

# Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

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5 December 2006

#### PAK102074.E

Pakistan: The treatment of members, activists and workers of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) by the government, police and military; treatment by opposing political activists

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Following a strike in May 2006, seven PPP activists were arrested for allegedly breaking shop windows during the protest; however, representatives of the PPP demanded the withdrawal of the case, arguing that the strike had been peaceful and claiming that the government was using the allegations as a means of "maligning the party" (*Dawn* 15 May 2006).

On 29 October 2006, 50 PPP activists were to appear before the court to face charges of storming the parliament on 22 April 1998 (PPI 29 Oct. 2006; *Business Recorder* 30 Oct. 2006; *The Baluchistan Times* 30 Oct. 2006). The judge cancelled the bail bonds of 40 of the accused PPP activists and issued arrest warrants against them (*ibid.*).

Pakistan Press International Information Services (PPI) reported that, in October 2006, a PPP activist was arrested from his house without an arrest warrant and that "[t]he police then tortured ... the 16 year old son ... in front of the family members and whisked him away to an unknown place" (28 Oct. 2006).

According to media articles, the PPP's chairperson and former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, indicated that a local PPP leader from the Ghotki area was robbed and "seriously wounded in an attack by unknown gunmen," and that, in October 2006, two PPP activists were fined and sentenced to 10 years in prison for their refusal to leave the PPP, a case Bhutto described as "politically motivated" (*Gulf News* 12 Nov. 2006; PPP 11 Nov. 2006; *Dawn* 12 Nov. 2006).

Several articles report that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidates were threatened or pressured to withdraw their nominations for elections [during the period August to October 2005] (*Dawn* 28 July 2005; *ibid.* 17 July 2005). In April 2005, authorities arrested "thousands" of PPP activists who had gathered in Lahore to welcome PPP leader Asif Zardari back from his trip to Dubai (HRW 19 Apr. 2005; HRCP Feb. 2006, 166; *Dawn* 20 Apr. 2005; *ibid.* 16 Apr. 2005; *ibid.* 15 Apr. 2005). According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), PPP activists were arrested under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code which prohibits four or more people from gathering (19 Apr. 2005). HRW reports that "[p]olice beat and manhandled many supporters, including women" (19 Apr. 2005). According to *Dawn*, Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi had warned that any PPP worker who attempted to violate the ban "would be dealt with an iron hand" (15 Apr. 2005). *Dawn* also reports that many PPP activists went into hiding or changed locations to avoid being arrested (16 Apr. 2005).

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) 2005 annual report on the human rights situation in Pakistan describes the following treatment of PPP activists:

- Allegations that the Punjab government tried to intimidate and harass PPP leaders to convince them to leave their party by bribing them with important positions in the ruling party or in the government (HRCP Feb. 2006, 164);
- In June 2005, a PPP Member of the Provincial Assembly from Sindh was arrested in Hyderabad after having criticized the Sindh budget (*ibid.*, 167);
- In August 2005, five PPP activists were "gunned down" in Akora Khattak in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) during a post-election celebration (*ibid.*, 164);
- In August 2005, five PPP leaders avoided an attempted murder. Some PPP members were charged for this case; however, the PPP maintained that the Sindh government and PML members were responsible for the attack (*ibid.*, 164);

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- In August 2005, the PPP claimed that "fabricated cases" based on anti-terrorism laws were lodged against seven of their leaders (ibid., 167-168);

- In August 2005, a PPP member of the National Assembly and some PPP workers were "attacked" in Khairpur during a protest. Police reportedly quashed a PPP demonstration days earlier (ibid., 164);

- In July and August 2005, two PPP leaders were "attacked" during their campaign for local government (ibid., 164).

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:** Two representatives of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) did not reply to requests for information within the time constraints for this Response.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International, *Asia Times Online*, Asian Centre for Human Rights, *Daily Times* [Lahore], Factiva, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, PakTribune [Islamabad], South Asia Analysis Group, South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, United States Department of State.

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