

# **INDIA ASSESSMENT**

**October 2001**

**Country Information and Policy Unit**

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## **I. SCOPE OF DOCUMENT**

1.1 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3 The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4 It is intended to revise the assessment on a 6-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.5 The assessment will be placed on the Internet (<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/>). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK  
Immigration Advisory Service  
Immigration Appellate Authority  
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association  
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants  
JUSTICE  
Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture  
Refugee Council  
Refugee Legal Centre  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

## II GEOGRAPHY

2.1 India forms a natural sub-continent with the Himalayas to the north. The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, which are sections of the Indian Ocean, lie to the west and east respectively. India's neighbours are China (Tibet), Bhutan and Nepal to the north, Pakistan to the north-west, and Burma to the north-east. To the east, almost surrounded by India, is Bangladesh. Near India's southern tip, across the Palk Strait, is Sri Lanka. India covers an area of 3,287,623 square kilometres (1,269,219 square miles). [1]

2.2 In July 1999 the population was estimated to be 1,000,848,550. Officially the one-billionth baby was born on 11 May 2000, according to the country's census commission. India is a federal republic. The capital is New Delhi. [32o] & [35]

2.3 India is a mosaic of different cultures, ethnic groups, languages and religions. [1]

2.4 The official language of India is Hindi written in the Devanagari script and spoken by some 30% of the population as a first language. Since 1965 English has been recognised as an "associated language". In addition there are 18 main and regional languages recognised for adoption as official state languages. There are another 24 languages, 720 dialects and 23 tribal languages. [1]

2.5 Among the main languages are Bengali (8.2%), Marathi (7.7%), Urdu (5.2%), Gujarati (4.7%), Bihari (3.8%), Oriya (3.6%), Telugu (3.5%), Tamil (3.2%) and Punjabi (3.0%). Other languages include Assamese, Kannada, Rajasthani and Kashmiri. Bihari and Rajasthani are variants of Hindi. [1]

2.6 More than 180 million people in India regard Hindi as their mother tongue. Another 300 million use it as a second language. There is controversy about the status of Punjabi, which can be considered as a dialect of Hindi, or as an independent language. A 1997 survey found that 66% of all Indians can speak Hindi, and 77% of Indians regard Hindi as "one language across the nation". [31]

See also [Religious Minorities](#): Section 5.8

## III HISTORY (Sources: [1] & [7j] unless otherwise stated)

For information on Indian history up until 1996, please refer to the Europa World Yearbook (source [1]) or Annex C: Chronology.

### 1996: the Bharatiya Janata Party Government

3.1 Congress (I) government entered the May 1996 general elections with its morale at a low ebb and many of its senior leaders at odds with the Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao. Breakaway parties had been formed in the north, in Madhya Pradesh and in Tamil Nadu - the last in response to Narasimha Rao's decision to have an electoral alliance with the deeply unpopular Tamil regional party, the AIADMK, then ruling the state. Congress won only 139 seats, its poorest ever

performance. The BJP emerged as the largest party, improving on its previous performance to win 160 seats but still well short of a majority, even with allies. [7j]

3.2 On 15 May 1996 the Indian President called on the BJP's parliamentary leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to form a government, which he did with the support of Shiv Sena and other smaller allies. Given the antagonism felt towards the BJP by the majority of other political parties, Vajpayee resigned on 28 May 1996 in anticipation of his Government's inevitable defeat in a parliamentary vote of confidence. [1]

### **1996: the United Front Coalition**

3.3 The National and Left Fronts merged to form an informal coalition known as the United Front (UF) which comprised a total of 13 parties, with the Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party, the 2 communist parties and the regional Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Telugu Desam as its major components. With Congress (I) prepared to lend external support, the UF was able to form a Government at the end of May 1996. H D Deve Gowda, a former Chief Minister of Karnataka, was selected to lead the UF and the new Government. [1]

3.4 At the end of March 1997 Deve Gowda was faced with a serious political crisis following Congress (I)'s withdrawal of parliamentary support for the UF Government. On 11 April 1997 the Prime Minister resigned following the defeat of the UF Government in a vote of confidence, and he was replaced by Inder Kumar Gujral, the External Affairs Minister and the only person acceptable to all the coalition parties. He was sworn in as Prime Minister on 22 April 1997. [1]

3.5 In November 1997 Congress (I) called for the withdrawal of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party from the Government. The party was alleged to be indirectly implicated in the 1991 assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. The Government refused the request and Congress withdrew its support. Mr Gujral resigned as Prime Minister on 28 November 1997. On 4 December 1997 President Narayanan dissolved the Lok Sabha. Mr Gujral headed an interim government until the general election was held. [1]

### **1998 - the present**

3.6 The general election was held between 16 February and 7 March 1998. Atal Behari Vajpayee, parliamentary leader of the BJP, was sworn in as Prime Minister on 19 March 1998, thereby ending 2 weeks of feverish political activity following a general election which had left no party with a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. [5b]

3.7 India detonated 5 nuclear devices in May 1998, before Pakistan responded with 6 underground nuclear explosions. The tests enjoyed widespread support in India, but they provoked almost universal condemnation from the international community. A number of countries stated their intention to impose economic sanctions or reduce economic aid to the two countries. [5c]

3.8 State elections were held in 4 states in November 1998. The BJP was defeated in its strongholds of Rajasthan and Delhi, where Congress (I) swept to power, and in Madhya Pradesh the BJP failed to dislodge the ruling Congress (I). Regional groups took power in the remote

north-eastern state of Mizoram. The BJP defeat was attributed to internal dissent in the governing coalition, the weight of sanctions on a creaking economy and spiralling prices of essential commodities. [9a]

3.9 In January 1999 the BJP Government came under attack for its failure to stop the violence against Christians. During December 1998 and January 1999 Christians in the Dangs area of south western Gujarat suffered an escalating series of violent incidents in which churches and schools were burnt down and individuals were attacked. Hindu fundamentalist groups belonging to the Sangh Parivar apparently organised the violence, but Hindu activists denied that there was an organised campaign of violence. They claimed that local anger was ignited by the forced conversions of poor tribals by missionaries. [15a] Christian missionaries stated that they only provide charity. The violence dramatically escalated when a mob in the state of Orissa in eastern India murdered an Australian missionary and his 2 young sons on 23 January 1999. [9b]

*See also [Christians](#): paragraphs 5.8.26 - 5.8.44*

3.10 The BJP-led Government survived with the outside support of several regional parties and the participation in government of several allies whose backing was conditional on narrow and specific agendas. The allies' allegiance to the BJP was tenuous, relying more on the Government's ability to meet their demands than on any semblance of ideological compatibility. [16] A political crisis arose in April 1999 after the AIADMK party withdrew its support from the Government. On 17 April 1999 the Government lost a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha by one vote and after 10 days, during which Congress (I) tried and failed to form a new government, the President dissolved Parliament and called a general election. [8a] The general elections to the 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, held between September and October 1999, concluded with a decisive victory for the 24-party National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition led by the BJP, which with 296 seats commanded an absolute majority. Overall voter turnout was 60%. Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the BJP was sworn in as Prime Minister on 13 October 1999. Although there was a 2.7% swing to Congress (I) nationwide, it went on to suffer its worst ever electoral defeat. In contrast to the 1998 election, the BJP eschewed the rhetoric of sectarian Hinduism, concentrating instead on economic reform and infrastructure projects. In the last phase of the election, violence claimed 41 lives, mostly as a result of attacks by separatist militants in the north-eastern states of Assam and Tripura. [5e]

3.11 In May 2001, India's main opposition Congress (I) party emerged victorious after elections in five key states across the country. Congress (I) swept to power in Kerala, Assam and Pondicherry, while a key ally took the southern state of Tamil Nadu. India's communists also won a record sixth term in West Bengal, continuing their reign as the world's longest serving elected communist administration. The results were being seen as a major blow for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee whose BJP coalition partners did not win anywhere, although the BJP was not a key player in the five states. In Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK alliance, led by the former film star Jayalalitha, won a resounding victory over the BJP's key government coalition partner, the DMK. [38i]

### **Economic situation**

3.12 Since the early 1990s, India has been undergoing a transition from a government-controlled economy to one that is largely market oriented. The private sector is predominant in agriculture,

most non-financial services, consumer goods, manufacturing and some heavy industry, although the State dominates the economy through public ownership in sectors such as finance, energy, capital goods and heavy industry, and infrastructure. The State also employs nearly 70% of the 28 million workers in organised employment. [21]

3.13 India is the world's fifth largest economy in terms of gross national product (GNP), but its per capita GNP brings it to 90th place. Economic growth surpassed 5% between 1992 and 1996, reaching 6.2% in 1996. Agriculture, together with fishing and industry, contribute approximately one third of GNP. About 70% of the population are involved in cultivation activities. Nearly 33% of cultivated land is under assured irrigation while the rest depends on the annual monsoon. The main crops are food grains for domestic consumption such as rice, wheat and sorghum, making the country almost entirely self sufficient: in the 1990s net food imports have been less than 2% of total food supply, compared with 8-10% in the 1960s and 5-8% in the 1970s. Nevertheless large-scale poverty limits the growth in purchasing food grains, considering that out of the 1.13 billion people living below the poverty line throughout the world, 40% are found in India. [21]

3.14 India is also regarded as a giant in technological achievements and industrial output: it has significant expertise in nuclear energy, communication satellites, vehicles, software design, combat aeroplanes and helicopters, oceanography and deep sea oil drilling, as well as machinery and manufactured goods. [21]

3.15 The BJP Government's first budget was not well received as it lacked a clear message about the BJP's economic policy goals, while the reversal of some measures shortly afterwards reinforced doubts about the Government's ability to steer the economy. Inflation is running at approximately 8-9%. The stock market and the value of the rupee have fallen to new lows. The economic sanctions imposed by Japan and the United States after the nuclear tests in May 1998 could undermine long term development of the Indian economy. [16]

3.16 The approximate rate of exchange on 14 September 2001 was £1 = 70 Indian rupees. [39]

## **IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE**

### **Political System**

4.1 India is a federal republic, with legislative power vested in Parliament, which consists of the President and two Houses. The upper house, the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) has 245 members, most of whom are indirectly elected by the State Assemblies for 6 years (one third retiring every 2 years), the remainder being nominated by the President for 6 years. The Lower House, the Lok Sabha (House of the People) has 543 elected members, serving for 5 years. Two members of the Lok Sabha may be nominated by the President to represent the Anglo-Indian community, while the 543 members are directly elected by universal adult suffrage in single member constituencies. [1]

4.2 The President is a constitutional Head of State, elected for 5 years by an electoral college comprising elected members of both Houses of Parliament and the state legislatures. The President exercises executive power on the advice of the Council of Ministers, which is



responsible to Parliament. The President appoints the Prime Minister and, on the latter's recommendation, other Ministers. [1]

4.3 India has 28 states (29 if the capital region of Delhi is included) [33g] with constitutionally defined powers of government. The states vary greatly in size, population and development. Each state has a Governor appointed by the President for 5 years, a legislature elected for 5 years, and a Council of Ministers headed by a chief minister. Each state has its own legislative, executive and judicial machinery, corresponding to that of the Indian Union. In the event of the failure of constitutional government in a state, the Union can impose President's Rule. There are also 6 Union Territories and the National Capital Territory of Delhi, administered by Lieutenant Governors or Administrators, all of whom are appointed by the President. The Territories of Delhi and Pondicherry also have elected chief ministers and state assemblies. [1]

4.4 The 28 states are: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and West Bengal. [1] & [33g]

4.5 The Territories are: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep, and Pondicherry. [1]

### Party Positions in the Indian Parliament

4.6 The results of the September/October 1999 general election [24a] (with the party positions in the Lok Sabha after the February/March 1998 elections in brackets) are:

Bharatiya Janata Party*	<b>182</b> (181)
Congress (I)	<b>111</b> (141)
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	<b>32</b> (32)
Telugu Desam Party*	<b>29</b> (12)
Samajwadi Party	<b>25</b> (18)
Janata Dal United*	<b>20</b> (6)
Shiv Sena*	<b>15</b> (6)
Bahujan Samaj Party	<b>14</b> (5)
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*	<b>12</b> (5)
Biju Janata Dal*	<b>10</b> (9)
All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	<b>10</b> (18)
All India Trinamool Congress*	<b>8</b>
Nationalist Congress Party	<b>7</b>
Rashtriya Janata Dal	<b>7</b> (17)
Independents	<b>5</b> (6)
Pattali Makkal Katchi*	<b>5</b> (4)
Indian National Lok Dal*	<b>5</b>
Communist Party of India	<b>4</b> (9)

Jammu and Kashmir National Conference	4 (3)
Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*	4 (3)
Revolutionary Socialist Party	3 (5)
All India Forward Bloc	2 (2)
Muslim League Kerala State Committee	2
Shiromani Akali Dal*	2 (8)
Rashtriya Lok Dal	2
Akhil Bhartiya Tantrik Congress	2
Janata Dal Secular	1
Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya)	1
Manipur State Congress Party	1 (1)
Himachal Vikas Congress	1
Kerala Congress	1
Kerala Congress (M)	1 (1)
Sikkim Democratic Front	1 (1)
Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)(Liberation)	1
Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangha	1
Peasants and Workers Party of India	1 (1)
All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimmen	1 (1)
MGR Anna DM Kazhagam	1
Shiromani Akali Dal (Simranjit Singh Mann)	1

\* indicates parties which supported the BJP led Government.

The Bharatiya Janata Dal and its allies (the 24 party National Democratic Alliance) won 296 seats; Congress and its allies 134 seats, and the others accounted for 107 seats. [11a]

Atal Behari Vajpayee, the leader of the BJP, was sworn in as Prime Minister on 13 October 1999 at the head of a BJP led government. [33a]

4.7 As at 8 November 1999 the party position in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of the Indian Parliament) [24b] was as follows:

Congress (I)	58
Bharatiya Janata Party	45
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	16
Independents	15
Telugu Desam	10
Janata Dal	9
Rashtriya Janata Dal	8
Nominated Members	8
Samajwadi Party	7
Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	7
All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	5

(I)	
Shiv Sena	5
Shiromani Akali Dal	5
Bahujan Smaj Party	4
Biju Janata Dal	3
Tamil Maanila Congress (Moopanar)	3
Muslim League	2
Jammu and Kashmir National Conference	2
Asom Gana Parishad	2
Forward Bloc	2
All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (II)	1
Sikkim Sangram Parishad	1
Revolutionary Socialist Party	1
Kerala Congress	1
Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi	1
Haryana Vikas Party	1
Himachal Vikas Congress	1
Jharkhand Mukti Morcha	1
Indian National Lok Dal	1
Autonomous State Demand Committee	1

## Judicial System

4.8 There is an independent judiciary with strong constitutional safeguards. Under a Supreme Court ruling, the Chief Justice, in consultation with his colleagues, has a decisive voice in selecting judicial candidates. The President appoints judges, and they may serve up to the age of 62 on the state high courts and up to the age of 65 on the Supreme Court. Courts of first resort exist at the sub-district and district levels. More serious cases and appeals are heard in state-level high courts and by the national-level Supreme Court, which also rules on constitutional questions. State governments appoint sub-district and district judicial magistrates. High court judges are appointed on the recommendation of the federal law ministry, with the advice of the Supreme Court, the High Court Chief Justice, and the chief minister of the State, usually from among district judges or lawyers practicing before the same courts. Supreme Court judges are appointed similarly from among High Court judges. The Chief Justice is selected on the basis of seniority. [2a]

4.9 When legal procedures function normally, they generally assure a fair trial, but the process is often drawn out and inaccessible to the poor. Defendants have the right to choose counsel from attorneys who are fully independent of the Government. There are effective channels for appeal at most levels of the judicial system, and the State provides free legal counsel to the indigent. [2a]

4.10 Free legal services are available for everyone whose total income is less than 6,000 rupees. Legal Aid is available for fees incurred in legal proceedings, representations by a legal practitioner, obtaining certified copies of legal documents, and preparation of appeal papers. [6a]

4.11 The Criminal Procedure Code provides for an open trial in most cases, but it allows exceptions in proceedings involving official secrets, trials in which statements prejudicial to the safety of the state might be made, or under provisions of special security legislation. Sentences must be announced in public. [2a]

4.12 Muslim personal status law governs many non-criminal matters involving Muslims, including family law, inheritance, and divorce. The Government does not interfere in the personal status laws of the minority communities, with the result that personal status laws that discriminate against women are upheld. [2a]

*See also [Women](#): paragraphs 5.3.1 - 5.3.20*

4.13 In Jammu and Kashmir, the judicial system barely functions due to threats by militants against judges, witnesses, and their family members; because of judicial tolerance of the Government's heavy-handed anti-militant actions; and because of the frequent refusal by security forces to obey court orders. Courts in Jammu and Kashmir are reluctant to hear cases involving terrorist crimes, and fail to act expeditiously on habeas corpus cases, if they act at all. There were a few convictions of alleged terrorists in the Jammu High Court during 2000. [2a]

*See also [Human rights concerns in Kashmir](#): paragraphs 5.7.36 - 5.7.39*

## **The Security Forces**

4.14 In 1996 India's total armed forces numbered 1,145,000: of these, 980,000 constituted the army, 55,000 the navy, and 110,000 the air force. The paramilitary Border Security Force numbered 185,000. Military service is voluntary, although the Constitution states that every citizen has a fundamental duty to perform national service if called upon to do so. The armed forces have traditionally not been involved in domestic politics, and have never instigated a coup. [21] The qualifying age for military service is 17. [35]

4.15 Each state controls its own police forces through its own home ministry. The Union Home Ministry co-ordinates the activities of the all-India bodies. These include the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) (the main law enforcement body in India), the Central Detective Training School, the Central Forensic Laboratory, the Central Fingerprint Laboratory, and the National Police Academy in Mount Abu, Rajasthan, where the Indian police service is trained. It also has jurisdiction over the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Railway Protection Force and the Border Security Force. [21]

*See also [Abuses by the Security Forces](#): paragraph 5.2.12*

## **Medical Treatment**

4.16 In a letter dated 7 June 2001, the British High Commission in New Delhi outlined the standards of medical facilities in India. In the larger cities, particularly the state capitals, there are hospitals offering care in a wide range of medical specialities. These include: general medicine and surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics, neurology, gastroenterology, cardiology, cardiothoracic surgery, neurosurgery, dental surgery, dermatology, ENT surgery, endocrinology, renal and liver transplant, orthopaedic surgery, nephrology, nuclear medicine, oncology, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, psychiatry, respiratory medicine, rheumatology and urology. Outside these cities medical care can be more variable, but most districts are served by referral hospitals. **[40a]**

4.17 Most care is provided within the private sector. Private health care costs are less than in the UK, but vary according to the type of ward and tests needed. The private hospitals are expected to offer free treatment to a proportion of poor patients. **[40a]**

4.18 There is good availability of medications and many are cheaper than in the UK. Some are imported from abroad but there are many firms now producing drugs under licence in India. The standard of nursing and social care is not as high as in the UK, but with support from family these can be overcome. There are very few medical problems for which suitable care cannot be found in India. **[40a]**

4.19 In June 2001 Karnataka Minister for Food and Civil Supplies D.B. Inamdar declared open an 80-bed well-equipped hospital "Adhar" run by an association of local medical practitioners in Belgaum. Adhar would specially cater to the needs of the economically weaker sections of society. It was hoped that doctors elsewhere in the country would emulate the Adhar experiment and help the poor and needy in society. **[9s]**

## **Nationality Law**

4.20 Indian citizenship is based upon the Citizenship Act of 1955. Despite the variety of states, peoples and languages in India, the law recognises only Indian citizenship. Though the law of India does recognise citizenship through birth in country, unless the citizenship is actively applied for, the Indian government does not consider the child a citizen of India. **[41]**

4.21 Children born abroad must be registered at the Indian Consulate. The child of an Indian mother and a foreign father is considered an Indian citizen if the mother and child continue to live in India and the father does not give the child his country's citizenship. **[41]**

4.22 Indian citizenship may be acquired by naturalisation if the person has resided in India for five years and they have renounced any previous citizenship. **[41]**

4.23 Dual citizenship is not recognised. **[41]**

4.24 Voluntary renunciation of Indian citizenship is permitted by law. The following are grounds for involuntary loss of Indian citizenship: the person voluntarily acquires a foreign citizenship; naturalised citizenship was acquired through false statements; a naturalised citizen commits acts against the state of India before the end of the five-year grace period. **[41]**

## V HUMAN RIGHTS

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 India is a longstanding parliamentary democracy with an independent judiciary. The human rights of Indian citizens are safeguarded by extensive constitutional and statutory provisions. However there are significant human rights abuses. These can be attributed to deeply rooted tensions among the country's many ethnic and religious communities, violent secessionist movements and the authorities' attempts to repress them, and deficient police methods and training. [2a] Other reasons include poverty, disparities in the distribution of wealth, persistence of traditional practices and customs particularly affecting women, discrimination against underprivileged classes and castes, and ethnic, cultural and religious tensions. [6c]

5.1.2 Human rights abuses include:

- ◆ extra-judicial killings including faked encounter killings;
- ◆ excessive use of force by the security forces combating insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir and several north eastern states; arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention in Jammu and Kashmir and the north east;
- ◆ continued detention throughout the country of thousands arrested under special security legislation;
- ◆ torture and rape by police and other agents of government and deaths of suspects in custody; poor prison conditions; lengthy pre-trial detention; prolonged detention during trial;
- ◆ legal and societal discrimination and societal violence against women;
- ◆ discrimination and violence against indigenous people and scheduled castes and tribes; (*See Section 5.9 for definition of scheduled castes and tribes*);
- ◆ child prostitution, trafficking and infanticide; and exploitation of indentured, bonded and child labour;
- ◆ inter-caste and communal violence;
- ◆ societal violence against Christians and Muslims [2a]

5.1.3 Separatist militants were responsible for numerous, serious abuses, including killing of armed forces personnel, police, government officials, and civilians; torture; rape; and brutality. Separatist militants were also responsible for kidnapping and extortion in Jammu and Kashmir and the northeastern states. Extensive, complex patterns of violence continue in many of the seven north eastern states. The main insurgent groups in the northeast include two factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) in Nagaland; Meitei extremists in Manipur; the ULFA and the Bodo security force in Assam; and the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) and the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) in Tripura. The proclaimed objective of many of these groups is to secede from the country, creating new, independent nations. Their stated grievances against the Government range from charges of neglect and indifference to the widespread poverty of the region, and allegations of active discrimination against the tribal and non-tribal people of the region by the central Government [2a]

5.1.4 The number of insurgency-related killings in Jammu and Kashmir and the northeast by regular security forces increased during 2000. In the northeast there was no clear decrease in the number of killings, despite negotiated ceasefires between the Government and some insurgent forces, and between some tribal groups. [2a]

5.1.5 There have been clashes between the police and the Naxalite revolutionaries of the People's War Group – a Maoist-Leninist organisation formed in 1980, that has been waging an armed struggle for the creation of a communist state consisting of parts of Andhra-Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Nearly 400 people were killed in Andhra Pradesh in clashes between the police and the Naxalites during 1999, including 31 policemen and 200 Naxalite activists, and more than 5,000 have died in violence between Naxalites and police since 1985. [32h]

5.1.6 In Bihar, armed Naxalite groups have reportedly taken control of many villages across the state. Deaths from Naxalite activities during 1997 reportedly amounted to 100 villagers, 192 Naxalites and 5 policemen. Moreover, upper caste private armies and lower caste armed groups are engaged in a bitter struggle in which both groups have committed massacres with impunity on a monthly basis. [21] Ranvir Sena, a private militia controlled by high caste landlords in Bihar, was responsible for murdering at least 58 people on 1 December 1997. [26] Ranvir Sena were again blamed for the killing of 34 lower-caste Hindus on 16 June 2000. The massacre, in Miapur, Bihar, appeared to be a revenge attack for the killing of 12 upper-caste Hindus a few days earlier. [32q] Bihar is widely regarded as India's most lawless state. During state parliamentary elections there in February 2000, violent clashes and paramilitary raids caused 45 deaths. [33b]

5.1.7 Rebel groups intensified their activities in Tripura during 1999. The outlawed All-Tripura Tiger Force massacred at least 18 Bengali migrants and abducted 5 others from a market on 14 November 1999. Tripura's ethnic rebel groups claim they are upset with the ceaseless influx of Bengali migrants, from what is now Bangladesh, which has reduced the indigenous people of the state into a minority since 1949. [32i] In the worst single incident in the conflict, rebels from the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) killed 18 Bengalis and wounded 40 others in an attack on 21 May 2000. The previous day, Bengali militants had killed 9 tribal people. [32r]

5.1.8 Nearly 100 Hindi-speaking people were killed in a six week period during November and December 2000 in Assam. The Chief Minister accused the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) of being responsible, an allegation denied by the group. Assam witnessed the massacres of Bengali settlers during the 1980s and 1990s. [38d]

5.1.9 The United Nations Human Rights Committee noted the existence of a broad range of democratic institutions and a comprehensive constitutional framework for the protection of human rights. It referred to the work of the National Human Rights Commission, and the establishment of human rights commissions in a number of states, and the establishment of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the National Commission for Women in 1992 and the National Commission for Minorities in 1993. [6c]

*See also [Women](#): Section 5.3; [Children](#): Section 5.4*

5.1.10 In July 1997 Amnesty International submitted a report to the Human Rights Committee to supplement and update Amnesty's concerns in relation to India. Amnesty International drew attention to its concerns, which covered the following areas:

- ◆ the shortcomings of India's implementation of safeguards to prevent human rights violations;

- ◆ the absence of adequate mechanisms to ensure full redress for all victims of human rights violations;
- ◆ the continuing state of impunity for the majority of perpetrators of human rights violations, particularly in areas of armed conflict;
- ◆ the existence of special legislation which grants security forces wide powers to arrest and detain, and escape prosecution for violations;
- ◆ legislation which provides for preventive detention which has been used to detain people not only in areas of armed conflict but also against those defending human rights;
- ◆ the vulnerability of economically and socially disadvantaged groups in India, including women, scheduled castes and tribal peoples, to human rights violations and their problems in obtaining redress. [3c]

5.1.11 In a report dated 26 April 2000, Amnesty International highlighted their concerns about a range of abuses against the actual human rights defenders themselves. Amnesty acknowledged that steps have been taken by the Indian Government over a number of years to support the work of human rights defence, for example through the establishment of statutory human rights institutions and the ratification of international human rights treaties, and acknowledged the support that government agencies have given to sectors of social activism through government funded programmes and government-NGO co-operation. However, Amnesty were concerned that much of the state's actions in defence of human rights was at a rhetorical level and sporadic in their implementation, and believed that there was an urgent need for the state to take active steps to ensure the protection of activities in defence of human rights. [3j] In the wake of two killings of human rights defenders in the space of four months that were linked to police, Amnesty, in a news release dated 19 February 2001, called on the state government of Andhra Pradesh to take immediate action. They asked that the attacks be impartially investigated and human rights defenders protected. [3k] For their part, the government of Andhra Pradesh had announced in November 2000 that it intended to set up an independent body to deal with complaints against the police, headed by a High Court judge. [38g]

## 5.2 SPECIFIC TOPICS

### Constitutional guarantees

5.2.1 The Indian Constitution and the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure provide judicial guarantees. Detainees have the right to be informed of the grounds for arrest, to be represented by counsel, and, unless the person is held under a preventive detention law, to appear before a magistrate within 24 hours of arrest. An accused person must be informed of his right to bail at the time of arrest and may apply for bail at any time, unless he is held on a non-bailable offence. The police must file charges within 60 to 90 days of arrest; if they fail to do so, court approval of a bail application becomes mandatory. [2a]

### Political Opinion

5.2.2 India has a democratic, parliamentary system of government with representatives elected in multi-party elections. The Constitution provides citizens with the right to change their government peacefully, and citizens exercise this right in practice through periodic, free, and fair



elections held on the basis of universal suffrage. A Parliament sits for 5 years unless dissolved earlier for new elections, except under constitutionally defined emergency situations. State governments are elected at regular intervals except in states under President's Rule. On the advice of the Prime Minister, the President may proclaim a state of emergency in any part of the national territory in the event of war, external aggression, or armed rebellion. Similarly, President's Rule may be declared in the event of a collapse of a state's constitutional machinery. [2a]

See also [Political system](#): paragraphs 4.1 - 4.5

5.2.3 The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press, and the Government generally respects these rights in practice; however, there are some limitations. A vigorous and growing press reflects a wide variety of political, social, and economic beliefs. Newspapers and magazines regularly publish investigative reports and allegations of government wrongdoing, and the press generally promotes human rights and criticises perceived government lapses. Television is no longer a government monopoly, but this is due more to technological changes than to government policy. Private satellite television is distributed widely by cable or dish in middle-class neighbourhoods throughout the country. [2a]

5.2.4 The Constitution provides for the right of peaceful assembly and the right to form associations, and the government generally respects these rights. Permits and notification are sometimes required prior to the holding of parades and demonstrations, but local governments ordinarily respect the right to protest peacefully, except in Jammu and Kashmir, where separatist parties are routinely denied permits for public gatherings. At times of civil tension, the authorities may ban public assemblies or impose a curfew under the Criminal Procedure Code. [2a]

### **Freedom to travel**

5.2.5 Indian citizens enjoy freedom of movement within the country except in certain border areas where, for security reasons, special permits are required. [2a] Various diplomatic missions, several human rights lawyers and a former Advocate-General told the Danish Immigration Service on their fact-finding mission of 2000 that there were no restrictions on movement from one State to another. Furthermore, there were no rules that one should register in connection with a move from one State to another. [37] Under the Passports Act 1967, the Government may deny a passport to any applicant who "may or is likely to engage outside India in activities prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India." The Government uses this provision to prohibit the foreign travel of some government critics, especially those advocating Sikh independence and members of the separatist movement in Jammu and Kashmir. Indian citizens may emigrate without restriction. [2a]

5.2.6 Regarding application for a passport, a very thorough check is made by the local police to investigate an individual's status, including whether there was a case pending against him or her. However, sources indicate that it would not be impossible for a wanted person to obtain a passport on payment of a bribe, as throughout India it was very easy to obtain false documents. This applied to passports, birth certificates, certificates regarding education and career, marriage

certificates and ID cards, arrest orders and so called FIRs (First Information Reports). It was also reported that it was possible to obtain false letters from lawyers. [37]

5.2.7 The Immigration Service, which comes under the Ministry of the Interior, is responsible for checking those leaving the country. The problem of wanted persons leaving India with false or genuine passports on payment of a bribe is being addressed, as the authorities have launched a massive campaign against corrupt officials, particularly in the international airports. [37]

### **Security legislation**

5.2.8 A variety of special security laws were enacted during the 1980s to help law enforcement agencies fight separatist insurgencies. There have been reports of widespread arbitrary arrest and detention under these laws. [2a]

5.2.9 The National Security Act 1980 permits the preventive detention of persons suspected of being security risks without charge or trial for up to one year on loosely defined security grounds. The state government must confirm the detention order, which is reviewed by an advisory board of 3 High Court judges, within 7 weeks of arrest. The Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act 1978 covers corresponding procedures for that state. [2a]

5.2.10 The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 was enacted at a time when India was faced with the activities of insurgents in the border areas on the eastern frontier of the country. The Act's provisions only come into effect when the State Governor declares the area to be "disturbed". The Act lists the situations in which the special powers may be exercised: dispersal of unlawful assembly, preventing people from carrying weapons, destruction of arms dumps, search and seizure and the arrest of those suspected of committing a cognizable offence. The Act also provides for the arrested person to be handed over to the nearest police station. [21] The Act gives an officer in the armed forces the power to shoot to kill if necessary for the maintenance of law and order. Central government sanction is required for the prosecution of any officer for acts committed under the Act. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act as well as the Disturbed Areas Act of 1976 remain in effect in several states in which active secessionist movements exist, namely in Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, and parts of Tripura. [2a]

5.2.11 The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act 1985 (TADA), amended 1987, expired in May 1995 though 1,502 people arrested under the Act continued to be held as of 1 January 1997 and a small number of arrests under TADA continued for crimes allegedly committed before the Act lapsed [2a]. The Act prohibited not only "terrorist acts" but also "disruptive activities" which questioned or threatened the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India. [21]

### **Abuses by the Security Forces**

5.2.12 According to the UN Human Rights Committee, the police and other security forces do not always respect the rule of law and court orders for habeas corpus are not always complied with, particularly in disturbed areas. There are incidents of custodial deaths, rape and torture and special powers of detention remain widespread. [6c]

See also [Human rights concerns in Punjab](#): paragraphs 5.6.26 - 5.6.32; [Human rights concerns in Kashmir](#): paragraphs 5.7.36 - 5.7.39

### **Prison conditions**

5.2.13 Prisons are severely overcrowded and provision of food and medical care is frequently inadequate. Tihar jail in Delhi has a capacity of 3,300 but houses 9,000 prisoners. The Prison Act of 1894 remains unamended. [2a]

5.2.14 With the exception of an agreement with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for visits to detention facilities in Jammu and Kashmir, the Government does not allow NGOs to monitor prison conditions. However 15 states and union territories have authorised the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to conduct surprise check-ups on jails. There is growing public awareness of the problem of custodial abuse. The NHRC has identified torture and deaths in detention as one of its priority concerns. From April 1998 to March 1999, the NHRC received 1,297 complaints of custodial death (1,114 in judicial custody and 183 in police custody) no cases of custodial rape, and 2,252 complaints of other police abuses. A large proportion of the 1,114 deaths in judicial custody (out of a prison population of approximately 246,000) were from natural causes, in some cases aggravated by poor conditions. [2a]

5.2.15 On 17 November 1999 at least 10 people, including a jail official, were killed and more than 150 injured in a riot in a Madras prison, which broke out following the death of an inmate. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Muthuveli Karunanidhi said that he would set up a commission to investigate the causes of the riot. [32b]

5.2.16 The court system is extremely overloaded, resulting in the detention of numerous individuals awaiting trial for periods longer than they would receive if convicted. Prisoners may be held for months or even years before obtaining a trial date. [2a] In 1999 the Supreme Court of India ordered an investigation into the case of a prisoner who had been awaiting trial for 37 years in West Bengal. Ajay Ghosh had been in custody since 1962, when he was arrested and charged with murdering his brother. Throughout this period, Mr Ghosh was denied a trial on the grounds that he was mentally unsound. The Supreme Court later ordered his transfer to an old-age home. [32c] & [32d]

### **The National Human Rights Commission**

5.2.17 The Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 established a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in October 1993. The Commission monitors and investigates human rights violations, advises the Government on human rights issues, and works to further human rights awareness. The existence and functioning of the NHRC has had the effect of raising the profile of a range of human rights issues in India, including custodial violence, prison conditions, working conditions, child labour, basic health, human rights education and the training of police and security forces. [3d]

5.2.18 The NHRC has also played a role in international and regional fora, including the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Commissions. [3d]

5.2.19 The NHRC is also empowered to study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and recommend measures for their effective implementation. The NHRC has suggested that the Protection of Human Rights Act should be amended to incorporate International Covenants. [3c]

5.2.20 Section 19 of the Protection of Human Rights Act limits the mandate of the NHRC and specifies that it is not empowered to investigate allegations of human rights violations by the armed forces. Whenever human rights violations by members of the armed or paramilitary forces are reported to the NHRC, its mandate restricts its action to seeking a report from the central Government. There are no powers of investigation. After receiving the report, the NHRC can either not proceed with the case if it is satisfied with the report, or make recommendations. The Government is required to inform the Commission of the action taken on its recommendations within 3 months. The effect of this restriction is that the NHRC is reliant on the Government's version of events or the version of events as given by the alleged perpetrator. [3d]

5.2.21 In several high profile cases, the NHRC has disregarded this limitation in its mandate and intervened in incidents of human rights violations by security forces, for example in Jammu and Kashmir in the case of the killing of lawyer Jalil Andrabi in March 1996 and the killing of civilians by security forces in Bijbehara in October 1993. Amnesty International considered that this approach did not ensure consistent investigation of human rights violations and that it was consequently inadequate. [3c]

5.2.22 Section 36(2) of the Protection of Human Rights Act limits the NHRC to investigating allegations of abuses only up to a year after the alleged abuse took place. This has been overlooked in certain cases, but other cases over a year old have been disregarded. This is problematic, as many victims approach the NHRC as a last resort, after using other mechanisms such as the courts. Lack of resources is often an obstacle to filing a complaint within the time-frame required. A human rights violation may not come to light until over a year after the original incident or a rape victim may have compelling reasons not to come forward immediately. [3d]

5.2.23 However in September 1998 the Supreme Court ruled that the NHRC's probe into the alleged mass cremation of 2,000 bodies by the Punjab police in 1994-5 could not be barred by the one-year time limit. The Supreme Court ruled that the jurisdiction exercised by the NHRC in these matters is of a special nature not covered by the enactment of law and thus acts *sui generis*. [12d]

See also [NHRC's investigations in Punjab](#): paragraphs 5.6.60 - 5.6.62

5.2.24 The NHRC is allowed, having given notice, to visit jails and detention centres under the control of State Governments. Amnesty is concerned that this gives the State Governments an opportunity to improve conditions before a visit. It is also concerned that the NHRC is not allowed to investigate conditions in institutions under the control of the central Government such as interrogation centres run by the armed forces. [3d]

5.2.25 While the NHRC is conducting enquiries, it has the powers of a civil court, including summoning attendance of witnesses, compelling the provision of information and referring cases of contempt to a magistrate. However the NHRC, and individuals undertaking investigations on its behalf, do not have these powers in the course of activities beyond the conduct of enquiries,

including when undertaking investigations. There have been occasions when the NHRC's work has been hampered by delays in receiving reports from state authorities. Some states, particularly Jammu and Kashmir, have failed to submit reports about deaths in custody within 24 hours, in accordance with NHRC directives. [3d]

5.2.26 During 1996-7, the NHRC received 20,514 complaints, more than double the figure for the previous year. The increase was attributed to the spread of awareness of human rights. Cases from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together accounted for 54% of the total. During that year criminal prosecutions were launched against 167 people, including 144 police officers, and a total of 10,848 cases were disposed of. [10q]

5.2.27 One of the NHRC's first actions was to request that it be informed of death or rape in police custody within 24 hours of occurrence, and while it has not succeeded in implementing this directive in states such as Jammu and Kashmir, the NHRC has become an important monitor of the extent of custodial violence. [3c] The NHRC has recommended that army and paramilitary forces should also follow the same procedure and report any death or rape in custody to the NHRC within 24 hours. The Indian Government rejected this, saying that the existing procedures laid down in the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 were sufficient. [10r]

5.2.28 The NHRC has been active in recommending the granting of compensation in many cases in which it has found *prima facie* evidence of human rights violations, and it has actively pursued the granting of compensation with the authorities to ensure that victims or their relatives are provided with prompt financial redress. [3d]

5.2.29 The NHRC has recommended changes to existing legislation to ensure that human rights are protected, as part of its mandate to review safeguards provided under the Indian Constitution or legislation. The NHRC played a significant role in calls for the abolition of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), which was allowed to lapse in 1995. The NHRC, in a submission to the Supreme Court, has expressed the view that the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act is unconstitutional. The NHRC played a key role in encouraging the Indian Government to ratify the Convention against Torture. Nevertheless, Amnesty International believes that the NHRC should adopt a more systematic and consistent approach in reviewing existing or proposed legislation. [3d]

5.2.30 State Human Rights Commissions exist in Assam, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala and Rajasthan. Uttar Pradesh took legal steps to establish a commission but has yet to appoint members. [2a] The Governments of Gujarat and Nagaland have announced their intention to set up state commissions. [3d]

### **Treatment of Returned Asylum Seekers**

5.2.31 UNHCR observed that judging by their general information on Indian nationals who returned after having their asylum applications abroad rejected, returnees did not have problems if they returned with valid travel documents and if their departure had taken place with valid travel documents. Those who had not complied with Indian laws on leaving and arriving in India might be prosecuted. Refused Indian asylum seekers who returned to India with temporary travel documents could enter without any problems as such, but if they arrived after their passport had

expired then they would be questioned about the reasons for this. These arrivals were questioned briefly and could then leave the airport. [37]

5.2.32 UNHCR also remarked that in cases where the Indian authorities became aware that the person returning had been refused asylum, it was likely that the immigration authorities would detain the person briefly for questioning and then release the individual, unless suspicion was aroused by the returnee's behaviour or the individual was being sought by the Indian security services. Those in the latter group would be thoroughly questioned and if they were wanted, would be handed over to the security force in question. According to information available to the UNHCR, such questioning in international airports had not led to the use of violence. [37]

5.2.33 It would not be seen as an offence to have sought asylum in another country unless the person in question had connections with a terrorist group or a separatist movement and could be connected with activities which might damage India's sovereignty, integrity or security, or activities which might have a harmful effect on India's relations with other countries. For Indian asylum seekers who were already wanted by the Indian authorities for earlier offences such as alleged involvement in a terrorist group, arrival in India would certainly lead to prosecution wherever the Indian citizen landed or went afterwards. [37]

5.2.34 The law does not contain provisions for processing refugees or asylum seekers in accordance with the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, nor is there a clear national policy for the treatment of refugees. UNHCR has no formal status, but the Government permits them to assist certain groups of refugees (notably Afghans, Iranians, Somalis, Burmese, and Sudanese). The Government recognises certain groups, including Chakmas from Bangladesh, Tamils from Sri Lanka, and Tibetans as refugees and provides them with assistance in refugee camps or in resettlement areas. [2a]

### 5.3 WOMEN

5.3.1 According to the March 1991 census, out of a population of 846 million, 407 million are female and 439 million are male. [1] There are differences between the lives of rural women (some 75% of the total) and urban women. Literacy rates vary across the country, and the caste system as well as economic circumstances have an impact on the position of women. Scheduled caste women face double discrimination because of their gender and caste. Poverty has a disproportionate effect on women. [4e]

5.3.2 Women generally occupy a lower social status than men as a result of Hindu tradition. There is a preference for male children, and parents often give nutritional and health care priority to boys. There is also the practice of aborting female fetuses and female infanticide, of which there are reportedly 10,000 cases a year. [4e]

5.3.3 Marriage is considered a social necessity for women of all religions and regions in India. Most marriages are still arranged. In the south, intra-village or intra-family marriages are encouraged in order to strengthen family networks, while in the north, marriage is encouraged outside the community to expand the family network. As a result women in the north have little contact with their natal families. The system whereby a daughter leaves her home to live with her husband's family is characterised by the subordination of the bride to men and older women, and the bride is expected to be submissive. [4e]

5.3.4 The Child Marriage Restraint (Amendment) Act 1976 makes 18 the minimum age of marriage for women, but enforcement is uneven. Child marriages are said to be common, particularly in rural areas. [4e]

5.3.5 The personal status laws of the religious communities govern matters such as marriage, divorce and property. The Hindu Marriage Act 1955 gives the parties the right to dissolve the marriage according to their custom. Under the Indian Divorce Act 1869, a Christian woman may petition the court for divorce on one or more of several grounds, including bigamy and rape. [4e] In 1997 the Mumbai High Court recognised abuse alone as sufficient grounds for a Christian woman to obtain a divorce. Under Islamic law, a Muslim husband may divorce his wife spontaneously and unilaterally; there is no such provision for women. [2a] The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act 1939 permits a woman to apply to the courts on her own for a divorce decree. The divorce law applying to secular marriages is included in the Special Marriage Act 1954 and provides for divorce by mutual consent as well as by petition to the court. [4e]

5.3.6 Despite these legal provisions, divorce is socially unacceptable for women. A divorced woman may be ostracised by her community and even her family. Divorce may not be an option for many women because of their economic dependence on their husbands. [4e]

5.3.7 The Hindu Succession Act provides equal inheritance rights for Hindu women, but married daughters are seldom given a share in parental property. Islamic law recognises a woman's right of inheritance but specifies that a daughter's share should only be half that of a son. [2a]

5.3.8 Under tribal land systems, notably in Bihar, tribal women do not have the right to own land. Other laws relating to the ownership of assets and land accord women little control over land use, retention or sale. [2a]

5.3.9 Violence against women has increased in recent years. Wife beating is a problem which cuts across all castes, classes, religions and education levels. [4e] A report published in 1999 in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that 46% of husbands interviewed abused their wives either physically or sexually. The data came from more than 6,000 men who were interviewed over a period of two years in Uttar Pradesh. [32a] There is also domestic violence in the context of dowry disputes, where the groom's family harass a woman they believe has not provided a sufficient dowry. The harassment sometimes ends with the woman's death, which the family try to portray as a suicide or kitchen accident. Under a 1986 amendment to the Penal Code, the court must presume the husband or the wife's in-laws are responsible for every unnatural death of a woman in the first 7 years of marriage, provided that harassment is proven. If convicted, prison sentences can stretch to 14 years. [2a] & [32m] While the legislation introduced by the government is seen as a serious effort to end dowry deaths, lack of adequate enforcement is a major problem. [4e]

5.3.10 Women are vulnerable to attack and rape while in custody. Amnesty International expressed concern about the lack of official determination to bring the perpetrators of custodial crimes to justice. [4e] It is noted in the U.S. Department of State Report published in February 2001 that limits placed on the arrest, search, and police custody of women appear effectively to limit the frequency of rape in custody, although it does occur on occasion. [2a]

5.3.11 There is an elaborate system of laws to protect the rights of women, including the Equal Remuneration Act 1976, the Prevention of Immoral Traffic Act, the Sati Prevention Act, and the Dowry Prohibition Act. [2a] The Indian Penal Code contains a number of sections which address crimes against women and offences relating to marriage, rape and domestic violence. However the laws are not always enforced, especially in rural areas, due to social and religious practices. [4e]

5.3.12 The law prohibits discrimination in the workplace, but enforcement is inadequate. In both rural and urban areas, women get lower wages than men for doing the same job. [2a] Employers in the organised sector often ignore the minimum wage laws. Women are increasingly reliant on employment in the unorganised sector, where wages are lower, and where they are outside the reach of legislation designed to protect them from unsafe working conditions. Family-run businesses and cottage industries, in which most of the workers are women and children, are exempt from much of the labour standards legislation. [4e]

5.3.13 India has ratified a number of international conventions, including the Convention on the Political Rights of Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. One reservation was made in respect of the latter convention, in that the Indian Government declared that it would not interfere in the personal affairs of any community without that community's initiative or consent. This has been interpreted as reluctance on the part of the Government to change the religion-specific personal laws that discriminate against women in areas such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. [4e]

5.3.14 The Indian Constitution provides that all persons are equal before the law and shall have equal protection of the law. Women who are subject to violence have recourse through the civil and criminal courts. A civil suit for injunctive relief can be undertaken under the Civil Procedure Code and the Special Relief Act. In criminal law a victim of violence can seek redress under several sections of the Penal Code. [4e]

5.3.15 However many factors make the courts a difficult recourse for women. They often lack economic, geographic and even political access to the legal system. Those who are illiterate, poor, unaware of their legal rights and unaccustomed to dealing with public institutions have particular difficulties. There are reports that women are often subject to the negative attitudes of the male-dominated judiciary. Women face social pressures not to pursue cases, which may not be heard for years due to court backlogs. [4e]

5.3.16 There is also the question of the attitude of the police to women who complain of abuse or crimes committed against them. Police are reluctant to intervene in family disputes. Crimes may be ignored if the perpetrators are influential. The police are perceived as being insensitive, and women are often afraid to report crimes. [4e]

5.3.17 It is reported that one women's organisation, Sakshi, has provided gender sensitisation training to police officers. [4e]

5.3.18 There are no legal impediments to women's participation in the political process; however they are under-represented in government or politics. A large proportion of women exercise their right to vote and numerous women represent all the major parties in the national and state legislatures. There are 66 women among the 790 Members of Parliament, and 8 women in the 74 member Cabinet. 30% of seats in elected village councils (panchayats) are reserved for women.



[2a] There has been a prolonged debate over the reservation of parliamentary and state assembly seats for women. In recent years Indian governments have pledged to introduce legislation which would guarantee that at least 33% of MPs would be women. [11k] The Women's Reservation Bill was introduced in parliamentary sessions in November and December 1998, despite strong opposition. The Bill subsided when the Government failed to debate it in the winter 2000 session of parliament. [2a]

5.3.19 Despite their low numbers, women have been highly visible participants in Indian politics, although they are frequently not representative of women as a whole. Often they are from the "elite" and their political position derives from male relatives also involved in politics. [4e]

5.3.20 There are thousands of grassroots organisations working for social justice and economic advancement of women, in addition to the National Commission for Women. The Government usually supports these efforts, despite strong resistance from traditionally privileged groups. [2a]

## 5.4 CHILDREN

5.4.1 A National Policy for Children has been designed by the Government for the welfare of children and is implemented by the Ministry of Welfare. The Juvenile Justice Act lays down a scheme for the care and protection of neglected and delinquent children. India has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. [6a]

5.4.2 The BJP-led coalition Government continued its predecessors' plan to eliminate child labour from hazardous industries and eventually from all industries, but it did not repeat the previous government's pledge to accomplish the former by 2000 and the second by 2010. A 1996 Supreme Court decision raised penalties for employers of children in hazardous industries and established a welfare fund for formerly employed children. [2a] On 26 July 2000, the National Human Rights Commission announced that India's Government had banned its employees from employing children under the age of 14 as servants. [33e]

5.4.3 Both the Constitution and specific statutes prohibit forced or compulsory labour, and bonded labour, as a form of compulsory labour, is also prohibited by statute; however, such practices are widespread. The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 1976 prohibits all bonded labour, by adults and children. Offenders may be sentenced to up to 3 years in prison, but prosecutions are rare. Enforcement of this statute, which is the responsibility of state and local governments, varies from state to state and generally has not been effective, due to inadequate resources and to societal acceptance of bonded or forced labour. The working conditions of some children in the workplace amounts to bonded labour. Children are sent to work because their parents cannot afford to feed them or in order to pay off a debt incurred by a parent or relative. It is estimated that in the carpet industry alone there may be as many as 300,000 children working, many under conditions that amount to bonded labour. [2a]

5.4.4 In occupations and processes where child labour is permitted, work by children is permissible only for 6 hours a day between 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. with one day's rest a week. [2a]

5.4.5 The Government does not provide compulsory, free, and universal primary education, and only approximately 59% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 attend school. There is a significant gender gap in school attendance, particularly at secondary school level. According to

UNICEF, 59% of boys and 38% of girls were enrolled in secondary school. Economic reality is that children of wealthier families are more likely to attend school than those of poor families. About 120 million children out of 203 million attend primary school. Most of the remainder, 87 million, do housework, work on family farms, work alongside their parents as paid agricultural labourers, work as domestic servants, or are otherwise employed. [2a] Family run businesses and cottage industries, in which children work, are exempt from much of the labour standards legislation. The contractual system allows many industries to evade the requirements of the Factories Act, Minimum Wages Act and Child Labour Act. Participation in home-based industries is higher for girls than for boys. [4e]

5.4.6 There are an estimated 500,000 street children nationwide. There is child prostitution in the cities [2a] - approximately 100,000 prostitutes in Mumbai (Bombay) alone, many of whom are minors held in bondage in brothels. [4e]

5.4.7 Child marriage is prohibited by law. The Government does not effectively enforce the minimum age of 18 at which girls may marry. [2a]

## 5.5 HOMOSEXUALS

5.5.1 Homosexuality as such is not illegal in India. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (1860) proscribes "unnatural offences", which are defined as penetrative intercourse "against the order of nature" with man, woman or animal. Certain practices might therefore be deemed illegal in India. However the scope of the definition has not been much tested in the courts and cases under section 377 are rare. [7f]

5.5.2 The issue of homosexuality is still sensitive in India and is not openly debated to the extent that it is in the West. It is however much more openly discussed than it was a few years ago and society is tending to become more tolerant. There are a number of NGOs, properly registered, in different parts of India which exist to promote the welfare of homosexual men and women. [7f] Homosexual relationships are not unheard of in India, but they generally exist in the country's larger cities where people can be more open about their sexuality. [38h]

5.5.3 Open homosexuality is not accepted. There are organised gay and lesbian groups in New Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta and gay magazines are published. [25]

5.5.4 A 1999 film, "Fire", which dealt with lesbianism and which had been cleared by the censor board, was not allowed to be screened in most states; only Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal took proactive steps to allow the film to be shown. At times, offended Hindu mobs led by members of the Shiv Sena, a Hindu fundamentalist political party, provoked violence at movie theatres that were able to show the film. [2a]

5.5.5 In May 2001, it was reported that a lesbian couple had married in a Hindu ceremony, believed to be one of the first gay weddings in the country. The marriage still needs the approval of the local registrar to be legalised. Gay rights campaigners however, welcomed the news. [38h]

## 5.6 PUNJAB AND THE SIKHS

## **Sikh religion and historical background**

5.6.1 Sikhs form a religious and cultural community of some 16 million, less than 2% of the Indian population. Some 80% of Sikhs live in Punjab [4a] where they form the majority (about two thirds) of the inhabitants. [6b] The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), a high caste Hindu who denounced social and state oppression. He took monotheism from Islam, but rejected Ramadan, polygamy and pilgrimages to Mecca. He also rejected Hindu polytheism, the caste system and sati (sacrificing a widow on her husband's funeral pyre). Nine gurus succeeded Nanak. The Sikh commandments include certain prohibitions, notably against alcohol and tobacco. For men the Sikh religion requires observance of the "5 Ks": *Kes* (uncut hair and beard); *Kacch* (breeches); *Kirpan* (a double edged sword); *Kangh* (a steel comb); and *Kara* (an iron bangle). [4a]

5.6.2 New religious ideologies early in the 20th century caused tensions in the Sikh religion. The Akali Dal (Army of the Immortals), a political-religious movement founded in 1920, preached a return to the roots of the Sikh religion. The Akali Dal became the political party which would articulate Sikh claims and lead the independence movement. [4a]

5.6.3 Following the partition of India in 1947, the Sikhs were concentrated in India in east Punjab. Sikh leaders demanded a Punjabi language majority state which would have included most Sikhs. Fearing that a Punjabi state might lead to a separatist Sikh movement, the Government opposed the demand. [22] In 1966 a compromise was reached, when two new states of Punjab and Haryana were created. Punjabi became the official language of Punjab, and Chandigarh became the shared capital of the two states. However the agreement did not resolve the Sikh question. [4a]

5.6.4 In 1977, Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, an obscure but charismatic religious leader, made his appearance. He preached strict fundamentalism and armed struggle for national liberation. His speeches inflamed both young students and small farmers dissatisfied with their economic lot. [4a]

5.6.5 Tensions between Sikhs and New Delhi heightened during the 1980s, as the government did not respond to Sikh grievances. Over the years that followed, Punjab was faced with escalating confrontations and increased terrorist incidents. Akali Dal only achieved limited concessions from the government and Sikh separatists prepared for battle. In the Golden Temple enclosure 10,000 Sikhs took an oath to lay down their lives if necessary in the struggle. Renewed confrontations in October 1983 resulted in Punjab being placed under central government authority. [4a]

5.6.6 The violence continued and hundreds of Sikhs were detained in the first part of 1984. Followers of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale established a terrorist stronghold inside the Golden Temple. The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, then initiated Operation Blue Star which took place on 5-6 June 1984. The Golden Temple was shelled and besieged by the army to dislodge the terrorists. The fighting continued for five days. Bhindranwale was killed and there was serious damage to sacred buildings. [22]

5.6.7 Official figures put the casualties at 493 "civilians/ terrorists" killed and 86 wounded, and 83 troops killed and 249 wounded. Later in the year official sources put the total number killed at

about 1,000. Unofficial sources estimated that the civilian casualties alone were much higher. There were apparently more than 3,000 people in the temple when Operation Blue Star began, among them 950 pilgrims, 380 priests and other temple employees and their families, 1,700 Akali Dal supporters, 500 followers of Bhindranwale and 150 members of other armed groups. [22]

5.6.8 The intervention had disastrous consequences for the Sikh community and the whole country. Sikh-Hindu communalism was aggravated, Sikh extremism was reinforced, and political assassinations increased. [4a]

5.6.9 On 31 October 1984 Indira Gandhi was assassinated in New Delhi by two Sikh bodyguards. In the days that followed, anti-Sikh rioting paralysed New Delhi, ultimately claiming at least 2,000 lives; unofficial estimates were higher. Sikhs were also attacked in other cities in northern India. [22]

5.6.10 A peace agreement was concluded between the Indian Government and moderate Akali Dal Sikhs led by Harchand Singh Longowal in July 1985, which granted many of the Sikh community's longstanding demands. However the extremists regarded Longowal as a traitor to the Sikh cause and he was assassinated in August 1985. Moreover the promised reforms did not take place. [22]

5.6.11 In 1987 the state government was dismissed and Punjab was placed under President's Rule. Extremists spread terror throughout Punjab and the Indian government mounted a campaign of anti-terrorist measures designed to restore the situation in Punjab to normal. In May 1988 the Punjab police and Indian paramilitary forces launched Operation Black Thunder against armed extremists who had again created a fortified stronghold within the Golden Temple. At least 40 extremists and several police officers were killed during the battle. [1], [22] & [4a]

5.6.12 President's Rule was finally brought to an end following elections in February 1992, which were won by Congress (I). However the elections were boycotted by the leading factions of Akali Dal and attracted an extremely low turnout (only about 22% of the electorate). Beant Singh of the Congress (I) was sworn in as Chief Minister, but his government lacked any real credibility. Despite the continuing violence between the separatists and the security forces, the large turnout in the municipal elections in September 1992, the first in 13 years, afforded some hope that normality was returning to Punjab. The local council elections in January 1993, the first for 10 years, also attracted a large turnout. [1]

5.6.13 On 31 August 1995 Beant Singh was killed by a car bomb which exploded close to his car outside the Punjab Secretariat in Chandigarh. 15 security men and aides were also killed. Babbar Khalsa claimed responsibility and three suspects were later arrested. [10c]

5.6.14 State Assembly elections were held on 7 February 1997 and the alliance of Shiromani Akali Dal and the Bharatiya Janata Party swept to power, routing the ruling Congress party. The number of seats won by the parties was:

Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal)	75
BJP	18
Congress (I)	14

Communist Party of India	2
Bahujan Samaj Party	1
Akali Dal (Mann)	1
Independents	6

[1]

5.6.15 On 12 February 1997 Prakash Singh Badal was sworn in as Chief Minister. He has served as Chief Minister twice before, in 1970 and 1977. [10d]

### **Militant violence in Punjab**

5.6.16 Virtually all of the militant groups in Punjab pursued their campaign for a separate state of Khalistan through acts of violence directed not only at members of the police and security forces but also specifically at Hindu and Sikh civilians. [22]

5.6.17 Most of the militant groups in Punjab traced their origins to Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. After the storming of the Golden Temple the number of militant groups operating in Punjab grew. Some authorities claimed there were no more than 1,700 armed militants, while many journalists believed there may have been five times that number. [22]

5.6.18 The militants were organised into at least seven major groups and all theoretically operated under the authority of one of the Panthic Committees which functioned as decision making bodies and issued instructions. The main militant organisations were: the Khalistan Commando Force (Paramjit Singh Panjwar faction); Khalistan Commando Force (Zaffarwal); Khalistan Commando Force (Rajasthani group); Babbar Khalsa; Khalistan Liberation Force (Budhisingwala); Bhindranwale Tiger Force of Khalistan (Sangha); Bhindranwale Tiger Force (Manochahal); All India Sikh Student Federation (Manjit); All India Sikh Student Federation (Mehta Chawla); and the Sikh Student Federation (Bittu). [22]

5.6.19 In addition to this there were perhaps dozens of other groups, some representing splinter factions, as well as loosely organised armed gangs. [22]

5.6.20 After they first emerged in the early 1980s the militants assassinated civil servants, politicians, journalists, businessmen, other prominent individuals and ordinary Hindu and Sikh civilians. There were also indiscriminate attacks apparently designed to cause extensive civilian casualties, in some cases firing automatic weapons into residential and commercial areas, derailing trains, and exploding bombs in markets, restaurants and other civilian areas. Some of these attacks occurred outside Punjab in neighbouring states and in New Delhi. [22]

5.6.21 Motives for the attacks varied. Moderate Sikh political leaders were assassinated for opposing the militants. Other leaders were killed as a result of militant group rivalries. A number of militant groups tried to impose a Sikh fundamentalist ideology, issuing directives that stipulated appropriate conduct for Sikhs and prohibiting the sale of tobacco and alcohol. Failure to obey these orders meant punishment, including death. In late 1990 and early 1991 militant groups issued "codes of conduct" for journalists which also carried a death penalty for those who dared to disobey. Sikhs belonging to minority sects, which advocated practices perceived as heretical by orthodox Sikhs, were also murdered. [22]

5.6.22 Attacks on civilians were claimed as acts of retaliation for government violence. Other killings appeared to represent executions of suspected collaborators or informers. Militants also kidnapped civilians for extortion, frequently murdering their victims when their demands were not met. Threats were made to the minority Hindu population in an effort to drive them out of Punjab. As a result thousands of Hindus fled the state. [22]

### **Current situation of militants**

5.6.23 The Sikh militant movement is no longer active in Punjab. The hard core militants have either been physically wiped out or are no longer in India. There were no reports in 1997 and 1998 of Sikh militants forcing the local population to provide them with assistance. There is no obvious support for the militants and the people of Punjab want peace. A few remaining Sikh militant leaders are now based in Pakistan and their activities appear to be ineffectual. [4g] Two militant organisations retain a capacity for activism, namely the Babbar Khalsa under the leadership of Wadawa Singh and the Khalistan Commando Force led by Paramjit Singh Panjwar. They are believed to retain bases in Pakistan and to have an international circle of support. [19b]

5.6.24 The Danish Immigration Service consulted various individuals, authorities and organisations regarding the security situation during their fact-finding mission to Punjab in March and April 2000. According to the UNHCR in Delhi, the security situation in Punjab is now under control, but as the UNHCR does not have a presence in Punjab they could not comment on the situation in detail. Three foreign diplomatic missions in India agreed that the situation in Punjab had considerably improved and that the conflict between various groups had calmed down. Acts of violence in Punjab were becoming less common, and were now at a low level. Two of the missions reported that incidents do occasionally occur, such as explosions caused by bombs on buses and trains, but that such incidents occur in the rest of India, and not exclusively to Punjab. Officials of the Committee for Co-ordination on Disappearances in Punjab (CCDP) considered that Punjab was now peaceful and that there were no problems with militant groups and no political problems either. The News Bureau Chief for the Daily Ajit remarked that police actions were rare. [37]

5.6.25 The Danish Immigration Service interviewed a Punjab police official who stated that there were still 300 militants on the police wanted list, but that these people were living abroad. A foreign Embassy consulted, reported that several people who had previously been militants and who had served their sentences for terrorist activities now lived a normal life in Punjab. [37]

### **Human rights concerns in Punjab**

5.6.26 Various human rights organisations have strongly criticised the Punjab police for their misuse of power during the 1980s and early 1990s. Amnesty International reported that those who were arrested were detained for months or years without trial under provisions of special legislation suspending normal legal safeguards, and reports of torture during interrogation were said to be common. The arrest and detention of some detainees remained unacknowledged for weeks or months. Amnesty had received reports that many people simply disappeared, with the security forces refusing to admit that they had ever been arrested. It was feared that many of them had been killed in custody. [3a]

5.6.27 Amnesty International detected a pattern to the arrests, detentions, torture and disappearances which they reported. They concluded that Sikhs were often arrested on mere suspicion that they were linked to armed secessionist groups. Family members of suspects were arbitrarily detained and tortured in order to extract information about the suspect's whereabouts or activities. Amnesty said that women had been arrested and tortured simply to deter them from giving food and shelter to Sikh militants. They described torture in police custody as routine and there were persistent allegations that political prisoners died in custody as a result of torture. [3a] The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture cite that evidence exists that the police make random arrests of innocent young Sikhs purely to extract large bribes for their release from parents or village elders, and that this corruption reaches right to the top of the police hierarchy. [30] Former Advocate-General G.S.Grewal pointed out that nowadays, cases concerning human rights abuse were different from before in that now the abuse was individual and had specific reasons. Sikhs were not subjected to torture just because they were Sikhs or because of the general political situation. One diplomatic mission also commented that the situation was not perfect but that Sikhs in general were not being persecuted. The problems were of a different nature than before, and were often due to problems in local society, e.g. disputes over land, etc. [37]

5.6.28 Amnesty International also reported that hundreds of members or sympathisers of armed Sikh groups were allegedly captured, sometimes tortured, and then extra-judicially executed, the killings attributed by the police to armed "encounters". Amnesty stated that the police repeatedly frustrated attempts to bring those accused of human rights violations to justice. Legal safeguards for the protection of human rights do not apply to those arrested under special legislation relating to national security. [3a]

5.6.29 Most detainees in Punjab were arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), which allowed detention for up to one year without charge for investigation into broadly defined offences. Prisoners held under the Act could be tried *in camera* [i.e. in private] and the burden of proof was shifted onto the accused to prove his or her innocence. Amnesty International reported that TADA had been interpreted to include actions entirely unrelated to violent political offences, and that trials conducted under TADA fell far short of international standards for fair trial. [3a]

See also [Security legislation](#): paragraphs 5.2.8 - 5.2.11

5.6.30 In a later report, Amnesty International expressed concern at a series of incidents in which Punjab police illegally transgressed their operational jurisdiction, travelling to other Indian states to carry out under-cover operations which resulted in serious human rights violations. [3b]

See also [The current situation in Punjab](#): paragraphs 5.6.42 - 5.6.59; [Internal flight for Sikhs](#): paragraphs 5.6.69 - 5.6.74

5.6.31 In the aftermath of the violence, many relatives of victims came forward to pursue redress in the courts through the filing of petitions in cases of disappearance and other human rights violations. However in attempting to pursue redress through the courts, many families have faced direct harassment from the police and long delays in the judicial process. Human rights defenders in Punjab continue to be at risk of harassment for their activities. [3g]

5.6.32 In 1995 the Human Rights Wing of the Shiromani Akali Dal published the findings of research it had conducted into illegal cremations by the police. The organisation produced records from cremation grounds in Amritsar district, showing how several hundred "unclaimed" bodies had been cremated by the police. In several cases it claimed to have evidence to show that the bodies were those of individuals who had disappeared following arrest by the police and alleged that its findings suggested that the Punjab police had illegally cremated the bodies of many of those who had disappeared and who had subsequently been extra-judicially executed. [3g]

See also [NHRC's investigations in Punjab](#): paragraphs 5.6.60 - 5.6.62

### **Methods of ill treatment**

5.6.33 The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture examined 95 male Sikhs between 1991 and 1999, of whom all but eight were educated to at least secondary school level, and roughly half came from farming families and worked on the farm after finishing their education or had farming related jobs. The majority had belonged to an organisation such as the All India Sikh Student Federation. Most had been arrested on many occasions, usually for a short time ranging from 1 to 10 days, but the total time in custody ranged from 2 days to 8 months. Most were held by the police in the village police station, and a large majority were never charged with any offence. Some of the Sikhs in the study stated that in addition to their detentions, they had been arrested, questioned and threatened many times, but not detained. [30]

5.6.34 All of the Sikhs examined by the Medical Foundation as part of the study claimed they had been severely ill treated, usually worse in the first few days of detention. The methods of ill treatment included being beaten unconscious; being beaten with truncheons, fists, boots, lathis (bamboo canes), leather belts with metal buckles, pattas (leather straps with wooden handles), rifle butts, metal rods or a metal chain, and branches torn from a thorn bush. They were beaten on various parts of the body, but principally on the back, the legs or the buttocks. Beatings over the head and on the soles of the feet were also prevalent. Many had been suspended by the wrists, ankles or hair and beaten; some had had their wrists tied behind their back and then were suspended, causing injuries to the shoulder joints. Electric shocks were given. [30]

5.6.35 Another torture method consisted of forcing the hips strongly apart, often to 180 degrees, repeatedly or continuously. A thick wooden roller or a ghotna (a pestle 4 feet long and 4 inches in diameter used for grinding corn) was often rolled down the calves or thighs with one or more of the heaviest policemen standing on it. [30]

5.6.36 Much of this abuse took place during interrogation sessions, but beatings also occurred randomly at other times, including late at night when the policemen were drunk. [30]

5.6.37 As well as physical abuse, many suffered psychological abuse such as threats of further punishment, death or harm to their families, mock executions and extreme humiliation. [30]

5.6.38 The Medical Foundation found that most of the Sikhs in their study were released without charge after representations by the village elders, a politician or lawyer, but on many occasions only after the payment of a large bribe. [30]



## **Prosecution of security force personnel**

5.6.39 Hundreds of police officials have not been held accountable for the serious human rights abuses committed during the counterinsurgency of 1984-94, but steps have been taken against some of them. The CBI claims to be actively pursuing charges against dozens of police officials implicated in the "mass cremations" case in Tarn Taran. **[2a]**

5.6.40 The Times of India in September 1997 reported Union Home Ministry figures that 123 police officials were facing trial for taking alleged illegal steps against terrorists, while 2,555 petitions had been filed against Punjab police officers by individuals and human rights organisations. The same article referred to a protest by Punjab police which said that police officers who had played a key role in containing terrorism in Punjab were now being harassed and hounded for alleged excesses and human rights violations. The protest gained momentum following the suicide of the former Tarn Taran SSP Ajit Singh, who the police claim was driven to this step because of a "witch hunt". **[13a]**

5.6.41 India Today reported that police officers in Punjab felt abandoned by the government and frustration was mounting in the force as more than 2,000 officers were being brought to account for the extra-judicial methods that were employed in fighting terrorism. In 1995, 585 petitions were filed in different courts. The number had doubled by June 1997, by which time the Punjab police were facing 85 CBI and 91 judicial probes. 30 policemen were in jail, around 100 were out on bail and 140 were facing prosecution. **[11f]**

## **The current situation in Punjab**

5.6.42 Political representatives informed the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance during his visit to India in December 1996 that Sikhs were the victims of a policy of intolerance and discrimination based on religion pursued by the authorities. This policy of religious repression reached a climax in June 1984 with the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, and was followed by reprisals against Sikhs throughout India, but particularly in Delhi, after the murder of Indira Gandhi on 31 October 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. It was alleged that Sikhs were being subjected to State terrorism which found expression in the desecration of holy places, murders, extra-judicial executions and forced disappearances of Sikhs. **[6b]**

5.6.43 The individuals who expressed these views to the Special Rapporteur stated that this policy had become less violent recently but was still being pursued by indirect means, such as the continued presence of Indian security forces at the Golden Temple. **[6b]**

5.6.44 The Special Rapporteur was informed by other sources, including non-governmental and religious organisations, that the situation of conflict which existed in Punjab had no religious basis, rather it was purely political. The authorities were combating the development of a militant Sikh terrorist movement campaigning for a separate and autonomous Sikh state. The terrorists used religion to secure the support of Sikhs for a political cause. Certain Sikh political parties had exploited that situation for their own ends in the hope of obtaining advantages and concessions from the authorities and of increasing their influence among the Sikh population by creating confusion between religious and political matters. **[6b]**

5.6.45 According to these sources, the purpose of Operation Blue Star (the storming of the Golden Temple) undertaken in June 1984 had been to expel armed Sikh extremists from the sanctuary. There had been no intention of attacking the religious identity of Sikhs. The continued presence of security forces at the Golden Temple was necessary to remain vigilant against any attempt at destabilisation. Access to the place of worship had not been hindered. **[6b]**

5.6.46 These sources concluded that there was no religious problem, Sikhs enjoyed all their constitutional rights in the field of religion, including freedom of belief, freedom to practice their religion and freedom to proselytise. **[6b]**

5.6.47 The UN Special Rapporteur's own conclusions based on the information he had received, and as set out in his report of February 1997 was that the situation of Sikhs in the religious field is satisfactory. There were difficulties in the political field (foreign interference and terrorism) and economic field (in particular with regard to the sharing of water supplies). The Special Rapporteur noted information that there was discrimination in certain sectors of public administration, for example fewer Sikhs in the police force and no Sikhs in personal bodyguard units. Malfunctions in the administration of justice were described but they were connected with the anti-terrorist campaign rather than the Sikh beliefs of the accused. **[6b]**

5.6.48 Shortly after the 1992 elections, newspapers and magazines began to report that the situation in Punjab was improving. An indication of this was the vastly increased turnout at the local elections, in spite of terrorist threats. India Today in three articles, reported agriculture and industry were returning to normal production levels. Punjabi-based business groups as well as multi-nationals were returning to the state; expansion plans were being drawn up and exports were improving. Indeed projects intended for other states had been relocated to Punjab. Hindu migrants were returning to the state and reclaiming their farms and factories. Social and cultural functions were again being held. **[11e]**

5.6.49 The South East Asia Straits Times reported that Punjab had returned to the path of peace and prosperity once more. Police roadblocks and the constant military presence had gone. Businesses had re-established themselves and prosperity and affluence were clearly evident. **[18]**

5.6.50 The Documentation, Information and Research Branch (DIRB) of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board interviewed four specialists on the situation in Punjab in January 1997. The panel broadly agreed that Sikh militancy in Punjab had been virtually eliminated. Militant organisations had been shut down, reduced in size or seriously weakened. Nevertheless the Sikh search for some sort of political supremacy in the region remained a powerful ideology, and although the militants' ability to assert themselves had been suspended, future Sikh militant action could not be discounted. **[4f]**

5.6.51 The panel agreed that the central government had been attempting to rein in the Punjab police, who during the insurgency were responsible for large numbers of extrajudicial executions and disappearances. Investigations into allegations of human rights abuses have sent a strong signal that the climate of impunity for the Punjab police is ending, even though that climate has been deeply ingrained over many years and will take a long time to change. Reference is also made to the extensive human rights training for the police in India, which is seen as an example of the general trend in India towards recognising and addressing systemic problems with the police. **[4f]**

5.6.52 The Supreme Court was seen as clearly attempting to address the failure of the judiciary up until the mid 1990s to deal with human rights violations. Judicial protection in Punjab had improved and many people were using the judicial system. People who are not high profile militant suspects are not at risk in Punjab. They have much less to fear from the police and now have better access to judicial recourse if they are treated improperly. [4f]

5.6.53 The DIRB also interviewed representatives of three human rights groups that work in Punjab, and one human rights lawyer from Punjab. All were agreed that the human rights situation in Punjab had improved since the violence between 1984 and 1995. However there were two cases of disappearances: those of the human rights worker Jaswant Singh Khaira in September 1995 and of Akali Dal (Mann) Publicity Secretary Kashmir Singh in March 1997. Torture and ill treatment in custody remain serious problems, but this was said to be a problem throughout India, not just in Punjab. [4h]

5.6.54 The human rights activists were of the opinion that the root causes of discontent and political friction in Punjab had not been addressed, and the legacy of 55,000 civilian deaths and 1,700 police deaths between 1984 and 1994 would not be erased easily. The state government of Punjab, although elected to fight state repression, had not been able to bring about a greater improvement in human rights observances, partly because of constraints from the central government in New Delhi. [4h]

5.6.55 Sikhs are coming forward in increasing numbers to press claims against the authorities, and people are beginning to have faith in the judicial process. Sikhs are bringing cases to human rights lawyers to be taken up in court, rather than to human rights groups for investigation, even though there are few lawyers taking on this type of work. However the human rights organisations were sceptical about the outcome of court cases against police officers, since the government is providing senior lawyers to defend them and is still posting many officers to areas in which they are alleged to have committed abuses. [4h] According to Ravi Nair, Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, a case involving a human rights violation will usually be reported at the local police station. The police will undertake an investigation and on that basis will decide whether a case should be brought. If no case is brought, the individual may bring a civil suit to the lower (district) court. Ravi Nair added that the case often stops there as the court does not always proceed with the case; however, he remarked that nowadays it was easier to have a case heard in the courts than previously. [37]

5.6.56 Dr Cynthia Keppley Mahmood of the University of Maine agrees that conditions in Punjab have greatly improved since the worst days of the early 1990s, and that it is no longer accurate to say that any Sikh is at risk of persecution simply because of his or her religion. She refers to the work of the National Human Rights Commission and the prosecutions of individuals accused of human rights violations. Overt support for the militants has slipped dramatically, but the grievances that prompted the Khalistan movement are still there. [19a]

5.6.57 However Dr Mahmood points out that human rights abuses continue to occur in Punjab, the police are still out of control in many areas, and human rights workers have themselves been targets of harassment and abuse. Lawyers are encountering difficulties in getting cases against individuals accused of human rights violations actually organised and heard, because of pressure from the authorities to withdraw charges. Dr Mahmood concludes that the current improvement does not represent a durable and fundamental shift in the Indian human rights climate. [19a], [19b] & [19c]

5.6.58 Sikhs do not constitute a persecuted group at the present time, and rank and file members of groups that were at one time targeted eg the AISSF, are in general terms now safe. There are exceptions such as people with a local history of abuse at the hands of the police, who may continue a personal vendetta; and militants together with their close relatives and supporters who continue to be followed as potential seeds for further rebellion. [4h]

5.6.59 The Danish Immigration Service in the report of their fact-finding mission to Punjab in 2000, spoke to Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal, who underlined that there were now no security problems in Punjab. He stated that the major problem was unemployment in rural districts and the lack of a food processing industry, but that he could not see any other basic problems in modern day Punjab. Badal also underlined that co-operation between the State government and central Government was good. [37]

### **The National Human Rights Commission's investigations in Punjab**

5.6.60 On 12 December 1996 the Supreme Court gave an order requesting the NHRC to examine the allegations contained in two petitions filed in the Court. These alleged a pattern of human rights violations in Punjab and linked these to research, which found evidence of illegal cremations by Punjab police. However there has still been no comprehensive or consistent investigation into the allegations of human rights violations contained in the petitions. After a protracted debate about the role the NHRC should play in carrying out the Supreme Court's order, the NHRC issued an order in January 1999 which focused solely on the allegations of illegal cremations by police in one district of Punjab and would restrict the NHRC's role to awarding monetary compensation to only those families who can prove that their relatives were illegally cremated by police in that district between 1984 and 1994. [3g]

5.6.61 The original petitioners in the Supreme Court case are going back to the Court to ask that it clarify its original order or give further directions to the NHRC. [3g]

5.6.62 Amnesty International called on the Chair of the NHRC to review its order of January 1999, because the Supreme Court's order provided the NHRC with a unique opportunity to investigate a suspected pattern of grave human rights violations by the state and to ensure redress to hundreds of victims. Looking exclusively at only those cases where there is proof of illegal cremation by the police would exclude a vast number of human rights violations which have been reported from the state and which were referred to in the original petitions. Amnesty are further concerned that the NHRC appears to have restricted its role to that of awarding monetary compensation to relatives of victims of human rights violations. While compensation is part of redress, Amnesty believes that all the components of redress set out in Article 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights should be applied i.e. restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition. [3g]

### **Punjab State Human Rights Commission**

5.6.63 The Punjab State Human Rights Commission started work in July 1997 under the chairmanship of Justice V K Khanna, a former Chief Justice of the north east states. The Commission received 90 complaints of human rights violations in 1997, and 583 up to August

1998. 170 cases had been dealt with. The Commission has intervened in a number of cases of police excesses, torture and custodial deaths, and the Punjab Government has been forced to pay compensation. The Commission has started to inspect jails, with prior notice being given to the State Government, but the Commission wants the power to make unannounced visits. [12a]

See also [Human rights concerns in Punjab](#): paragraphs 5.6.26 - 5.6.32

### **The Committee for Co-ordination on Disappearances in Punjab**

5.6.64 This Committee came into existence in November 1997, when a variety of human rights organisations and political groups came together. Its purpose was to develop a voluntary mechanism to collect and collate information on disappearances in Punjab; to evolve a workable system of state accountability; and to lobby for India to change its domestic laws to conform to UN instruments on torture, enforced disappearances and accountability. The Committee was set up following the demand of Indian human rights groups that the independent and thorough investigation into complaints of disappearances in Punjab be allowed to proceed unhampered. [20]

5.6.65 The Committee first met in December 1997, when it called on the Punjab State Government to constitute a Truth Commission to investigate all reports of human rights violations in the State. The Committee also decided to form a Peoples' Commission to undertake the enquiries as the Punjab Government declined to do so. [20]

5.6.66 In August 1998 Committee member and former Supreme Court Justice Kuldeep Singh presented the chief minister of Punjab with a list of approximately 3,000 persons who either were missing or had died in encounters with security forces during the period of unrest in Punjab. Former Justice Singh also announced that the CCDP would form a three-member commission to investigate the mass cremations. The Commission received little co-operation from state government authorities and made little progress during 2000. [2a]

5.6.67 When asked for their views on the occurrence of disappearances, by the Danish Immigration Service on their fact-finding mission of March - April 2000, two members of the Committee observed that extrajudicial executions no longer took place in Punjab. This was not because of a change in the attitude of the police but because there was no terrorism left in Punjab. [37]

### **The People's Commission on Human Rights**

5.6.68 The (unofficial) People's Commission on Human Rights met in Chandigarh on 8-10 August 1998. It comprised Justice D S Tiwaria, former Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, Justice H Suresh, retired judge of the Maharashtra High Court, and Justice Jaspal Singh, former judge of the Delhi High Court. [12a] The Commission was set up as an independent tribunal to examine complaints of illegal abductions, custodial torture, enforced disappearance, summary execution and illegal cremation. [20] The Commission has no legal jurisdiction, but it gave people who had suffered human rights abuses at the hands of the police the opportunity to air their grievances. Nearly 70 police officers who were implicated in cases of disappearances were

identified for issue of notices to file their replies or appear in person before the Commission. [12c]

### **Internal flight for Sikhs**

5.6.69 The Indian Constitution guarantees Indian citizens the right to move freely throughout the territory of India, and to settle and reside in any part of the country. These rights are subject to restrictions as imposed by law in the interests of the general public. Punjabi Sikhs are able to relocate to another part of India and Sikhs outside Punjab are feeling more secure now than at any other time since the 1984 riots. Sikhs are a mobile community and as a result, there are Sikh communities all over India. [4i]

5.6.70 Some 4 million Sikhs live in India outside Punjab. Sikh communities are found in most Indian cities and in virtually all states. At the time of the 1981 census some 8% of Delhi's population was Sikh. They are generally urban and prosperous and they control important trades and occupy a prominent position within the central and regional administration. [4c] Most Sikhs, particularly the better educated and urban Sikhs, have some knowledge of English and/or Hindi. Punjabi Sikhs would have no more problem enrolling their children in school or obtaining employment than any other Indian relocating to a new area. [4i]

5.6.71 The increase of Sikh militancy outside Punjab during the period of insurgency led to instances of harassment of moderate Sikhs by extremists and to greater police surveillance of the Sikh community. There were also instances of communal violence, usually during periods of chaos and unrest that follow attacks by Sikh militants on Hindu targets. Some 2,150 Sikhs were killed in Delhi during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots that followed Indira Gandhi's assassination, and 50-60,000 fled the city. [4c]

5.6.72 However, at present there are no checks of any kind on a newcomer to any part of India arriving from another part of India, even if the person is a Punjabi Sikh. Local police forces have neither the resources nor the language abilities to perform background checks on people arriving from other parts of India. There is no system of registration of citizens, and often people have no identity cards, which in any event can be easily forged. [4i]

5.6.73 Sources disagree whether the Punjab police would pursue an individual they wanted to another part of India: some say it is unlikely, unless the individual had a very high profile or the Punjab police secured the involvement of the Central Bureau of Investigation or the Central Reserve Police Force. There have been instances where the Punjab police have acted on their own, for example where they pursued and killed, in May 1993 and June 1994, former residents of Punjab who had relocated to West Bengal and Nepal. [4i] The Director of the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre believed that a high-profile person would not be able to move elsewhere in India without being traced, but that this would be possible for low-profile people. Sources from foreign diplomatic missions in India considered that there was no reason to believe that someone who has or has had problems in Punjab would not be able to reside elsewhere in India. Reference was made to the fact that the authorities in Delhi are not informed about those wanted in Punjab. [37]

5.6.74 Other sources indicate that the Punjab police would be likely to pursue someone they wanted outside the state. People at risk would include militants or perceived militants and their

families and close supporters. "History sheeters" i.e. those with a record of previous arrests and detentions and "habitual offenders" - those who are rounded up whenever anything untoward happens - might also be at risk. Lists of habitual offenders are apparently distributed across India via the police computer system. [4i]

## 5.7 KASHMIR

### Historical Background

5.7.1 The former Himalayan principality of Kashmir has been disputed by India and Pakistan since independence in 1947. It has been the cause of two of the three wars between India and Pakistan. India controls the state of Jammu and Kashmir, which constitutes two thirds of the region and is the only Muslim majority state in India. Pakistan rules the remainder, Azad Kashmir. [9c]

5.7.2 On Partition in 1947, Kashmir with its largely Muslim population was expected to go to Pakistan. The Hindu ruler wanted Kashmir to stay independent but faced a revolt in the west and the threat of invasion by Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan. In October 1947 the Maharajah signed an instrument of accession to India in return for military aid and the territory became a battlefield in fighting between India and Pakistan. A cease-fire came into effect in 1949. [9c] A UN Military Observer Group (UNMOGIP) has been in place monitoring the ceasefire line (that was agreed between India and Pakistan in July 1949) ever since (redefined as the "Line of Control" after the 1971 war). [7d] Two further wars in 1965 and 1971 left positions virtually unchanged but convinced neither side to drop its claim to the whole of the territory. [9c]

5.7.3 The area to the east of the Line of Control (Ladakh, the Kashmir Valley and most of Jammu) constitutes the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Muslims form about 95% of the population of the Kashmir Valley, while Hindus are in the majority in Jammu (about 65%). [7d]

5.7.4 The status of Kashmir remains highly sensitive for both India and Pakistan; many of the Kashmir Valley's population are unreconciled to being included in India but are divided as to whether they would prefer independence or to join Pakistan. Under the peace agreement signed at Simla in July 1972, both sides agreed "to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by other peaceful means mutually agreed on between them", and they committed themselves to a final settlement of the problem. The Indians have since held that, by this agreement, Pakistan is precluded from invoking the United Nations resolutions in an effort to resolve problems with India. Pakistan does not accept this interpretation and regularly calls for a peaceful settlement "on the basis of the UN resolutions and in the spirit of the Simla Agreement". [7d]

5.7.5 Within Jammu and Kashmir, there was growing dissatisfaction throughout the 1980s with what was seen as increased corruption in local government and interference by central government. This came to a head after the 1987 state elections which were widely viewed as having been rigged in favour of the Congress (I) backed Kashmir National Conference and against the Muslim United Front. Incidents of violence in Kashmir increased. The Indian army was sent into the state in large numbers after the state government was dismissed and President's Rule was imposed in 1990. [4d] This lasted until the 1996 state assembly elections. [9c]

Following select killings of community members and widespread anarchy, almost the entire Hindu community (Pandits) of the Kashmir Valley is reported to have fled during 1989-90 when numerous secessionist groups took control of the region. [21]

5.7.6 Tensions escalated in October 1993 following the siege of the Muslim shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar by the Indian security forces which continued until August 1994, sparking protests, strikes and hunger strikes. [4d] A further wave of anger swept through the Kashmir Valley following the Indian Army operation in Charar-e-Sharief in May 1995, as a result of which 20 militants and 2 soldiers were killed and a fire engulfed more than half the town, including the shrine. [11g]

### Political Developments in Kashmir

5.7.7 Parliamentary elections were held in Kashmir in May 1996 after six years of fighting. The National Conference boycotted the elections, in which Congress (I) won 4 of the 6 seats. [8i], [8j] & [10g]. Parliamentary elections were also held in 1998 in which the National Conference won 3 seats, the BJP 2 seats and Congress (I) 1 seat. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference called for a boycott of the poll. Polling was peaceful, although there were six incidents, apparently minor, when militant groups attempted to disrupt the voting by throwing grenades and exploding land mines. The Hindustan Times reported that some 30% to 40% of voters turned out. [9e], [14a] & [14b] *see source [11a] for the results of the 1999 parliamentary elections in Jammu and Kashmir*

5.7.8 Elections for the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly were held in September 1996, the first since the previous elections in 1987. The previous assembly was dissolved in February 1990 and the state had been under direct rule from New Delhi since then. All the major parties participated in the election, with the exception of the All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference which boycotted the poll. The elections took place amid tight security and fears that militants would disrupt the elections. There was violence in scattered areas with deaths and shooting across the border with Pakistan, anti-government protests, bombings, state-wide strikes and the detentions of separatist leaders. A record number of candidates stood for election. The elections were seen as free and fair in some areas of the state, while in others there were irregularities, and claims that people were being coerced to vote. There were protests against the elections in (Pakistan controlled) Azad Kashmir. [8k] & [8m]

5.7.9 The election results were: [1]

National Conference	<b>55</b>
BJP	<b>8</b>
Congress	<b>7</b>
Janata Dal	<b>5</b>
Bahujan Samaj Party	<b>4</b>
AIIC(T)	<b>1</b>
Awami League	<b>1</b>
CPI (M)	<b>1</b>
Independents	<b>2</b>
Others	<b>3</b>



5.7.10 On 9 October 1996 Farooq Abdullah, chairman of the National Conference was sworn in as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference vowed to continue the fight against the government. [8p]

5.7.11 Under the new state government, the state police was restructured, strengthened from 38,000 to 50,000 men and prepared for a counter-insurgency role. The Special Operations Group (SOG), earlier known as the Special Task Force, was given more and better communications and transport facilities, training by security agencies and a supplement of some 12,000 Special Police Officers (SPOs) and local people, including many renegades with good local knowledge and links in the population. [3f]

5.7.12 Police security operations against the militants became proactive, particularly after the BJP Government came to power in 1998. The new government expressed a will to adopt a proactive approach to what were described as “infiltrators and Pakistani and Afghan mercenaries” carrying out the armed struggle in Jammu and Kashmir. Security forces were called upon to initiate operations against members of armed opposition groups rather than react to attacks initiated by them. [3f]

5.7.13 In July 2000, the Indian cabinet rejected a demand for greater autonomy in the state. The proposal would have seen Jammu and Kashmir return to its pre-1953 status, when it had its own constitution, flag and prime minister, and had control over all its affairs with the exception of finance, defence and communications. The autonomy resolution had been hotly debated in the Kashmir assembly, leading to strong criticism from India's main political parties. Home Minister L.K.Advani admitted that a major factor in the decision was concern that other states too would start to demand the same rights. [32v]

5.7.14 On 24 July 2000, the leading Kashmiri militant group, Hizbul Mujahedin announced a unilateral ceasefire and said it was willing to enter into negotiations with the Indian authorities, stating that the ceasefire would last 3 months. [32x] The announcement sparked a wave of attacks by Muslim separatist militants opposed to the ceasefire. Over a period of 2 days starting 1 August 2000: 34 people died and 46 were injured in an exchange of fire between militants and Indian security forces at Pahalgam (30 of the dead were pilgrims en route to a Hindu cave shrine); 19 Hindu labourers were massacred at a brick kiln in Mir Bazar, and a further 7 others were killed in a separate attack in a nearby village; at least 22 Hindus were shot dead in the Doda region; in Baramullah a former militant and six members of his family were also shot dead. [32y]

5.7.15 On 8 August 2000, Hizbul Mujahedin called off the ceasefire after India refused to enter three-way peace talks with the Kashmiri leadership and Pakistan. India and Pakistan blamed each other for the breakdown. [32z] Hizbul Mujahedin immediately recommenced attacks in Kashmir and two days after the end of the ceasefire, set off 2 powerful bombs in Srinigar, killing 14 soldiers and journalists and wounding 25 others. Then on 13 August 2000, a string of landmine explosions and gun battles left 22 dead and 52 wounded. [33f]

See also [Recent militant violence](#): paragraphs 5.7.22 - 5.7.28

5.7.16 In November 2000 the Indian government announced a unilateral ceasefire barring Indian forces from offensive operations against Muslim separatists in Kashmir. The announcement coincided with the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Extensions of the ceasefire were made a month at a time, before a three month extension to the end of May 2001. Militant groups

rejected the ceasefire and extensions as merely a propaganda stunt. [38f] The ceasefire was ended on 24 May 2001 after it was said to have demoralised the security forces without producing any real lessening of violence. Some 1,200 had died in the conflict since November 2000. The same day as the announcement of the ceasefire, Atal Behari Vajpayee issued an invitation to Pakistan's Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf to visit India to engage in a "productive dialogue" to build "trust and confidence" between the two sides. Vajpayee referred to a "composite dialogue" addressing "all outstanding issues", but specifically including the separatist conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. In Musharraf's acceptance of the invitation on 29 May 2001, the Pakistan leader emphasised that the Kashmir dispute was the "root cause of tension" between the two countries but signalled that he was also willing to discuss other outstanding issues. [5g]

5.7.17 The talks, held in July 2001, failed to reach an agreement over Kashmir. Neither side was willing to budge over how to describe the Kashmir dispute and the militants waging the 12-year-old civil war. Abdul Sattar, the Pakistani Foreign Minister, said the talks remained inconclusive but did not fail. Mr. Sattar said in Islamabad: "The two leaders laid a valuable foundation to reach a fuller agreement at a later stage". [15d]

### **Militant/Political Groups**

5.7.18 The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front was one of the main militant groups operating in Kashmir, but by 1993 it had lost its military ascendancy to the Hizbul Mujahedin, although politically it claimed to have retained the support of the majority of the people. In 1994 the JKLF leader, Yasin Malik, renounced the armed struggle and made an offer of political negotiations. This non-violent approach caused a rift with Amanullah Khan, who had continued to operate as chairman of the JKLF *in absentia* from Rawalpindi and Muzaffarabad. [29]

5.7.19 The main militant groups currently active in the Kashmir valley are the Hizbul Mujahedin, Harkat-ul-Ansar [29] (which has split into the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami) and Lashkar-I-Toiba. [23] It remains to be seen how long these militant groups will remain powerful because many that were prominent some years ago no longer appear to wield influence today. A recently emerged group is Jaish-e-Mohammad (Army of Mohammad), formed by the Islamic cleric, Maulana Masood Azhar. [32w] The war of words between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian airliner by Kashmiri separatists escalated in January 2000 when Home Affairs Minister L.K.Advani claimed that the interrogation of four accomplices arrested in Bombay had revealed the identities of the hijackers, who were all Pakistani. Mr Advani claimed that the hijacking had been organised by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) and Harkat-ul-Mujahideen. [5f] Maulana Masood Azhar was one of those released from an Indian jail in December 1999, in exchange for hostages on the hijacked airliner. [32w]

5.7.20 Also active is the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), formed in September 1993. This is an umbrella group of over 30 trade unions, political and religious organisations working together to separate from India. It has led strikes and protests in Jammu and Kashmir. [4d] In a news release issued on 1 December 1999, Amnesty International expressed grave concern about the continued detention of 25 members of APHC and called for their immediate release. Those detained, including the APHC chairman Syed Ali Shah Gilani, were being held under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act, which allows for detention without trial for up to two years. The APHC members were arrested in September and October 1999 after calling for the boycott of

elections. [3h] Three of the leaders were released in April 2000 with no reason given for the move. [32k]

5.7.21 India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the militants, while Pakistan says it provides only diplomatic support. [9c]

### **Recent militant violence**

5.7.22 On 12 November 1999 a bomb exploded on a passenger train in northern India, killing 14 people and injuring 56 others. The blast occurred near the town of Pathankot in Punjab. No one claimed responsibility for the blast aboard the Puja Express, which was en route from Kashmir's winter capital of Jammu to New Delhi, but police believed militants were responsible. [33b]

5.7.23 On 3 January 2000 a land mine ripped through a crowded vegetable market near Srinagar killing 17 people, including four security personnel. 31 were injured, many seriously [15b]

5.7.24 On 20 March 2000, unidentified gunmen killed 36 Sikhs in the village of Chadisinghpooora. The identity of the perpetrators was uncertain as contradictory accounts were reported from Jammu and Kashmir. The Director General of Police believed it to be the work of Muslim rebels, and the Indian government blamed the attack on the Hizbul Mujahedin and Lashkar-I-Toiba. A spokesperson of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference claimed that it had been carried out by the state security agencies in order to discredit the separatist movement. No attacks on members of the Sikh community in Kashmir had previously been reported. [3i] Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah admitted his government had failed in anticipating the risk that the Sikhs face from militants active in the state. He said he would revamp the state's security system to provide adequate protection for all minority communities in Kashmir. [32g] Abdullah later announced a judicial inquiry into the massacre, which would also investigate the killing of five alleged militants a few days after the atrocity, who local people believed were innocent civilians who had been singled out as scapegoats. In a separate inquiry Abdullah announced that most of the deaths in the massacre at Pahalgam *see paragraph 5.7.14* were caused by excessive retaliatory firing by members of the Central Reserve Police Force, a paramilitary corps. The Indian authorities had blamed Islamic militants. Investigating the incident where 9 people died on 3 April 2000 during a protest march in the town of Brakpora, former Supreme Court judge Justice Pandian blamed paramilitaries and police. He recommended seven officers involved be put on trial for murder. [34c]

5.7.25 In May 2000, Minister of Power Ghulam Hasan Bhatt was killed in a landmine explosion, claimed by Hizbul Mujahedin. It was the first time a serving minister had been killed since the start of the armed uprising. [32u]

5.7.26 On 16 January 2001 the militant group Lashkar-I-Toiba tried to storm the airport in Srinagar. In the ensuing gun battle with Indian security forces, 11 were killed and a dozen injured. [34b]

5.7.27 On 3 February 2001, a further attack was carried out on the Sikh community in Kashmir. On this occasion, six Sikhs were killed in the provincial capital Srinagar. No group claimed responsibility for the killings. One person was subsequently killed in clashes between police and Sikh protestors. [38e]

5.7.28 On 1 October 2001, a suicide attacker detonated a government jeep loaded with explosives outside the Kashmir State Assembly building, while at least two other militants wearing police uniforms entered the complex and took over one of the buildings there. Police said the remaining militants were killed after a gun battle lasting several hours. 38 people were killed in the attack. The Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group initially said it carried out the attack, naming the suicide bomber as a Pakistani national. However, it subsequently withdrew the claim. [38j]

### **Firing across the Line of Control**

5.7.29 An additional factor in the situation is the relations between India and Pakistan. The armies of the two countries face each other across the Line of Control and there are frequent reports of artillery exchanges. Pakistan accuses the Indian army of shelling villages in Azad Kashmir and India accuses the Pakistani forces of targeting Indian army positions to help Kashmiri rebels to cross the Line. [4d]

5.7.30 An outbreak of firing between Indian and Pakistani troops started on 25 June 1998 and continued for a week. The Poonch and Kupwara districts were particularly affected with fatalities, injuries and damage to villages caused by Pakistani mortar bombs and artillery fire. [9i]

5.7.31 Shelling across the Line of Control intensified towards the end of July 1998, with an Indian Army colonel being killed near the Line in Baramulla District on 18 July 1998. [10n] It is reported that there were 350 incidents of cross border firing in Kashmir between January and June 1998. [9h]

5.7.32 In the aftermath of India's nuclear tests in May 1998, an upsurge in shelling and shooting by Indian and Pakistani troops stationed along the Line of Control in Kashmir left over 100 civilians dead. Although India maintained that the exchanges represented a "seasonal" phenomenon, observers in Kashmir reported that the shelling was the heaviest in recent years. [26]

5.7.33 A serious escalation of the conflict in Kashmir occurred in May 1999 in response to the largest infiltration of Islamic militants into Jammu and Kashmir in recent years. India attacked the guerrilla positions with jet fighters and helicopter gunships. After frequent skirmishes along the Line of Control earlier in the month, a prolonged battle developed after insurgents, under cover of artillery fire from Pakistan, had launched a rocket attack on 9 May 1999 on an Indian ammunition dump near the town of Kargil in northern Kashmir. Pursuing the attackers, Indian troops discovered at least 600 well-armed militants had occupied bunkers on a ridge overlooking the town. [5d]

5.7.34 It had been reported that the infiltrators' force had been trained in camps in Azad Kashmir by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI). Pakistan denied that it had any control over the militants, and denied Indian allegations that some of Pakistan's own troops were fighting alongside them. [5d]

5.7.35 By 11 July 1999 Pakistan had agreed on a plan, under US pressure, for the infiltrators to withdraw from Jammu and Kashmir. [8b]. On 17 July 1999 India announced that it believed that most of the infiltrators had withdrawn from the Indian side of the Line of Control. [8c]

### **Human Rights Concerns in Kashmir: Summary**

5.7.36 Human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests, torture leading to hundreds of deaths in custody, and extra-judicial executions perpetrated by state police and armed and paramilitary forces, soared in the early 1990s. Armed opposition groups were reported to have taken hundreds of civilians hostage and to have tortured and killed hundreds of unarmed civilians. [3f]

5.7.37 Reliable figures of the number of deaths in Jammu and Kashmir as a result of the conflict are impossible to obtain. According to official reports and figures obtained in September 1998, 19,866 people had died in Jammu and Kashmir since January 1990. This includes 9,123 members of armed opposition groups; 6,673 victims of armed opposition groups; 2,477 civilians killed by Indian security forces and 1,593 security personnel. These figures do not reflect the number of victims who were deliberately or arbitrarily killed or died as the result of torture inflicted in the custody of state agents. Observers consider that there are some 350-400 such deaths each year. [3f]

5.7.38 The US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices for 2000, issued in February 2001, focuses on Kashmir and sets out concerns relating to human rights abuses by the security forces, which include torture and disappearances; a disrupted judicial system which faces threats from militants; and judicial tolerance of the Government's heavy handed counterinsurgency tactics. Security forces offered bounties for wanted militants brought in dead or alive. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, in 1999 in Jammu and Kashmir, security forces killed 1082 militants, captured 744, and 109 surrendered to authorities. Kashmiri separatist groups maintain that many such "encounters" are faked and that suspected militants offering no resistance are summarily executed. Human rights groups allege that this is particularly true in the case of security force "encounters" with non-Kashmiri militants who have crossed into Jammu and Kashmir illegally. [2a]

5.7.39 In early 2000 the Jammu and Kashmir authorities confirmed that 56 Indian army officers were severely reprimanded for human rights violations, out of nearly 1,000 complaints made against them in 1999. [32e]

### **Disappearances**

5.7.40 There were also disappearances, most of which occurred between 1983 and 1995. They were attributable to the police authorities, the army and paramilitary groups acting in conjunction with, or with the acquiescence of, the armed forces. In Kashmir numerous people are said to have disappeared after "shoot outs" with security forces. [6d] Abduction and hostage taking of unarmed civilians has also been used by armed opposition groups to seek to free arrested associates or to frighten or harass the population. Amnesty report that the victims of disappearance belong to all ages, including children and juveniles, and all professions and most appear to be ordinary civilians who have no connections with armed opposition groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir. [3f]

5.7.41 The fate of the victim remains unknown in many cases. Investigations into cases of disappearances are rarely carried out and when they are, they are usually conducted by police or army officials rather than by an independent body. Police often fail to register detentions or file arrest warrants, and they are then able to deny holding a detainee. [6d]

5.7.42 Amnesty International reported that during 1998 there were fewer disappearances in Jammu and Kashmir than in previous years, but many of the early cases remain unresolved. Amnesty also reported that no effective measures have been taken to end disappearances and to investigate the fate of hundreds of people who have disappeared, including the more than 100 cases submitted by Amnesty in its 1993 report. [3f]

### **Special Security Laws**

5.7.43 Several laws in operation in Jammu and Kashmir facilitate human rights violations and the impunity with which they are perpetrated by inadequately safeguarding the rights of those under arrest and detention. Cases are filed against individuals under the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) for offences allegedly committed before the Act lapsed in 1995. In January 1997 the Supreme Court expressed concern about the continuing detention of people under TADA, and its misuse to detain those who should be charged under the ordinary criminal law. [3f]

5.7.44 The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958 was introduced in Jammu and Kashmir in 1990 and gives the armed and paramilitary forces sweeping powers which facilitate arbitrary arrest and detention and extrajudicial executions and reinforce the impunity of offenders acting under it. The Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Areas Act 1992 gives similar powers to the police in areas declared to be disturbed. The United Nations Human Rights Committee in its July 1997 report expressed its concern at the continued reliance on special powers in areas declared to be disturbed, and at serious human rights violations committed by security and armed forces acting under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and other laws such as the Public Safety Act and the National Security Act. [3f]

5.7.45 The special laws require the Union Government to give sanction for prosecution of military and other central forces and the state government to give sanction for prosecution of police acting under such legislation - this is withheld as a matter of course. The United Nations Human Rights Committee reported that this requirement contributes to a climate of impunity and deprives people of the remedies to which they may be entitled. Amnesty is concerned that the Government of India has shielded offenders in the security forces from international scrutiny. Amnesty has submitted cases of alleged disappearances, calling for impartial investigations, but the Government has denied that the violations have occurred and insisted that effective remedies are in place for everyone who wishes to seek redress. [3f]

5.7.46 Legal and constitutional safeguards, including the right to be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours of arrest and to consult a lawyer of one's choice, are not available to those held under preventive detention legislation such as the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act 1978. [3f]

## **Police and Security Force Impunity**

5.7.47 In July 1997 Justice A Q Parry of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court observed in a case of torture allegedly perpetrated by the counter-insurgency wing of the state police, that the “police Task Force are still behaving in a way which is neither recognised by law nor is provided by any procedure established by law”. The Jammu and Kashmir state police have shown a disregard for the rule of law in their expanding counter-insurgency operations, leading to increasing allegations of arbitrary arrests, torture, killings and disappearance perpetrated by police officers themselves and reports of their connivance in abuses committed by other agencies such as the renegades. It is also shown in the way police have obstructed victims’ and families’ access to redress. Lawyers and activists in Jammu and Kashmir have repeatedly asserted that there is systematic disregard of the right to file a complaint with the police and that local police have been instructed to refuse to register complaints without first obtaining permission from higher authorities. [3f]

5.7.48 Accountability remains a serious problem in Jammu and Kashmir. Security forces have committed thousands of serious human rights violations over the course of the conflict, including extra-judicial killings, disappearances, and torture. Despite this record of abuse, between January 1990 and September 1998, only 295 members of the security forces were prosecuted and punished for any of these crimes, and no compensation was paid to the victims or their families. [2a] Army admissions of human rights violations have usually been followed by assertions that abuses have been investigated and perpetrators brought to justice. The numbers given vary which makes it difficult to obtain an accurate numerical account. Few of the statements given by the army contain details about the nature of the allegations or the offences, the nature, composition and terms of reference of the inquiries, the identity of the offenders and the punishments awarded. Amnesty is not aware of any case in which those responsible for “disappearing” a person in custody have been convicted and sentenced. [3f]

5.7.49 Amnesty is aware of cases where the security forces have not only defied the courts but have also actively threatened, harassed or intimidated relatives of disappeared persons and other victims of human rights violations to stop them from seeking redress. [3f]

5.7.50 In the past, scrutiny by the NHRC and international human rights organisations when permitted, and the persistence of individual magistrates, have resulted in greater accountability of the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir. However, in July 1998, the Government rejected the NHRC's recommendations to bring the army and paramilitary forces under closer scrutiny by the NHRC to allow it to probe complaints of their excesses. The NHRC continues to receive complaints alleging human rights violations by the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir. [2a]

5.7.51 In October 2000 the Indian army sentenced one of its officers (whose rank was captain) to 7 years imprisonment for raping a young girl in a village in the Doda district. The case marked a rare departure for the army, both in terms of making the case public and in taking such severe action. [38a]

## **Detention**

5.7.52 The Ministry of Home Affairs reported that 744 suspected militants were arrested in 1999 and 109 persons surrendered. [2a]

5.7.53 Human rights groups maintain that several hundred people are held by the military and paramilitary forces in long-term unacknowledged detention in interrogation centres and transit camps in Jammu and Kashmir (and in the north east of India) which are nominally intended for only short-term confinement. Human rights groups fear that many of these unacknowledged prisoners are subject to torture and extra-judicial killing. According to one NGO, there were 1,300 writs of habeas corpus pending in the Jammu and Kashmir High Court in 1999. [2a]

5.7.54 The Government maintains that screening committees administered by the state governments provide information about detainees to their families. However, other sources indicate that families are able to confirm the detention of their relatives only by bribing prison guards. A programme of prison visits by the ICRC, which began in October 1995, is designed in part to help assure communications between detainees and their families. [2a]

5.7.55 During 2000, the ICRC visited approximately 1,000 detainees in 20 places of detention. All acknowledged detention centres in Jammu and Kashmir, and Kashmiri detainees elsewhere in the country were visited. The ICRC is not authorised to enter interrogation centres or transit centres, nor does it have access to regular detention centres in the north east. [2a]

### **Abuses by militants**

5.7.56 There are also concerns about the serious abuses committed by the separatist militants which included political killings, kidnapping, extortion and acts of random terror which killed hundreds of Kashmiris. Many of the militants are not Indian citizens, but are Afghan, Pakistani, and other nationalities. Attacks by Muslim militants seeking to end Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir, and continuing political violence, has driven almost 95% of Hindus in the Kashmir Valley (Pandits) to seek refuge in camps in Jammu, with relatives in New Delhi, or elsewhere. Throughout 2000 militants carried out several execution-style mass killings of Hindu villagers and violently targeted Pandits, and in one instance the Sikh minority in Jammu and Kashmir. [2a]

### **Ineffective Judiciary**

5.7.57 The higher judiciary in Jammu and Kashmir appears in many ways unable or unwilling to provide justice to the disappeared and their families. There are lengthy delays in hearing *habeas corpus* petitions. There is a large proportion of unconfirmed judges, which makes them open to government pressure. Some judges, who have been transferred after making observations critical of the government, are hesitant to make a judgement or pass an order: instead they repeatedly adjourn cases. [3f]

5.7.58 The Jammu and Kashmir High Court appears to be unduly lenient towards the non-appearance of respondents or other non-compliance with court orders. Usually hearings are adjourned and respondents given more time to appear and respond. The state regularly fails to respond to court orders to file objections following the submission of reports of judicial enquiries relating to cases of disappearance. In a few cases the court has attempted to enforce compliance



by imposing fines on state representatives for failure to respond to the order to file objections. **[3f]**

5.7.59 Ordinary people in Jammu and Kashmir are frequently unaware of their right to legal redress. They do not trust the judicial process, and they usually also lack the financial resources to sustain an often long drawn judicial process, especially if they live in remote places a long distance away from the seat of the court. Many a petition has been dismissed in default simply because family members could not afford to travel to the court or to pay legal fees. **[3f]**

### **State Human Rights Commission**

5.7.60 The Jammu and Kashmir Protection of Human Rights Act 1997 established a state Human Rights Commission and human rights courts. The Commission is empowered to enquire into any complaint of a violation of human rights presented to it by a victim or any person on his/her behalf. It can also intervene in any proceeding involving any allegation or violation of human rights pending before a court with the approval of the court. **[10k]**

5.7.61 The Commission may also visit any jail or detention centre. It can also review human rights legislation and recommend measures for its effective implementation. **[10k]** However the panel is not empowered to examine alleged abuses by the army or paramilitary forces or any other central agencies. **[3f]**

5.7.62 Amnesty International is concerned about the restrictions placed on the functioning of the Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Commission and its effectiveness in carrying out its mandate. Amnesty has called for a review of the state legislation establishing the Commission to ensure that its powers are at least on par with those of the National Human Rights Commission in the rest of India and that it has the resources and powers to carry out its mandate fully. **[3d]** Human rights monitors have stated that the Commission has not yet demonstrated effective, independent protection of human rights in the state **[2a]**, nor to have vigorously pursued allegations of disappearances in the state, even when allegedly perpetrated by forces other than the security forces and thus well within its mandate to investigate. **[3f]**

5.7.63 During 2000 the authorities continued to deny Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International permission to visit Jammu and Kashmir; however, some foreign diplomats gained improved access to some prisons. **[2a]**

## **5.8 RELIGIOUS MINORITIES**

### **Introduction**

5.8.1 The preamble to the Indian Constitution proclaims India's commitment to democracy and secularism and guarantees all citizens freedom of religion and belief as well as the right to practise religion freely. **[6b]**

5.8.2 The Penal Code prohibits and punishes any violation of tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion or belief:

- ◆ promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion (Section 135A);
- ◆ injuring or defiling a place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class (Section 295);
- ◆ deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious feeling of any class by insulting its religion (Section 295A);
- ◆ disturbing religious assembly (Section 296);
- ◆ uttering words with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings (Section 298) **[6b]**

5.8.3 Under the Representation of the People Act 1951, it is an offence for a candidate to call upon someone to vote or to abstain from voting by playing on his religion, or using religious symbols as a means of promoting that candidate's election prospects. **[6b]**

5.8.4 According to 1999 government statistics (based on the 1991 national census), the following table gives the population percentages of the main religious groups: **[36]**

Hindus	82.4%
Muslims	12.7% (90% Sunni and 10% Shiite)
Christians	2.3%
Sikhs	2.0%
Buddhists	0.7%
Jains	0.4%
Others (including Parsis, Jews and Baha'is)	0.4%

5.8.5 The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance concluded that the situation in India relating to tolerance and non-discrimination based on religion is generally satisfactory. The country's commitment to democracy, sound democratic institutions, legislative and government measures, and the secular nature of the state all contributed to religious tolerance in India. **[6b]** In their Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, published 5 September 2000, the U.S. Department of State concluded that despite some incidents of violence during the period covered by the report, relations between various religious groups generally are amicable among the substantial majority of citizens. **[36]**

### **Buddhists and Zoroastrians**

5.8.6 Buddhist and Zoroastrian minorities are able to practise their religion freely, possess adequate numbers of places of worship and religious publications, and refrain from proselytising among other communities. Buddhists and Zoroastrians are said to be fully integrated into society. **[6b]**

5.8.7 Unidentified gunmen killed three Buddhist monks in the Ladakh region of Indian-administered Kashmir in July 2000. **[32n]**

## Muslims

5.8.8 Muslims constitute India's largest minority as well as the second largest Muslim community in the world after Indonesia, and before that of Pakistan. [6b]

5.8.9 The Indian authorities do not restrict the religious activities of Muslims. Muslims have freedom of religious practice and freedom to organise their services according to their codes, religious teachings and customs. [6b] Muslims do not benefit from special reservations in education and employment. They are reportedly under-represented in the civil service, the military and institutions of higher education. [21]

5.8.10 In Jammu and Kashmir, the only state in India where Muslims are in the majority [21], the religious situation is seriously affected by the armed conflict between the Indian army and the militant extremists. There have been several incidents of attacks on mosques in Jammu and Kashmir including the destruction of the Charar-e-Sharief sanctuary on 11 May 1995. [6b]

*See also [Kashmir](#): Section 5.7*

5.8.11 Muslims in India have their own educational establishments, including the madrasa religious schools responsible for disseminating the teachings of Islam. Muslims possess a large number of places of worship as well as the Waqf Board, which is responsible for the management of property belonging to religious communities and charitable institutions. [6b]

5.8.12 Several mosques have been destroyed in India, most notably the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992. The UN Rapporteur stated that according to official and non-governmental observers, the destruction of the Babri Masjid was an aberration which could not be interpreted as evidence of an official policy of religious intolerance directed against Muslims. [6b]

*See also [Destruction of Ayodhya Mosque](#): paragraphs 5.8.16 - 5.8.25*

## Hindu-Muslim Inter-communal violence

5.8.13 Various parts of India have suffered inter-communal violence between Hindus and Muslims, in particular the state of Gujarat, where such violence pre-dates Indian independence. The state's population of 4.8 million is 60% Hindu and 40% Muslim. Rival religious celebrations have often sparked off conflict, with elements on both sides trying to provoke one another. One flash point has been the Hindu Rath Yatra (Unity) procession, held each July. Tension in the state has also been fuelled by wider developments in Hindu-Muslim relations, in particular since 1986 by the Ayodhya controversy. [7a]

5.8.14 The antagonism has been exacerbated by non-religious considerations. Muslims have accused Hindu organisations, such as the Rashtriya Swayam Sevaksangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Shiv Sena, of deliberately seeking to drive them out of the cities, where many Muslims are textile workers, craftsmen and shopkeepers, so that Hindus can take over their jobs and businesses. Hindu leaders have rejected the charge. Muslims have also alleged that the predominantly Hindu local police make little effort to protect their community during riots. [7a]

5.8.15 At the end of December 1998, 5 people were killed and 50 wounded in Karnataka, and 3 were killed in religious clashes in Amod in Gujarat. [9f] In June 2000, a bomb exploded in a mosque in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, wounding two people and prompting mob attacks that injured five others. [33d] Then on 11 July 2000 it was reported that 10 people died in Malpura, Rajasthan after clashes between Hindu and Muslim groups. The riots were sparked by the fatal stabbing of a Hindu man who was facing charges relating to several killings that occurred in Malpura after the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque. [32l]

### **Destruction of the Ayodhya mosque**

5.8.16 The BJP and its allies had called repeatedly for the mosque at Ayodhya (the Babri Masjid, built in the 16th century by the Mughal emperor Babar) to be replaced by a temple honouring the Hindu deity, Lord Ram. [5a] In 1990 the then BJP leader, Lal Krishna Advani, led a procession of Hindu devotees to the town to begin construction of a Hindu temple. Paramilitary troops were sent to Ayodhya and thousands of Hindu activists were arrested in an attempt to prevent a Muslim-Hindu confrontation. However following repeated clashes between police and crowds, Hindu extremists stormed and slightly damaged the mosque and laid siege to it for several days. [1]

5.8.17 Then on 6 December 1992 around 100,000 Hindu *kar sevaks* (construction volunteers) responded to a call by the BJP and other Hindu organisations, including the RSS and the VHP to resume construction work on the temple at Ayodhya. A small mob of Hindu zealots stormed past guards and razed the mosque to the ground. [5a]

5.8.18 Within hours of the mosque's destruction, Ayodhya was gripped by fighting between Hindus and Muslims. By the following day there were reports of numerous deaths and arson attacks on Hindu and Muslim shrines across India despite strict security arrangements in most states. The worst affected cities were Bhopal, Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Jaipur, Kanpur and Surat. Southern states were also affected. [5a]

5.8.19 The demolition of the mosque triggered angry reactions across the Muslim world and led to the deaths of an estimated 25 people in neighbouring Muslim states. [5a]

5.8.20 The Indian Government strongly condemned the desecration and demolition of the holy building and pledged to re-build it. The leaders of the BJP, including L K Advani and the party's president, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi, and the leaders of the VHP were arrested, the BJP Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh resigned, the state legislature was dissolved and Uttar Pradesh was placed under President's Rule. On 8 December 1992 the security forces took full control of Ayodhya, including the disputed complex, meeting with little resistance. [1]

5.8.21 A few days later the Government banned five communal organisations, 3 Hindu and 2 Muslim, under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 [27], on the grounds that they promoted disharmony among different religious communities. [1] The banned organisations were: Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) (VHP), Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajrang Dal, Islamic Sevak Sengh (ISS) and Jamaat-I-Islami Hind. [27] The ban on these groups has since been lifted. [28]

5.8.22 In January 1993 there was a resurgence of Hindu-Muslim violence in Bombay and in Ahmedabad. Curfews were imposed and thousands of extra paramilitary troops were sent to curb the serious unrest. Despite a ban on communal rallies, thousands of Hindu militants attempted to converge on the centre of New Delhi to attend a mass rally organised by the BJP on 25 February 1993. Thousands of BJP activists were arrested throughout India in an effort to prevent the rally taking place and the crowds that did gather were dispersed by the security forces using batons and tear gas. On 12 March 1993 there were a number of bomb explosions in Bombay which caused about 250 casualties. [1]

5.8.23 It was not until September 1997 that a court indicted 49 people on criminal charges over the demolition of the mosque. Among them were Lal Krishna Advani, then BJP president; Murli Manohar Joshi, former BJP president; and Bal Thackeray, the leader of Shiv Sena. The charges include rioting, creating hatred between two religious communities, defiling a place of worship and causing grievous hurt by threatening and damaging the life and safety of others. The BJP leaders claimed they were innocent and that the party was not responsible for destroying the mosque. [8f]

5.8.24 The Supreme Court in 1994 ordered that no activity should take place in or around the disputed area until a lower court gave its verdict on a number of title suits filed by Hindu and Muslim groups. The BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee has stated that he will abide by the court's ruling on the ownership of the site and Home Minister L K Advani has stated that temple building is not on the government's agenda. Nevertheless the BJP manifesto for the 1998 general election stated that the party was "committed to facilitate the construction of a magnificent Rama Mandir at Ayodhya". [8z]

5.8.25 The VHP is leading a campaign to build a temple on the site, a prospect which angers India's Muslims. The VHP has vowed to ignore any court or government orders on the issue. The government has come under fire from its opponents in Parliament since it came to office in March 1998 for allowing Hindu revivalist groups to carry out temple construction near the site. The Press Trust of India quoted Mr Advani as saying that no construction work was taking place at the disputed site. [8z]

## **Christians**

5.8.26 Christians constitute the second largest minority in India, after Muslims. The Indian authorities do not interfere with their internal religious activities, which may be conducted freely. Christians are well integrated into Indian society. [6b]

5.8.27 Public schools provide secular education. Minorities can establish their own schools; these include schools providing a general education but in addition offering religious instruction to Christian pupils, and also religious establishments such as seminaries. [6b]

5.8.28 There is constitutional freedom to produce and disseminate religious publications, including the Bible. [6b]

5.8.29 Christians have an adequate number of places of worship, although there have been isolated cases of obstacles to the construction of places of worship. This is attributed to slow administrative procedures, affecting all communities. [6b]

5.8.30 There is no national law that bars proselytising by Christian citizens. Foreign missionaries generally may renew their visas, but since the mid-1960's the Government has refused to admit new resident foreign missionaries. New arrivals currently enter as tourists on short-term visas. During 2000, as in the past, state officials refused to issue permits for foreign Christian missionaries, as well as other persons, to enter some north eastern states, on the grounds of political instability in the region. This restriction is not levied specifically against Christians. There is no ban on professing or proselytising religious beliefs; however, speaking publicly against other beliefs is considered dangerous to public order, and is prohibited. **[2a]**

5.8.31 There is an active lobby of converts belonging to scheduled castes who are protesting against the withdrawal of State measures benefiting untouchables (reservation of positions in the public education system, reserved jobs in State enterprises) when they convert from Hinduism. This practice was seen as an obstacle to conversion. **[6b]**

5.8.32 Catholics in the central and northern states of India have reported that since the BJP came to power, there has been an increase in the number of attacks against convents, schools and Catholic missions, especially in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. **[21]**

5.8.33 During one week in September 1998, 3 convents were attacked by armed men in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and near Calcutta, resulting in the rape or physical injury of nuns. **[21]**

5.8.34 The United Christian Forum for Human Rights (UCFHR) in India stated that it had recorded nearly 120 cases of rape, Bible burning, assault and other forms of violence against Christians during 1998. This compared to 40 cases recorded between 1964 and 1996. **[9g]** Most of these incidents have occurred in Gujarat. It is said that those extremist groups which have been terrorising Christians have been emboldened by the BJP's coming to power at the head of a coalition government. The BJP also forms the state government of Gujarat. **[9j]**

5.8.35 Concerns have been expressed that these attacks have been carried out directly by, or in connivance with, right wing Hindu groups with links to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, including the VHP and Bajrang Dal. These groups have spoken out strongly against the alleged forcible conversion of tribal people and others by Christian missionaries, justified attacks on Christians and their property and advocated their expulsion from India. **[3e]** In November 1999, groups loosely allied to the BJP demanding an end to conversion, preceded a visit to India by the Pope by a month of protests. Less than a week after the Pope's visit, Christians were attacked in Delhi, reportedly by members of the World Hindu Council (Vishwa Hindu Parishad). **[34a]**

5.8.36 Much of the violence against Christians has centred around deprived areas of India where Christian missionaries have traditionally carried out development activities with tribal and dalit communities, organising health and educational services. **[3e]** In August 1999 a bill was introduced in Gujarat that would allow harsh punishment to be meted out to anyone in the state found guilty of converting someone to another religion through use of force, provision of material benefits, or fraud. Human rights groups fear that if passed, the bill – called the Gujarat Freedom of Religion Bill, 1999 – could be used to restrict the fundamental right to choose one's religion. However, the Gujarat state assembly took no action on the Freedom of Religion Bill, allowing it to lapse. It must be reintroduced to be further considered. **[2a]**

5.8.37 Some of the worst violence occurred in the Dangs district of Gujarat, where Hindu mobs went on the rampage for several weeks starting on Christmas Day 1998. The attackers burnt churches and missionary schools, and injured priests and nuns. Christians blame Hindu activists for the violence. The VHP denied instigating such violence, but it criticised evangelists who it said were forcing Hindus to convert. The VHP regarded these conversions as an assault on the Hindu religion and culture. Christians dismissed these accusations, saying that they were administering charity to the area's poor. [9l] & [9m]

5.8.38 The Prime Minister, A B Vajpayee, who visited the Dangs area, stated that the Government would not tolerate any further attacks on the Christian minority. The Union Home Ministry sent a team of officials to investigate the attacks. Security forces were deployed in the affected areas to guard missionaries and churches. [9m] Further violence took place on the day the Gujarat Chief Minister rejected an interim report by the National Commission for Minorities on the situation in the state as "biased and one-sided". The report found that attacks on Christians and their property had been carried out with the connivance of Hindu groups and was critical of the Gujarat government's role in failing to protect minorities. [3e]

5.8.39 Anti-Christian violence spread to other areas of India. In Kerala, Hindu activists were arrested on 26 January 1999 after an attack on Christian students; and 2 pastors were seriously injured in an attack by RSS activists in early February 1999, also in Kerala. [9n] In Orissa an Australian missionary, Graham Staines, and his 2 sons were burnt alive in their jeep in late January 1999. The police blamed activists of the Bajrang Dal for the murder, but the VHP vice-president denied that the VHP or the Bajrang Dal were involved. [9p] The Indian Government ordered a judicial inquiry into the incident to be conducted by a sitting Supreme Court judge. [10a]

5.8.40 The Wadhwa Commission, which investigated the murder of Graham Staines and his sons, presented its report on 6 August 1999. The report concluded that Dara Singh, a Hindu fundamentalist, was responsible for leading and inciting a crowd into the murder of Staines and his sons and that there was no evidence that any authority or organisation was involved. [8e] The president of the All India Christian Council, Dr Joseph D'Souza, and the National Convenor of the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, John Dayal, expressed disappointment in the Commission's findings. They deplored the state authorities and central government for their failure to provide the Commission with all the facts about the violence against the Christian community in India. They stated that the Commission had not been given a free hand to investigate and the Government had rejected demands that the terms of reference of the Commission be expanded to examine the totality of anti-Christian violence which culminated in the murder of Graham Staines. [17]

5.8.41 On 1 December 1999, Junior Home Minister I.D.Swami said an investigative report into the murder of Graham Staines had found that Staines did not try to convert villagers. [33c]

5.8.42 Dara Singh was finally arrested on 31 January 2000 in a village in Orissa. [32j]

5.8.43 In October 2000 a 13 year-old boy was sent to a juvenile detention centre for 14 years for his role in the murder of Staines. Sudarshan Hansda was tried separately because of his age. His was the first conviction in the case; as at that date, the trial of Dara Singh was continuing. [32f]

5.8.44 Violence against Christians continued during 2000. In May 2000, a bomb blast in a crowded congregation in Machlipatnam, Andhra Pradesh, left 30 people injured. Three further explosions occurred on 8 June 2000, in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, injuring 4 people. [32s] Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee spoke out strongly about these incidents. He called on state governments to "firmly and impartially investigate all incidents of violence against Christians in India", and commenting on the spate of attacks he called them an "aberration and an exception to the general texture of peaceful and cordial relations between the various communities". [32t]

## 5.9 SCHEDULED CASTES AND TRIBES

5.9.1 India's caste system has strong historic ties to Hinduism. It delineates clear social strata, assigning highly structured religious, cultural, and social roles to each caste and sub-caste. The Constitution gives the President authority to identify historically disadvantaged castes, Dalits and tribals (members of indigenous groups historically outside the caste system) which are entitled to affirmative action in employment and other benefits. These are known as "scheduled" tribes and castes. [2a] They include India's aboriginal inhabitants, or Adivasis, who comprise nearly 200 ethnic and culturally distinct peoples who speak more than 100 languages. They are represented in Parliament but as theirs is usually a minority vote, legislation favourable to their interests can be impeded by vested interests. [21]

5.9.2 The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 lists new offences against disadvantaged people and provides stiffer penalties for offenders. [2a]

5.9.3 The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes was established in March 1992. It serves to ensure observance of the measures taken to promote the educational and economic interests of these groups. These include reservation of seats in public services, administration, Parliament and State legislatures, and the setting up of advisory councils and separate departments for the welfare of vulnerable groups. The Commission has the powers of a civil court in investigating violations of rights guaranteed to Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Affirmative measures are also being taken for disadvantaged groups belonging to Other Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (OBCs). [6a]

5.9.4 Since independence, India has pursued a policy of affirmative action quotas for Scheduled Castes and Tribes in educational institutions, public employment and political representation. Nevertheless violence against, and stigmatisation of, Scheduled Castes and Tribes remains rampant and there are an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 acts of violence against them every year. [21]

5.9.5 Other Backward Castes are a series of castes above the Scheduled Castes, but below the upper castes and constitute some 50-70% of the population. [21]

5.9.6 The practice of untouchability (the belief that contact with members of the Untouchable group would defile members of a higher caste [21] was in theory outlawed by the Constitution and the 1955 Civil Rights Act, but it remains an important aspect of life. [2a]

5.9.7 Dalits (formerly called untouchables or harijans) are a Scheduled Caste occupying the lowest layer of the Hindu caste system and form some 16% of the Indian population. Dalits are



poor and exploited economically, with 90% of them living in rural areas, the overwhelming majority being marginal farmers or landless labourers. [21]

5.9.8 In August 2000, India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party chose for the first time a lower caste member to be the party's new president. Banguru Laxman, junior Minister for Railways, was the first member of the Dalit community to head a major party. [32p] Laxman resigned as president of the BJP in March 2001 over a bribery scandal that implicated several senior political figures and bureaucrats. An Indian website accused Laxman of taking money in connection with supposed defence deals. [38c]

## **ANNEX A: POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS Source: [1] & [7k]**

### **ALL INDIA ANNA DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGAM** (All India Anna Dravidian Progressive Association)

A Tamil Nadu party, with its headquarters in Chennai (Madras). Founded in 1972 as a breakaway group from the DMK. It went into the 1998 national elections in alliance with the BJP and joined the BJP-led government afterwards. However its withdrawal of support in April 1999 led to the collapse of the government and another national election in which it is once again allied with Congress (I). Leader: Jayaram Jayalalitha, party secretary general.

### **ALL INDIA FORWARD BLOC**

Founded 1940 and has socialist aims, including nationalisation of major industries, land reform and redistribution. A minor Marxist-Leninist ally of CPI-M in West Bengal.

### **ASOM GANA PARISHAD (AGP)** (Assam People's Council)

Founded 1985. Draws support from the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad and the All Assam Students' Union. Leader: Prafulla Kumar Mohanta (Chief Minister of Assam).

### **BAHUJAN SAMAJ PARTY** (Majority Society Party - [This translation is misleading as Bahujan is also another synonym for backward castes])

Formed in 1980 as the champion of scheduled castes and is strong in Uttar Pradesh, where it briefly formed the government in alliance with the BJP in 1996. Led by Kanshi Ram and Ms Mayawati.

### **BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY** (Indian People's Party)

A Hindu nationalist party formed in 1980, which made steady advances in North India during the 1990s. Supports economic self-reliance, uniform civil code and cultural nationalism. Also supports exercising the option to induct nuclear weapons.

Rules the states of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh, and is the minority partner in the coalition governments of Punjab and Maharashtra. Lost power in Delhi and Rajasthan in the State elections of November 1998.

Leading personalities: A B Vajpayee (Prime Minister), L K Advani (Home Minister), Murli Manohar Joshi (Human Resource Development Minister) and Jaswant Singh (Foreign Minister).

### **BIJU JANATA DAL**

Made up of almost the entire Janata Dal unit of Orissa, who formed the BJD because of neglect by the Janata Dal national leadership. Main government party in Orissa. An ally of the BJP. Led by Naveen Patnaik (Chief Minister of Orissa).

### **COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (CPI)**

Founded 1925 and advocates the establishment of a socialist society led by the working class, and ultimately of a communist society. Support in West Bengal, Bihar and Kerala.

General-Secretary: Ardhendu Bhushan Bardhan.

### **COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA - MARXIST (CPI-M)**

Formed in 1964 as a pro-Beijing breakaway group from the CPI. Declared its independence of Beijing in 1968. In power in West Bengal since 1977, and also in Kerala. Support also in Tripura. In October 2000, the Election Commission demoted CPI-M's status from that of a national party to a state party. General-Secretary: Harkishan Singh Surjeet. Main leaders: Jyoti Basu (Chief Minister of West Bengal since 1977), Somnath Chatterjee (Parliamentary leader).

### **CONGRESS (I)**

Party of Indian independence, then of government for 45 of the following 50 years under Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi and grandson Rajiv Gandhi. Ridden with corruption scandals, leadership squabbles and crumbling organisation. Had support throughout India, but suffered massive losses in the North and partially in the West in 1998 and lost the confidence of traditional voters such as Muslims and scheduled castes. Sonia Gandhi, widow of Rajiv Gandhi, took over as president of Congress (I) in April 1998, and under her leadership the party made significant gains in the 1998 State elections to take over the government of Delhi and Rajasthan and retain control of Madhya Pradesh. But it registered its worst ever performance in the Lok Sabha elections on September/October 1999 when it won just 111 seats. However, in October 2000, the party made significant gains in BJP-ruled Gujarat.

### **DRAVIDA MUNNETRA KAZHAGAM (DMK)**

Founded in 1949, was dismissed from state government of Tamil Nadu in 1991, but restored with a huge majority in 1996. Supports greater federalism; resents northern domination. Exclusive to Tamil Nadu and supported primarily by locally dominant backward castes. Member of National Democratic Alliance so agreed to moderate its stand on Sri Lanka's Tamil problem. Led by Muthuvel Karunanidhi (Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu).

### **INDIAN UNION MUSLIM LEAGUE**

Concerned with the interests of the Muslims of Kerala.

### **JAMMU AND KASHMIR NATIONAL CONFERENCE (JKNC)**

Headquarters in Srinagar. Formerly All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. Founded 1931, renamed 1939, reactivated 1975. A state-based party campaigning for internal autonomy and responsible self-government. Accepts accession to the Indian Union. Leader: Dr Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

### **JANATA DAL (UNITED)**

Led by Sharad Yadav. Formed on the eve of the 1999 Lok Sabha election due to a split in the Janata Dal over whether to ally with the BJP in the National Democratic Alliance. The JD(U) favoured the alliance. Strong support base in Bihar.

### **JANATA DAL (SECULAR)**

See above. A smaller section of the Janata Dal did not agree with an alliance with the BJP and formed the Janata Dal (Secular). Led by former Prime Minister, H.D.Deve Gowda.

### **KERALA CONGRESS (M)**

Concerned with the interests of the Christians of Kerala.

### **MAJLIS-E-ITTEHADUL MUSLIMEEN (MIM)**

Muslim communal party of Hyderabad.

### **NATIONALIST CONGRESS PARTY**

Formed in 1999 by Sharad Pawar, a senior Congress (I) leader from Maharashtra, and others expelled from Congress (I) for being unwilling to accept Sonia Gandhi, a non-Indian born citizen, as Congress' candidate for Prime Minister. Formed coalition government with Congress (I) after state elections in Maharashtra.

### **RASHTRIYA JANATA DAL**

Formed in 1997 by a breakaway group of former Janata Dal MPs from Bihar. Pro Yadav casteist party. Supported by the backward Yadav caste and Muslims of Bihar. Led by Laloo Prasad Yadav.

### **REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY**

Minor Marxist-Leninist party allied with CPI-M, and supported in West Bengal.

### **SAMAJWADI PARTY**

Emerged from V P Singh's Janata Dal as an aggressive champion of specific backward castes and Muslims. Supports reservations for jobs and education. Support confined to Uttar Pradesh. Led by Mulayam Singh Yadav.

### **SAMAJWADI JANATA PARTY**

The one-man party of Chandra Shekhar, a former Prime Minister.

### **SAMATA PARTY**

A breakaway from V P Singh's Janata Dal over the corrupt ways of former Bihar Chief Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav. Supported by backward castes mainly in Bihar and also in Uttar Pradesh.

### **SHIROMANI AKALI DAL**

A moderate Sikh party controlled by the dominant Jat Sikh farming community of Punjab. Supports greater federalism and is a strong ally of the BJP. Main leader: Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab.

### **SHIV SENA**

Founded in 1966 and based in Mumbai (Bombay). It is a pro-Maratha and pro-Hindu party. Party President: Balashaheb "Bal" Thackeray.

### **TAMIL MAANILA CONGRESS (TMC)**

Broke away from Congress (I) in 1996 in protest against Rao's decision to fight elections with the AIADMK. Policies not otherwise distinct from Congress (I). Confined to Tamil Nadu.

### **TELUGU DESAM PARTY (NAIDU) (Telugu Nation)**

HQ in Hyderabad. Founded in 1982 by Telugu film star N T Rama Rao, who died in 1996. Based in Andhra Pradesh, and is supported by locally dominant middle castes. Led by Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.

### **TRINAMOOL CONGRESS**

Breakaway group of the Congress (I) in West Bengal. Part of the BJP-led NDA government. Led by: Mamata Banerjee.

## **OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

### **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (National Union of Selfless Servers)**

Founded in 1925 by Keshan Baliram Hedgewar, the RSS is a widespread fundamentalist Hindu organisation which was banned in 1992 because of the violence following the December 1992 destruction of the Ayodhya mosque. The ban was suspended on 18 May 1993 by the Allahabad High Court and lifted on 4 June 1993 by the Unlawful Activities Tribunal. The organisation was temporarily banned twice previously, in 1948 and 1975. There are an estimated 4.5 million members, and the national headquarters are in Nagpur, Maharashtra. At present the RSS is said to exert considerable pressure on the BJP government to which it is said to be closely connected. In general, it aims to roll back recent reforms and modernising processes such as trade liberalisation, urbanisation and imported technologies. [21] & [38b]

### **All India Sikh Student Federation**

The AISSF was founded in 1944. Its founder president was Sardar Swarup Singh. It was the first body to pass a resolution seeking the formation of a separate Sikh homeland. Its other objectives were to promote and propagate Sikhism amongst the college-going Sikh students. While the AISSF sought a separate Sikh homeland, it did not fight for it until militancy erupted under Bhindranwale in 1981. From then onwards, a number of AISSF members joined the ranks of the militants. The organisation was banned between 19 March 1984 and 11 April 1985 [4b] & [7b]

### **Dam Dami Taksal**

Dam Dami Taksal is one of the most distinguished Sikh seminaries in India. It is located in a new gurdwara in a village in Gurdaspur District, some 25 miles from Amritsar. The fundamentalist militant preacher Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who was ultimately killed in Operation Blue Star, was born of a peasant family closely associated with the Taksal; he was sent there to train as a preacher, and became head priest of the Taksal in 1971. [7c]

Bhindranwale championed Sikh orthodoxy, and in particular insisted that Sikhs should bear weapons. He initially focused his attentions on the Nirankari Sikhs, whom the priests of the Golden Temple had declared enemies of the Sikh panth in 1973 because contrary to orthodox teaching they worshipped a living guru. There were increasingly violent clashes between orthodox Sikhs and Nirankaris from 1978 onwards. As far as can be established, Dam Dami Taksal has never itself advocated an armed struggle for an independent Sikh state. It has almost certainly never had any direct link with terrorist organisations, though its orthodox teaching may have inspired those who took up the gun. Nowadays it is a purely religious institution. [7c]

## **BANNED ORGANISATIONS IN INDIA Source: [28]**

This list sets out the banned organisations both India-wide and in individual states.

### **◆ Banned by the Union Government**

(Note: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front ban order has now lapsed)

United Liberation Front of Assam

Bodo Security Force/ National Democratic Front of Boroland

National Socialist Council of Nagaland

People's Liberation Army

People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak

Kangleipak Communist Party and the Red Army

United National Liberation Front

Kanglei Yaol Kanba Lup

All Tripura Tiger Force

National Liberation Front of Tripura

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

◆ **Banned by Jammu and Kashmir State Government**

Hizbul Mujahedin

Harkat-ul Ansar (renamed Harkat-ul-Mujahideen) [9r]

◆ **Banned by Andhra Pradesh State Government**

People's War Group

Radical Youth League

Ryot Coolie Sangh

Singarani Karmika Samakhya (SIKASA)

Viplava Karmika Samakhya (VIKASA)

Radical Student's Union

All India Revolutionary Students Federation

◆ **Banned by Bihar State Government**

Mazdoor Kisan Sangram Samiti

Maoist Communist Centre

Lal Khandi

Sunlight Sena

Lal Sena

Lorik Sena

Bhumi Sena

Hara Sena

Kuer Sena

Brahmarshi Sena

Savarna Liberation Front

Ranvir Kisan Maha Sangh

Jan Suraksha Sahgharsh Manch

◆ **Banned by Tamil Nadu State Government [10s]**

Al-Ummah

Jehad Committee

**ORGANISATIONS PROSCRIBED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM UNDER THE  
TERRORISM ACT Source: [15c]**

International Sikh Youth Federation

Babbar Khalsa

Harakat Mujahideen (or Harkat-ul-Mujahideen)

Jaish e Mohammed (or Jaish-e-Mohammad)

Lashkar e Tayyaba (or Lashkar-I-Toiba)

## **ANNEX B: PROMINENT PEOPLE - PAST AND PRESENT**

### **FAROOQ ABDULLAH**

Chairman of the National Conference, was sworn in as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in October 1996 following the party's win in the state elections.

### **LAL KRISHNA ADVANI**

Home Minister in the Bharatiya Janata Party-led coalition government which took office in March 1998 and a former president of the BJP. In 1990 he led a procession of Hindu devotees to Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, to begin the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of a disused ancient mosque. He was accused of deliberately inciting inter-communal hatred by exhorting Hindu extremists to join him in illegally tearing down the mosque. Advani was arrested along with thousands of Hindu activists.

The Ayodhya issue came to the fore again in December 1992 when the mosque was torn down by Hindu militants. Advani was again arrested along with other BJP leaders amidst the violence that followed the demolition.

### **PRAKASH SINGH BADAL**

Leader of Shiromani Akali Dal. Became Chief Minister of Punjab in February 1997 following the Akali Dal-BJP election victory.

### **JARNAIL SINGH BHINDRANWALE**

A charismatic Sikh religious leader who first appeared in 1977. He preached strict fundamentalism and an armed struggle for national liberation. He was arrested following the killing of Lal Jagat Narain, editor of a pro-Hindu newspaper, in 1981. He was released immediately, but his prestige increased among young Sikhs. Sikh unrest escalated and 10,000 Sikhs barricaded themselves in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Operation Blue Star was initiated by then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, and the temple was besieged and shelled by the army. Thousands were killed, among them Bhindranwale.

### **H D DEVE GOWDA**

A former Chief Minister of Karnataka, Deve Gowda was selected to lead the 13 party United Front coalition and he took office as Prime Minister in May 1996. He was forced to resign as Prime Minister in April 1997 after Congress (I) withdrew its parliamentary support for the Government.

### **INDIRA GANDHI**

Daughter of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. She became Prime Minister in 1966 leading the Congress government and held office until she was defeated in the 1977 general election. She resumed office in 1980. She was assassinated in October 1984 by Sikh members of her personal guard in retaliation for the Indian Army's storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar earlier that year.

### **RAJIV GANDHI**

Son of Indira. He entered politics after the death of his brother Sanjay in an air crash in 1980. He was elected to his brother's constituency in 1981 and became a General Secretary of Congress (I) in 1983. He was sworn in as Prime Minister in October 1984 immediately after his mother's



assassination. He led the Congress party to a decisive election victory in December 1984, but was defeated in the next elections in November 1989. On 21 May 1991 after the first day of voting in the general election, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by members of the Sri Lankan Tamil separatist group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), while campaigning in Tamil Nadu.

### **SONIA GANDHI**

Italian born widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. She refused to become involved in politics after her husband's assassination, but was a leading figure in the Congress (I)'s 1998 general election campaign and was credited with being responsible for the party's better than expected tally of seats. She became president of Congress (I) in March 1998. She attempted, but failed, to form a Congress led government following the collapse of the BJP led government in April 1999.

### **INDER KUMAR GUJRAL**

Minister of External Affairs in the United Front Government, Gujral became Prime Minister on 22 April 1997, after Congress (I) reinstated its support for the UF Government providing that the former Prime Minister, Deve Gowda, was replaced. Gujral and the UF Government resigned in December 1997, when Congress (I) withdrew its support for the Government.

### **JAYARAM JAYALALITHA**

General Secretary of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, a Tamil Nadu party. She used to be a film actress and was Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from 1991 to 1996, but her party was heavily defeated on grounds of large-scale corruption.

The AIADMK was the largest party after the BJP in the government coalition, but the government came under growing pressure from Jayalalitha, who made a number of demands of the BJP in return for her continued support. These included the dismissal of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu. In April 1999, she withdrew support from the BJP led government, which lost a vote of confidence in parliament.

In February 2000, Jayalalitha was found guilty of corruption and sentenced to a year in prison. This was then suspended on appeal, but the threat of jail resurfaced in October 2000 when she was held to be guilty in two corruption cases.

### **KOCHERIL RAMAN NARAYANAN**

Elected President of India in July 1997, the first Dalit President. Served as Vice-President 1992-97.

### **BEANT SINGH**

Took office as Chief Minister of Punjab following the state elections of February 1992. His government pursued a counter-insurgency policy which saw normality return to Punjab. He was assassinated in August 1995 in a car bomb explosion. Babbar Khalsa claimed responsibility.

### **ATAL BEHARI VAJPAYEE**

Prime Minister of India. The Bharatiya Janata Party emerged as the largest party in the Lok Sabha after the 1998 general election and he was appointed Prime Minister on 15 March 1998. His coalition government lost a vote of confidence in April 1999 and the government resigned.

Vajpayee was re-elected to office at the head of a BJP-led coalition in the general election held in September/October 1999.

Vajpayee had previously been appointed Prime Minister in May 1996 after the BJP emerged as the largest single party in the Indian Parliament after the 1996 general election. He resigned as Prime Minister on 28 May 1996 in anticipation of his government's inevitable defeat in a vote of confidence.

**ANNEX C: CHRONOLOGY** (Sources: [1] & [4b] unless otherwise stated)

**1947**

15 August: Indian gains independence as a Dominion within the Commonwealth, with Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General and Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister.

**1950**

26 January: India becomes a republic.

**1962**

Border dispute with China escalates into brief military conflict.

**1964**

Death of Nehru. Succeeded as Prime Minister by Lal Bahadur Shastri.

**1965**

Second war with Pakistan over Kashmir.

**1966**

Death of Shastri. Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi becomes Prime Minister.

**1971**

Third war with Pakistan over Kashmir. The Indian Army occupies East Pakistan, which India recognises as Bangladesh.

**1972**

Mrs Gandhi and President Bhutto of Pakistan meet in Simla and agree that their respective forces should respect the cease-fire line in Kashmir.

**1975**

Mrs Gandhi declares a state of emergency after she is accused of election fraud.

**1977**

General election: the Janata Party wins and Morarji Desai becomes Prime Minister.

**1978**

Indira Gandhi becomes leader of a new breakaway political group, the Congress (I).

**1979**

Resignation of Desai's government. Charan Singh becomes Prime Minister at the head of a Lok Dal and Congress coalition, which collapses 24 days later.

**1980**

General election: Congress (I) wins and Mrs Gandhi becomes Prime Minister.

**1982**

Giani Zail Singh elected Indian President, the first Sikh to hold the position.

## **1983**

October: Following unrest in Punjab, the state is brought under President's Rule.

## **1984**

19 March: The All India Sikh Student Federation is banned. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale establishes a terrorist stronghold inside the Golden Temple in Amritsar. In June Operation Blue Star is launched as the army storm the temple.

31 October: Indira Gandhi is assassinated by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Anti-Sikh riots break out. Indira's son, Rajiv Gandhi is appointed Prime Minister.

December: Congress (I) win the general election with an overwhelming victory.

## **1985**

11 April: the ban on the AISSF is lifted.

September: The Akali Dal win elections to the Punjab State Assembly and President's Rule is lifted.

## **1987**

The Congress Government encounter political setbacks including defeats in state elections, an open dispute between the Prime Minister and the President, and accusations of corruption and financial irregularities against senior Congress figures, including the Bofors affair.

11 May: The Punjab State Assembly is suspended and President's Rule is imposed.

October: Formation of the Jan Morcha by V P Singh and other Congress (I) dissidents.

## **1988**

May: Operation Black Thunder - Punjab police and Indian paramilitary forces besiege the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Formation of Janata Dal to oppose Congress at forthcoming elections.

## **1989**

November: general election in which Congress loses its majority. V P Singh is appointed Prime Minister of a National Front coalition with the support of the BJP.

## **1990**

October: The BJP withdraws support for the government, following the arrest of the BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani as he led a procession of Hindus to Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh to begin the construction of a temple on the site of an ancient mosque. Clashes between police and crowds and Hindu extremists storm and damage the mosque.

November: Chandra Shekhar forms his own dissident faction called the Janata Dal (S). The Government loses a vote of confidence in Parliament and V P Singh resigns. Chandra Shekhar appointed Prime Minister at the head of a minority government with Congress (I) support.

## **1991**

March: Chandra Shekhar resigns as Prime Minister

May: General election held, but on 21 May, after the first day's polling, Rajiv Gandhi is assassinated by members of the Sri Lankan militant group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Congress emerges as the largest party and forms a government with P V Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister.

## **1992**

February: State Assembly elections in Punjab won by Congress (I), but there is a low turn out of the electorate. President's Rule lifted. Municipal elections held in September with a greatly increased turnout.

The Congress candidate, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma is elected President of India.

6 December: demolition of the Babri Masjid, the ancient mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, by Hindu mobs. This sparks off widespread communal violence throughout India with Mumbai (Bombay) one of the worst affected areas. BJP leaders arrested, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister resigns and the state is placed under President's Rule, as were three other states also under BJP control. Five communal organisations are also banned.

## **1993**

January: Resurgence of communal violence in Mumbai and in Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

February: Thousands of BJP activists are arrested throughout India to prevent a mass rally taking place in New Delhi.

March: Bomb explosions in Mumbai.

## **1995**

31 August: Assassination of the Chief Minister of Punjab, Beant Singh. Babbar Khalsa claim responsibility. Harchan Singh Brar appointed Chief Minister.

## **1996**

Accusations of corruption come to the fore with leading politicians allegedly receiving bribes from the industrialist Surendra Jain (Hawala scandal). The Prime Minister is also accused of involvement which he denied.

April/May: General election. No party gains an overall majority, but the BJP emerge as the largest party. On 15 May Atal Behari Vajpayee of the BJP forms a government, but resigns on 28 May. On 1 June H D Deve Gowda is appointed Prime Minister at the head of United Front coalition of 13 parties, supported by Congress (I).

## **1997**

30 March: Congress (I) withdraws support for the United Front Government. The crisis is resolved by the resignation of the Prime Minister, Deve Gowda, and the appointment of the External Affairs Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, as Prime Minister on 21 April.

July: K R Narayanan elected President of India, the country's first president from an "untouchable" caste.

November: Congress (I) demand the withdrawal of the DMK from the Government, following allegations of its involvement in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The Government refuses, and Congress withdraws its support.

4 December: Parliament dissolved. Gujral heads a caretaker government until the general election is held.

## **1998**

February/March: General election. No party wins a majority, but the BJP emerges as the largest party and Atal Behari Vajpayee forms a government in coalition with 17 other parties. The government wins a confidence vote on 28 March. [5b]

May: Tension rises between India and Pakistan as India conducts five underground nuclear tests, and Pakistan conducts six tests. [5c]

November: the BJP suffers defeats in the State elections in Delhi and Rajasthan, and fails to dislodge Congress (I) from control of Madhya Pradesh.

December: escalation of violence against the Christian minority in Gujarat.

## **1999**

April: The AIADMK withdraws support from the Government coalition, which resigns after losing a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha. The President dissolves Parliament and calls an election.

May-July: A serious escalation of the conflict with Pakistan in Kashmir occurred in May in response to the largest infiltration of Islamic guerrillas into the state in recent years. On 11 July India and Pakistan had agreed on a plan for the infiltrators to withdraw. [5d] & [8b]

September/October: General election. BJP re-elected under Vajpayee. [33a]

## **2000**

March: 36 Sikhs killed by unidentified gunmen in Chadisinghpooora, the first such attack on the Sikh community in Kashmir. [3i]

July-August: Militant group Hizbul Mujahedin announced a unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir but called it off after India refused to enter three-way peace talks with the Kashmiri leadership and Pakistan. Violence ensued during and immediately after the ceasefire. [32x], [32y], [32z] & [33f]

November: The Indian government announced a unilateral ceasefire barring Indian forces from offensive operations against Muslim separatists in Kashmir. Extensions of the ceasefire were made a month at a time, before a three month extension to the end of May 2001. Militant groups rejected the ceasefire. [38f]

## **2001**

May: The ceasefire in Kashmir announced in November 2000 by the government is ended as some 1,200 people had died during its period of operation. [5g]

July: Talks between India and Pakistan fail after the two countries fail to reach an agreement over Kashmir. [15d]

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