Aménagement linguistique dans le monde*. "Guyana." <<http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/amsudant/Guyana.htm>> [Accessed 22 Sept. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Caribbean Guyana Institute for Democracy (CGID), the Ethnic Relations Commission of Guyana and an expert on ethnic issues at the University of Guyana did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints for this Response.

The Guyanese ombudsman's office and the Guyana Human Rights Association (GHRA) did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints for this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Caribbean Guyana Institute for Democracy (CGID), Caribbean Knowledge Management Centre, Guyana Caribbean Politics and Culture, *Guyana Chronicle*, Human Rights Watch, *Stabroek News*, United States Department of State.

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