

# 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.

5 July 2012

**PAK104126.E**

Pakistan: Situation and treatment of Muhajirs, particularly in Lahore, Islamabad and Faisalabad; situation and treatment of members of the Pakistan People's Party in Lahore, Islamabad and Faisalabad; whether the Muttahida Qaumi Movement targets Pakistan People's Party members in these cities

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

### 1. Situation and Treatment of Muhajirs

Muhajirs [also spelled Mohajirs or Mojahirs] refers to the descendants of people who migrated to Pakistan following India's partition in 1947 (CFR 6 Jan. 2011; UN 27 May 2010; RFE/RL 3 Aug. 2010). *Muhajir* can be translated as "immigrant" (MEMRI 21 June 2012; MRG n.d.) or "refugee" (InfoChange India July 2008). Minority Rights Group International (MRG) indicates that Muhajirs consider themselves to be the largest minority group in Pakistan, but that there are no reliable data on their numbers (n.d.).

Sources indicate that Muhajirs are Muslims (*Political Parties of the World* 2009, 444; The Jamestown Foundation 4 Feb. 2011; InfoChange India July 2008). Several sources describe the Muhajirs as Urdu speakers (MEMRI 21 June 2012; The Jamestown Foundation 4 Feb. 2011; CFR 6 Jan. 2011). According to sources, the Muhajirs see themselves as a "distinct nation" within Pakistan (MRG n.d.; InfoChange India July 2008). In an article providing an overview of the Muhajirs in Pakistan, an Indian journalist, who also holds a master's degree in history, states that other Muslims who immigrated to Pakistan, but settled in regions other than the province of Sindh, notably in Pakistani Punjab and in the North West Frontier Province, mostly did not keep a sense of identity as Muhajir and "were soon well integrated" with the local population (InfoChange India July 2008). Corroborating information was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the Indian journalist, referring to Muhajirs in the political and ethnic sense of the term usually describes those who migrated to Sindh province (ibid.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), an independent and non-profit Washington-based organization founded in 1998 (MEMRI n.d.), also noted that the Muhajirs have "substantial" presence in the Sindh province (MEMRI 21 June 2012). Minority Rights Group International (MRG) also notes that the Muhajirs are a large ethnic group within the province, where they claim to constitute more than half the population (MRG n.d.).

According to MRG, the Muhajirs are concentrated in urban areas (ibid.). They are notably present in the city of Karachi (ibid.; MEMRI 21 June 2012), where they reportedly make up almost half of the population (CFR 6 January 2011; UN 27 May 2010) and constitute the largest ethnic group (UN 27 May 2010).

The MEMRI representative stated that the Muhajirs "have faced discrimination and attacks in linguistic conflicts involving Sindhi-speaking locals," but did not provide details (MEMRI 21 June 2012). Corroboration for this statement could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. While noting that there are fewer Muhajirs outside of Sindh, the MEMRI representative provided the following details about the situation and treatment of the Muhajirs outside of the province:

In Quetta, capital of Baluchistan where a limited insurgency for the independence of the province is underway, the Baluchi rebels have targeted settlers from other provinces, especially Punjabis but also Muhajirs. The Urdu-speaking Muhajirs do experience discrimination of different types from other communities - for example, efforts by them to become politically active in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province have not been allowed by local Pashtun groups; sometime Muhajirs who follow Shia Islam are also attacked because of their belief in Shia Islam by Sunni militant groups who can be broadly categorized as the Taliban or the pro-Taliban or Taliban/Al-Qaeda affiliates - the most dreaded anti-Shia group being Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). (ibid.)

Information corroborating these statements by the MQM representative could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

## 1.1 The Muttahida Qaumi Movement

The Muttahida Qaumi [or Quami] Movement (MQM) was formerly known as the Muhajir Qaumi Movement [or Mahaz] (MRG n.d.; InfoChange India July 2008). According to the *Political Handbook of the World 2012*, when the movement was founded it "was primarily concerned with the rights of postpartition migrants to Pakistan, whom it wanted to see recognized as constituting a 'fifth nationality' (PHW 2012, 1096). Sources indicate the MQM is composed of a majority of Muhajirs (The Jamestown Foundation 4 Feb. 2011; UN 15 May 2007). According to sources, the MQM is a secular party (CPJ 7 Oct. 2011; CFR 6 Jan. 2011).

The MQM obtained 25 seats in the National Assembly during 2008 elections (*PWH 2012, 1097; Political Parties of the World 2009, 444*) out of a total of 342 seats (*ibid., 443*). *Political Parties of the World* indicates that the MQM'S "political base lies almost entirely in Sindh Province, especially in Karachi, the provincial capital and Pakistan's largest city" (*ibid., 444*). The MQM holds 51 seats in the Sindh Assembly (*ibid., 445; Pakistan 27 June 2012*) out of 168 (*ibid.*). However, *Foreign Affairs*, a journal which deals with international and US foreign policy issues published by the Council on Foreign Relations, an independent think-tank (CRF n.d.), states that the MQM is in "relative decline" in Sindh province, partially due to the continuing arrival of Pashtun workers in Karachi (6 Jan. 2011). According to the MEMRI representative, MQM supporters and "Pashtu-speaking settlers from Pakistani tribal region have clashed in recent years" in Karachi (MEMRI 21 June 2012). The *Political Handbook of the World* also states that MQM supporters were "involved in political violence against ethnic Pashtuns and the ANP [Awami National Party]" in Karachi in 2010 and 2011 (*PHW 2012, 1097*).

The MEMRI representative explains that

[o]ver the years, the ethnic/linguistic conflict has become so deep-rooted that all political parties and religious organizations have developed informal armed wings all of whom spurts in target killings and bloodshed in Karachi (*ibid.*).

Corroborating information regarding this statement could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraint of this Response.

## 1.2 Situation and Treatment of Muhajirs in Islamabad, Lahore and Faisalabad

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the MEMRI representative provided the following information on the situation of the Muhajirs in Lahore, Islamabad and Faisalabad:

In Islamabad, Lahore and Faisalabad, Muhajirs face severe competition in government jobs from mainly Punjabis, who control the levers of government and military throughout Pakistan. In Islamabad, the federal capital, the Muhajirs face discrimination in government jobs. So, there is some pattern of discrimination against them, but there are no violent attacks except for occasional incidents. (21 June 2012)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), a non-profit independent NGO (HRCP n.d.), stated that he was not aware of any "discrimination or political victimization" targeting members of the MQM in Lahore, Islamabad and Faisalabad (HRCP 27 June 2012). Further information about the situation of the Muhajirs in Lahore, Islamabad and Faisalabad could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

## 2. Situation and Treatment of Members of the Pakistan People's Party

The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is an Islamic socialist party formed in 1967 (PHW 2012, 1095; *Political Parties of the World 2009, 446*). During legislative elections in 2008, the PPP obtained more seats than any other party nationally becoming the head of a coalition government (*ibid.*). It also obtained the majority of seats in Sindh province (*ibid.*). According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the PPP is "a Sindh-based party that rules at both the national and provincial level but is a minor power in Karachi, where it effectively represents Sindhis and Balochis" (CFR 6 Jan. 2011). The Jamestown Foundation similarly indicates that the party largely represents Sindhis (4 Feb. 2011).

The representative of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan stated that Islamabad "is ruled" by the PPP (HRCP 27 June 2012). The representative also indicated that he was not aware of any "political victimization" of members of the PPP in Lahore or Faisalabad (*ibid.*). However, corroborating information was not found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

## 3. Relationship Between the MQM and the PPP

Sources indicate that the MQM controls Karachi (CFR 6 Jan. 2011; RFE/RL 3 Aug. 2010). According to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) the "MQM's main political rival is the Awami National Party, a secular nationalist party whose main power center is Pakistan's northwest and whose basis in Karachi is the ethnic Pashtun community" (*ibid.*). *Foreign Affairs* notes that the Awami National Party is allied with the PPP (CFR 6 Jan. 2011).

Sources report that there are ethnic conflicts in Karachi (MEMRI 21 June 2012; CFR 6 Jan. 2011; RFE/RL 3 Aug. 2010; The Jamestown Foundation 4 Feb. 2011). According to the representative of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, the MQM and PPP accuse each other of targeting their members in Karachi (HRCP 27 June 2012). The Jamestown Foundation similarly indicates that Pashtun nationalists blame the MQM for the violence, and that the MQM blame the Pashtuns (4 Feb. 2012).

The MEMRI representative stated that

MQM [...] is not known for target killings of political rivals outside Sindh. There is some kind of uneasy tussle between MQM and PPP (Pakistan People's Party), but there are no violent clashes. Similarly, Faisalabad and Lahore are in Punjab province, a traditional stronghold of Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) [the] party of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. If MQM and PPP were to assert politically in those cities, they will face resistance from the PML-N, but at present one does not see violence between them. (21 June 2012)

No further information or corroboration on the relationship between the MQM and the PPP in Lahore, Islamabad, and Faisalabad was 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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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## Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact a professor specializing in ethnic politics and civil society at the Lahore University of Management Sciences's School of Humanities and Social Sciences and a professor emeritus of political science at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany specializing in the politics and ethnic minorities of Pakistan were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Australia Refugee Review Tribunal; Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation; *Dawn.com*; eoi.net; Factiva; Human Rights Watch; Human Security Report Project; International Crisis Group; Minorities at Risk; United Kingdom Border Agency; United Nations Refworld.

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