



Pakistan: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland 31 March 2009

Information on the treatment of lower caste members

Section 6c of the *United States Department of State 2008 Human Rights Report for Pakistan*, under the heading 'Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor', states:

"A Freedom House report from January noted that bonded laborers sometimes sell their organs, particularly their kidneys, to escape servitude. According to the UN's Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation conducted a survey in Punjab released in July 2007 noting that 93 percent of kidney vendors needed the money to repay debts and 69 percent of vendors were bonded laborers. There were continued reports of kidney sales after the introduction of the Human Organs and Tissues Transplant Ordinance, which banned the practice in September 2007.

A large proportion of bonded laborers were low caste Hindus, or Muslim and Christian descendants of low caste Hindus." (United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor) (25 February 2009) – *Pakistan: 2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*)

Paragraph 20.02 of the *UK Home Office Country of Origin Information Report for Pakistan*, under the heading 'Ethnic Groups', states:

"The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN), a network of national solidarity groups for Dalit rights, based in Denmark, reported on a workshop that took place on 3 June 2007 on "Caste-based discrimination in Pakistan". The report noted "It is estimated that about two million scheduled caste people are among the poorest of the poor and are discriminated against in day to day life. Scheduled caste communities include the Kolhi, Meghwar, Bheel, Balmiki, Oad, Jogi, Bagri and other communities." (United Kingdom Home Office (05 November 2008) – *Country of Origin Information Report : Pakistan*, p.86)

An *IRIN News* article from November 2006 states:

"According to figures reported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), there are at least 1.7 million such landless agricultural workers (haris) and sharecroppers in five districts of Sindh Province (Thatta, Dadu, Badin, Mirpurkhas and Umerkot). Most of them are held in debt bondage by landlords who still hold almost complete sway over many parts of rural Sindh.

In most cases, poverty stricken families have accepted cash advances from landlords to survive. In return, they are expected to be available to work, often for no wages, from morning to nightfall. Women and children form a part of the labour force. Apart from their work in the fields, many haris are made to work as unpaid domestic help. The bonded labourers include both Muslims and low-caste Hindus." (IRIN News (28 November 2006) – *PAKISTAN: Slave labour still common in Sindh*)

The September 2006 *United States Department of State International Religious Freedom Report for Pakistan*,

"Non-Muslims were officially 4 percent of the population, although their leaders claimed the actual figure was approximately 10 percent. Christians, officially numbered at 2.09 million, claimed to have 4 million members, 90 percent of whom lived in Punjab. The largest Christian denomination was the umbrella Protestant Church of Pakistan, a member of the Anglican Communion. Roman Catholics were the second-largest group, and the remainder belonged to various evangelical denominations. The Catholic diocese of Karachi estimated that 120 thousand Catholics lived in Karachi, 40 thousand in the rest of Sindh, and 5 thousand in Quetta, Balochistan. A few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh have converted to Christianity. Hindus were officially numbered at 2.44 million adherents, but their leaders claimed an actual membership of approximately 4 million. Most Hindus lived in Sindh, where they comprised approximately 8 percent of the population. Parsis, Sikhs, and Buddhists each had approximately 20 thousand adherents, while the Baha'i claimed 30 thousand. The tiny but influential Parsi community was concentrated in Karachi. Some tribes in Balochistan and NWFP practiced traditional animist religions." (United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor) (15 September 2006) – *Pakistan: International Religious Freedom Report 2006*)

The report goes on to say:

"While many Christians belonged to the poorest socioeconomic groups and faced discrimination, the reason might have more to do with ethnic and social factors than with religion. Many poor Christians remained in the profession of their low-caste Hindu ancestors, most of whom were "untouchables." Their position in society, although somewhat better than in the past, did not reflect major progress despite more than one hundred years of consistent missionary aid and development. Christian students reportedly were forced to eat at separate tables in public schools that are predominately Muslim." (ibid)

References:

IRIN News (28 November 2006) – *PAKISTAN: Slave labour still common in Sindh*

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=61817>

(Accessed 31 March 2009)

United Kingdom Home Office (05 November 2008) – *Country of Origin Information Report : Pakistan*, p.86)

http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html#countries

(Accessed 31 March 2009)

United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor) (25 February 2009) – *Pakistan: 2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/sca/119139.htm>

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United States Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor) (15 September 2006) - *Pakistan: International Religious Freedom Report 2006*

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=printdoc&docid=450fb0c22f>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

Amnesty International

BBC News

ECOI: European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House

Human Rights Watch

International Crisis Group (ICG)

IRB: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

IRIN News

Lexis Nexis

Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database

United Kingdom: Home Office

UNHCR Refworld

United States Department of State