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Guyana: Whether members or supporters of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) are targeted because of their political beliefs, particularly by members of the People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R) (May 2004 - September 2006).
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Violence against members of the PPP/C

In April 2006, the Minister of Agriculture, Satyadeow Sawh, members of his family and a security guard were murdered in an armed attack on the Minister's home (AFP 22 Apr. 2006; CGID 23 Apr. 2006; *Caribbean Media Corporation* 22 Apr. 2006). The day after the killings, a news release issued by the ruling People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) indicated that the minister was "a long standing member and faithful activist" of the PPP/C (22 Apr. 2006). The Caribbean Guyana Institute for Democracy (CGID) alleges that the murders were premeditated (CGID 23 Apr. 2006). According to the *Latin American Caribbean and Central American Report*, the police indicated after their investigation that the assailants had tried to eliminate any witnesses to the attack and that the robbery served as a cover for the attack (23 May 2006).

The PPP/C Presidential Secretary has reportedly implicated the opposition in the assassination (*Latin American Caribbean and Central American Report* 23 May 2006), while PPP/C authorities have suggested that "one of the possible objectives of this assassination might be to foment hatred and violence" before the election (PPP 22 Apr. 2006; see also BBC 22 Apr. 2006). Following Sawh's murder, the leader of the opposition People's National Congress/Reform (PNC/R), Robert Corbin, called for an emergency meeting to develop a security plan for Guyana (*Latin American Caribbean and Central American Report* 23 May 2006).

No information on the identity of Minister Sawh's killers or on other violent attacks against members or supporters of the PPP/C could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information on relations between the PPP/C and the PNC/R may be useful.

Electoral environment

Traditionally, Guyanese who support the PPP/C are predominantly of South Asian origin or Indo-Guyanese, while those who support the PNC/R are mostly of African origin, or Afro-Guyanese (Freedom House June 2005; *Latin American Weekly Report* 5 Sept. 2006; see also *Global Insight Daily Analysis* 29 Aug. 2006). Indo-Guyanese make up 52 percent of the population, while Afro-

Guyanese account for 43 percent (ibid.; *Latinnews Daily* 1 Sept. 2006).

According to sources, the 28 August 2006 election demonstrated none of the violence that characterized the previous elections (*The Economist* 2 Sept. 2006) and was held in what was described as "the most peaceful environment in years" (*Emerging Markets Daily News* 29 Aug. 2006; see also *The Economist* 2 Sept. 2006 and *Global Insight Daily Analysis* 29 Aug. 2006). The Organization of American States (OAS), which sent observers to Guyana, applauded the smooth election process and indicated that it may present an opportunity to move beyond traditional ethnic and political divisions (6 Sept. 2006).

The main cause of the violence remains the ethnic split between the two main political parties, the PNC/R and the PPP/C (*Global Insight Daily Analysis* 28 Aug. 2006). Small businesses are often directly affected by ethnic unrest, and are victims of looting (ibid.). On the day of the election, businesses barricaded their storefronts and the police and military patrolled the capital, Georgetown (*The Economist* 2 Sept. 2006). In the end, the military did not have to intervene (*Latin American Weekly Report* 5 Sept. 2006).

During a visit to Guyana in April 2006, the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS told the *Latin American Caribbean and Central American Report* that the mistrust among the political parties and the lack of mechanisms for building consensus presented significant challenges for the electoral process in Guyana (25 Apr. 2006). The leaders of the two main political parties later reviewed security measures for the upcoming elections (*Caribbean Media Corporation* 5 Aug. 2006).

However, the 28 August 2006 issue of the *Global Insight Daily Analysis* indicates that drug-related violence increased in the run-up to the vote. The murder of five employees at the local daily *Kaieteur News* printing office on 8 August 2006 was one of several violent incidents that raised concerns that the election would not be peaceful (*Global Insight Daily Analysis* 28 Aug. 2006; ibid. 10 Aug. 2006; see also AP 10 Aug. 2006).

After the PPP/C won the election with 54.6 percent of the vote, the PNC/R leader, Robert Corbin, reiterated calls for racial groups to share power (*Latinnews Daily* 1 Sept. 2006). The new, "multi-ethnic Alliance for Change" won 10 percent of the vote (*Latin American Weekly Report* 5 Sept. 2006; *The Economist* 2 Sept. 2006) and managed to elect five representatives (*Latin American Weekly Report* 5 Sept. 2006; *Latinnews Daily* 1 Sept. 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.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The Caribbean Guyana Institute for Democracy (CGID), the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) and an expert on political and ethnic issues at the University of Guyana did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints for this Response.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Factiva, Human Rights Watch, *Stabroek News*, United States Department of State.

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