

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

Is there information/evidence that members of Bajrang Dal (BD) in Gujrat are now targeted/attacked (for that reason alone rather than, for example, suspicion of an individual's involvement in specific attacks on Muslims as in February 2002) by:

1. BJP
2. Congress
3. Muslim fundamentalists or
4. the police ?

RESPONSE

Is there information/evidence that members of Bajrang Dal (BD) in Gujrat are now targeted/attacked (for that reason alone rather than, for example, suspicion of an individual's involvement in specific attacks on Muslims as in Feb 2002) by (i) the BJP, (ii) the Congress Party, (iii) Muslim fundamentalists or (iv) the police?

Information was not found in the sources consulted to suggest that members of the Bajarang Dal (BD) in Gujarat are now targeted or attacked, for that reason alone, by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Congress Party, Muslim fundamentalists or the police.

The following may be noted:

- The Bajarang Dal (BD) is the youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and is part of the “family” (*parivar*) of organisations that promotes the ideology of *Hindutva* (Hindu-ness). Headed by the the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), that family, which is known as the *sangh parivar*, is comprised by a host of political and politico-religious organisations. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is among them, is the political flagship of the family (‘Sangh Parivar’ 2005, Wikipedia website,

26 August http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sangh_Parivar – Accessed 21 September 2005 – Attachment 1; ‘Bajrang Dal’ 2005, Wikipedia website, 26 August http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bajrang_Dal – Accessed 21 September 2005 – Attachment 2).

- The Hindu nationalist movement is particularly strong in Gujarat, where the VHP and BD are reported to have established “a firm foothold” and strongly suggested links with the police (Srivastava, S. 2002, ‘Analysis: Why is Gujarat so violent?’, *BBC News* online, 25 September http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1856049.stm – Accessed 20 September 2005 – Attachment 3; ‘Impunity in the Aftermath’ 2002, Human Rights Watch website <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/india/India0402-06.htm> – Accessed 26 September 2005 – Attachment 4).
- While reports were not found to suggest that members of the Bajrang Dal (BD) in Gujarat are now targeted or attacked, for that reason alone, by Muslim fundamentalists, a report, dated 20 January 2003, indicates that a former leader of the BD “was stoned to death” by local Muslims in a Gujarati city over “personal rivalry” (‘Former Bajrang leader killed’ 2003, *The Telegraph* online edition, 20 January http://www.telegraphindia.com/1030120/asp/nation/story_1590311.asp – Accessed 19 September 2005 – Attachment 5).
- It may be relevant to note that relations between the BJP and its “family” have soured over recent years owing to the party’s alleged “dilution of *hindutva*”. Recent media reports indicate that the relationship between the two groups has been particularly sour in Gujarat over that and other issues, and that it has led to active dissent from the VHP and reports of violence between their members on at least one occasion in Ahmedabad. On that occasion, VHP/BD activists attacked members of the BJP at a demonstration aimed at BJP President, LK Advani, for statements he made during a trip to Pakistan “praising Pakistan’s founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah” (‘VHP-BJP activists clash over celebrations’ 2005, *Yahoo News*, sourced from *Indo-Asian News Service*, 7 June <http://in.news.yahoo.com/050607/43/5yv4t.html> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 6; Vyas, N. 2004, ‘RSS blames it on “dilution of Hindutva”’, *The Hindu* online edition, 15 May <http://www.hindu.com/2004/05/15/stories/2004051507320300.htm> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 7; Rawat, B. 2005, ‘VHP invites Cong leader to sting BJP’, *The Telegraph* online edition, 23 August http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050823/asp/nation/story_5145046.asp – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 8; ‘VHP gives one-year mandir deadline’ 2004, *The Economic Times* online edition, 1 July <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/760196.cms> – Accessed 20 September 2005 – Attachment 16).
- Under pressure from hardline elements within the family for these comments, Advani was subsequently forced to resign from his position as president of the BJP. Media reports indicate that he will formally step down from the position in December 2005 (‘Advani to step down as BJP leader’ 2005, *BBC News* online, 18 September http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4257522.stm – Accessed 23 September 2005 – Attachment 9)

- The fallout over Advani’s statements reverberated in Gujarat where Narendra Modi, the state’s BJP Chief Minister, also came under fire from the VHP for “diluting hindutva”, “supporting Jinnah and questioning Akhand Bharat [eternal India]” after publicly supporting the beleaguered BJP President (‘VHP fires another salvo at Modi’ 2005, *The Deccan Herald* online edition, 20 August <http://www.deccanherald.com/deccanherald/aug202005/index203312005819.asp> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 10; ‘Rawat, B. 2005, ‘Modi turn not far off, chuckles rebels’, *The Telegraph* online edition, 19 September <http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050919/asp/others/print.html> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 11).
- Media reports indicate that the Chief Minister had already come under fire from the VHP in Gujarat following “the revival of 2002 riot related cases against VHP workers” (‘Advani’s shielding of Modi upsets RSS’ 2005, *The Business Standard* online edition, 25 August <http://www.business-standard.com/common/storypage.php?storyflag=y&leftnm=lmnu2&leftindx=2&lselect=1&chklogin=N&autono=198290> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 12)
- Interestingly, media reports also note that the Chief Minister was facing dissent from other elements within the BJP for his “autocratic style of functioning and his failure to control the riots in Gujarat in 2002” (‘Rawat, B. 2005, ‘Modi turn not far off, chuckles rebels’, *The Telegraph* online edition, 19 September <http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050919/asp/others/print.html> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 11; Misra, S and Satyanarayanan, S 2005, ‘Gujarat rebels serve ultimatum—Seek Removal of Modi’, *The Tribune* online edition, 28 August <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20050828/main1.htm> – Accessed 22 September 2005 – Attachment 13)
- Notwithstanding what has been said of the relationship between hard and soft line elements within the family of Hindu nationalist organisations, it may be relevant to note that membership within that family is nonetheless characterised by a high degree of fluidity; and that prominent members of the BD have left the organisation and joined the BJP without incident. Examples include former BD presidents, Vinay Katiya and Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya, who were both elected to India’s national parliament (*Lok Sabha*) as members of the party (‘Vinay Katiya’ 2005, Wikipedia website, 20 September http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinay_Katiyar – Accessed 21 September 2005 – Attachment 14; ‘Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya’ 2005, Wikipedia website, 26 August http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaibhan_Singh_Pawaiya – Accessed 21 September 2005 – Attachment 15).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Google search engine

UNHCR *REFWORLD* UNHCR Refugee Information Online

Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)

RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Sangh Parivar' 2005, Wikipedia website, 26 August.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sangh_Parivar – Accessed 21 September 2005)
2. 'Bajrang Dal' 2005, Wikipedia website, 26 August.
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(http://www.telegraphindia.com/1050823/asp/nation/story_5145046.asp – Accessed 22 September 2005)
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13. Misra, S and Satyanarayanan, S 2005, 'Gujarat rebels serve ultimatum—Seek Removal of Modi', *The Tribune* online edition, 28 August (<http://www.tribuneindia.com/2005/20050828/main1.htm> – Accessed 22 September 2005)
14. 'Vinay Katiya' 2005, Wikipedia website, 20 September. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vinay_Katiyar – Accessed 21 September 2005)
15. 'Jaibhan Singh Pawaiya' 2005, Wikipedia website, 26 August. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaibhan_Singh_Pawaiya – Accessed 21 September 2005)
16. 'VHP gives one-year mandir deadline' 2004, *The Economic Times* online edition, 1 July. (<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/760196.cms> – Accessed 20 September 2005)