



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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16 October 2009

### KEN103281.E

Kenya: Situation of persons of Indian origin; in particular, businessmen in Nairobi and Kisumu; whether there have been any reports of attacks against or looting of Indian businesses in these cities; availability of state protection (2007-2009)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

In 12 October 2009 correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate political science professor at the University of Ottawa who specializes in African politics stated that,

Kenyans of Indian descent, generally referred to as "Asians", are in a difficult position. Most are economically privileged compared to the African majority population, but they are widely considered less authentically Kenyan and therefore less deserving of rights. Though almost all were born in Kenya and are either Kenyan citizens or permanent residents, they are not indigenous to Africa and are visibly "outsiders". (Associate Professor 12 Oct. 2009)

An article in Connecticut-based *Little India*, the "largest circulated overseas Indian publication in the world" (*Little India* n.d.), indicated that that Asian Kenyans own a disproportionate number of businesses considering their population size (*Little India* 5 Dec. 2008). The Associate Professor further stated that Asian Kenyans own "[m]any stores and other businesses" and "are also prominent in banking, insurance and other financial services" (12 Oct. 2009).

Sources indicate that tension exists between Kenyans of Indian descent and Kenyans of African descent, with many Asian Kenyans reporting difficulty feeling accepted in their own country (*Little India* 5 Dec 2008; Pabari 14 Sept. 2008). According to Dipesh Pabari, an Asian Kenyan writer, many Kenyans of Indian origin share the sentiment that "Kenya is home but it is not their country" (ibid.).

According to the Associate Professor,

[b]ecause of their outsider status, their actual or assumed wealth (often perceived as gained at the expense of the African majority) and some individuals' "shady" dealings with the current and previous governments, there is widespread resentment of Asians in Kenya. This applies to Nairobi, Kisumu and other urban centres. (12 Oct. 2009)

According to the Nairobi-based newspaper *The Daily Nation*, several shops owned by Asian Kenyans in downtown Nairobi were robbed by armed gunmen in September and October 2008 (*Daily Nation* 29 Oct. 2008). In a December 2008 report, *Little India* stated that

[t]oday, the more affluent Indians live a very sheltered life in Kenya. Many retain security guards and burglar alarms at home, fearful for their personal security. News reports of Indian businessmen being robbed or killed, or Indian houses being burgled is not uncommon. (*Little India* 5 Dec. 2008)

The Associate Professor claimed that "Kenyan authorities provide little protection to any Kenyans" and speculated that the police would be disinclined to provide it to Kenyans of Indian descent (12 Oct. 2009). Corroborating information on police protection could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, in correspondence with the Research Directorate, the editor of Nairobi-based *AwaaZ Magazine*, a journal dedicated to South Asians in Africa, reported that South Asian Kenyan communities "have organized themselves for better security," in cooperation with local police (Editor 13 Oct. 2009).

In late December 2007 and early 2008, parts of Kenya were subject to rioting and looting in the wake of disputed elections (Associate Professor 12 Oct. 2009; HRW Jan. 2009, 81). Among the places affected were Nairobi and Kisumu (Editor 13 Oct. 2009; Associate Professor 12 Oct. 2009; Reuters 30 Dec. 2007).

Reuters describes Kisumu as "the opposition heartland" (30 Dec. 2007) and according to *The Times of India*, Asian Kenyans were targeted

[b]ecause they are close to president Mwai Kibaki's ruling Party of National Unity (PNU). Kibaki belongs to the Kikuyu tribe, the main business community of Kenya, which has controlled the country's politics

since 1963. Indians have strong ties with Kikuyus because of the business connection, which has upset [the opposition Orange Democratic Movement] ODM, dominated by the other tribe - Luo. (*Times of India* 3 Jan. 2008)

During post-electoral violence, Asian Kenyan businesses in Kisumu were reportedly subject to looting and vandalism (Editor 13 Oct. 2009; Associate Professor 12 Oct. 2009; Reuters 30 Dec. 2007). Media reports stated that many of the Asian Kenyan community in Kisumu took refuge in a Hindu temple during the violence (*Times of India* 3 Jan. 2008; IBNLive 2 Jan 2008; Reuters 30 Dec. 2007). Many Asian Kenyans fled Kisumu during the violence (Pabari 14 Sept. 2008; *Times of India* 3 Jan. 2008; IBNLive 2 Jan. 2008). *The Times of India* reports that the Indian embassy in Nairobi issued emergency visas to those who wanted to go to India (3 Jan. 2008).

Some sources report that Asian Kenyan businesses in Nairobi were also targeted during the post-electoral violence (Associate Professor 12 Oct. 2009; *Times of India* 6 Jan. 2008). In contrast, the *AwaatZ Magazine* Editor stated that "[i]n Nairobi there were no attacks on South Asian businesses during the post election violence" (13 Oct. 2009).

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

Associate Professor, University of Ottawa. 12 October 2009. Correspondence.

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#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sources, including:** Amnesty International (AI); Minorities at Risk; Minority Rights Group International (MRGI); United States (US) Department of State.

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