



## Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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29 April 2010

### IND103452.E

India: Treatment of political activists and members of opposition parties in Punjab (2008 - 2010)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

A Professor of Political Science at the South Asia Institute at the University of Heidelberg, whose expertise includes the functioning of political parties and institutions in India, provided the following information in a telephone interview:

Punjab has an elected government, and an active opposition. Rebels have become stakeholders and the normal political process has bounced back. No-one who is a political activist or member of an opposition party will experience repression at the hands of the authorities. (19 Apr. 2010)

Similarly, the Director of the Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies at the University of California stated in correspondence that:

...[P]olitical institutions are working and life as usual is going on in India. There are no particular problems with respect to opposition politicians or opposition party members in Punjab. (9 Apr. 2010)

A Professor at the University of Washington with expertise in the politics of Punjab provided the following information:

Tensions certainly linger, but opposition parties contest elections, and the politicians from these parties are free to do so. Even ex-militants contest elections. I don't know of any situation where someone would be arrested simply for belonging to a particular political party.

...political parties change on a regular basis. Whatever party is in power will use the resources they have to try and stay in power, but this is not unique to Punjab. (12 Apr. 2010)

A Professor of Political Science at the University of Missouri, who has published several books and journal articles on Punjab politics, provided further corroborating information in correspondence:

Governments in power...use the advantages of office against their opponents. Nonetheless, Punjab and India are democratic polities [governments] so the excesses do not unduly disrupt the polity. There is alternation in ruling political parties.... A vibrant media and legal system are active. It is true that there is a high level of corruption in Punjab.... (9 Apr. 2010)

Various media sources corroborate that corruption exists among officials in Punjab (Punjab Newslines 7 Apr. 2010; *The Tribune* 8 Apr. 2010; IBN Live 18 Mar. 2010).

The Director of the Center for Sikh and Punjab Studies expressed the opinion that "the police as an institution is corrupt to the core," adding that it is important to bear police corruption in mind when considering Indian politics (9 Apr. 2010). An *Ottawa Citizen* editorial written by the Director of the Balsillie School of International Affairs - a Canadian institution that studies global governance (Balsillie School n.d.) -states the following:

There is an unholy nexus between police, politicians and armed criminals. Police are often asked to drop investigations against political allies and harass, intimidate and coerce opponents. (8 Jan. 2010)

The University of Washington Professor states that politics in India can be "rough" and that both politicians and voters may face intimidation (12 Apr. 2010). Similarly, an article published by Punjab Newslines quotes the Punjab Chief Minister as calling for an end to confrontational politics in Punjab (9 Mar. 2009). He is further quoted as saying some politicians in the state have engaged in "vendetta politics" (Punjab Newslines 9 Mar. 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

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*The Tribune* [Chandigarh, India]. 8 April 2010. Naveen S. Garewal. "Punjab Govt Apathy a Shield for the Corrupt." <<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2010/20100409/main3.htm>> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2010]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources, including:** two academics with relevant subject matter expertise, an Indian human rights lawyer, and a non-profit organization focussed on human rights in Punjab were unable to provide information within the time constraints of this Response.

**Publications, including:** *Harvard Human Rights Journal*.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), Asia Society, Asia Times Online (ATol), Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Ensaaf, Harvard University, *The Hindu Business Line*[Chennai], Human Rights Watch, India Centre for Human Rights and the Law, International Crisis Group, *The Kashmir Times* [Jammu], *The Times of India* [New Delhi], United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, University of Notre Dame, University of Texas, University of Washington, World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO).

  
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