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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

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18 December 2006

PAK102075.E

Pakistan: The current status of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), including its activities, the number of members and its relationship with other political parties

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), also known as the Mutahida Qaumi Mahaz, the United National Movement (*Political Parties of the World* 2005, 458), or the Muttahida Quomi Mahaz (SATP n.d.a),

represents the interests of Muslim, Urdu-speaking immigrants (from India) in Pakistan, seeks the designation of Mohajir as [a] fifth nationality ... [and] aims to abolish the prevailing feudal political system and to establish democracy. (*Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 3390)

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) states that the MQM held 17 of the 342 seats in the National Assembly in October 2002 and 18 in June 2006, behind the Pakistan Muslim League (PML), the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) (9 Oct. 2006). However, on their Web site, the MQM claims to be the "third largest political party of Pakistan and the second largest political party in the southern province of Sindh" (n.d.; SATP n.d.a; EIU 9 Oct. 2006). The MQM leader, Altaf Hussain, has been in exile in London since 1992 as a result of threats to his person and his party (National MIPT 7 Nov. 2006; SATP n.d.a).

The EIU also provides the following information on the MQM:

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) was originally formed to support Muslim refugees that emigrated to Pakistan from India during the partition. It is the third-largest political party, although its support base is largely confined to Urdu speakers in the main cities of Sindh, particularly Karachi and Hyderabad. The MQM's militancy and reputation as an unreliable ally have frequently prevented it from capitalising on its potential as a power-broker, although it is currently a partner in the pro-Musharraf state government in Sindh. (9 Oct. 2006)

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), the MQM is the "foremost among the ethnic based politico-terrorist formations in Pakistan" (n.d.b). However, since 1998, the MQM has reportedly "largely adopted peaceful means of protest" (SATP n.d.b).

Several sources report that the MQM is part of an alliance with the ruling coalition led by the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) (BBC 15 Nov. 2006; *Business Recorder* 5 Dec. 2006; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 3). Other sources report that relations between the parties have deteriorated and that the MQM has opposed the ruling PML on several issues (*Dawn* 6 Dec. 2006a; *ibid.* 6 Dec. 2006b; BBC 28 July 2006; *ibid.* 8 Jan. 2006). An 8 January 2006 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) article reports that the MQM threatened to withdraw its support to government in Balochistan. A subsequent BBC article notes that, following a conflict with the government, several MQM provincial cabinet ministers handed in their resignations in the province of Sindh (28 July 2006). However, a 4 August 2006 article in the *Gulf News* indicates that "[a]ll issues including the resignations presented MQM federal and provincial ministers have been resolved," and that the MQM would remain in the ruling coalition. In December 2006, MQM leader Altaf Hussain addressed a rally of MQM supporters and was quoted as saying that the PML would have to decide whether it considered the MQM its ally or its rival (*Dawn* 6 Dec. 2006b; *Business Recorder* 6 Dec. 2006). Similarly, *Dawn* reports that the PML adopted a resolution against the MQM, after which the MQM "urged the PML to recognise the MQM as its coalition partner" (8 Dec. 2006).

Several sources report that the MQM is open to dialogue with the opposition parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) (*Gulf News* 24 Oct. 2006; *Dawn* 23 Oct. 2006; *Business Recorder* 19 Oct. 2006; *ibid.* 15 Nov. 2006). According to the *Daily Times*, the PPP and the MQM were seriously considering forming an alliance (5 Dec. 2006).

Regarding the relationship between the MQM and the Muttahida Maalis-e-Amal (MMA), the *Daily Times* reports that the MMA accused the MQM of being "criminals" (6 Oct. 2006) and of undertaking a "political victimisation campaign against its adversaries" (13 Apr. 2005). On the other hand, PakTribune reports that the MQM alleges that the MMA is guilty of "fueling terrorism in the country" and was involved in organizing suicide attacks (27 June 2006).

Information regarding the number of MQM members could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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 Muttahida Qaumi Movement did not respond within the time constraints of this Response.

Publications: *Political Handbook of the World: 2005-2006*.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International, Factiva, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, *The Nation* [Lahore], *The Pioneer* [New Delhi], South Asia Analysis Group, United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, United States Department of State.

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