



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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15 March 2010

### **KEN103428.E**

Kenya: Treatment of the Hindu Pattni community from India; whether Hindu Pattni are considered wealthy and therefore targeted; whether state protection is available to the Hindu community

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information specifically regarding the treatment of the Hindu Pattni community in Kenya was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, a professor of African studies at the University of Michigan stated in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that the general population in Kenya "can't distinguish between Hindus — they just see the ethnic minority as Indian" (25 Feb. 2010). Similarly, a professor of African politics at the University of Oxford stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that while black Kenyans might be able to distinguish between Muslim and Hindu members of the Indian diaspora, they would have little awareness of who, in particular, was from the Hindu Pattni community (25 Feb. 2010).

While neither professor was able to provide information with respect to how the Hindu Pattni community, in particular, was treated, the following information regarding the general treatment of the Indian minority in Kenya may be of interest.

The Oxford University Professor stated that, although there may be the "odd incident" of discrimination that takes place against members of the Hindu community in Kenya, this discrimination is "not systematic" (25 Feb. 2010). Similarly, the Michigan University Professor stated:

The Indian community is not a beloved ethnic minority, but neither is it a particularly oppressed minority. It is an ethnic minority that is resented for being wealthy. This resentment manifests itself as general grumbling about the Indian community. Many Indians are traders in Kenya and this leads to all sorts of resentments. For example, the Indian community is regarded as not paying employees particularly well. People resent the insularity of the Indian community, while at the same time, they don't necessarily also want to be a part of it. (25 Feb. 2010)

Similarly, an article published in *Little India* — a United States (US)-based publication focussed on India that is distributed in the US and internationally (n.d.) — indicates that the Indian community is perceived as owning more than their fair share of businesses in Kenya (*Little India* 5 Dec. 2008). The Oxford University Professor stated that there is "a general disinterest in the welfare of

Indians," in Kenya adding:

Poorer Hindus in the Ngara part of Nairobi are preyed upon by criminals and extorters but this is economic and opportunistic, and to do with vulnerability, not active discrimination. (25 Feb. 2010)

The Oxford University Professor further stated that state protection is generally unavailable to Kenyan citizens who are victims of discrimination, adding that this lack of protection "is not specific to Pattni Hindus" (25 Feb. 2010). *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008* provides further information on state protection, as follows:

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on race, tribe, place of origin or residence, or other local connection, political opinions, colour, creed, or gender. However, government authorities did not enforce effectively many of these provisions. There was also some evidence that some government and opposition officials tolerated, and in some instances instigated, ethnic violence. (US 25 Feb. 2009, Sec.5).

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

*Little India* [USA]. 5 December 2008. Nilanjana Bhowmick. "Kenya's Wahindis." <<http://www.littleindia.com/news/134/ARTICLE/4417/2008-12-05.html>> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2010]

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Professor of African Politics, University of Oxford. 25 February 2010. Telephone interview.

Professor of African Studies, University of Michigan. 25 February 2010. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

United States (US). 25 February 2009. Department of State. "Kenya." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008*. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119007.htm>> [Accessed 4 Mar. 2010]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** *AwaaZ* magazine, the Hindu-Canadian Alliance and Pattni Connection were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** All Africa.com, Amnesty International (AI), British

Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI.net), Freedom House, *The Hindu*, Hindu Human Rights, Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, Human Rights Watch, Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), International Crisis Group (ICG), Médecins Sans Frontières International (MSF), *The Times of India*, University of Nairobi.

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