

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

Please advise on the following

1. the activities of Muslims helping Dalits (whether through SIMI or otherwise) in Tamil Nadu until 2003;
2. the relationship between RSS / VHP groups and Muslims / SIMI in Tamil Nadu until 2003;
3. the activities of Muslims helping Dalits (whether through SIMI or otherwise) in Mumbai since 2003;
4. the relationship between RSS / VHP groups and Muslims / SIMI in Mumbai since 2003;
5. any reported incidents of violence / murders of Muslim activists in Mumbai since 2003 for social activities such as helping the Dalits (and whether such violence is likely to have been perpetrated by 'professionals' / hired people);
6. the conduct of authorities and police in responding to possible violence between RSS/VHP and Muslims (would this be different if the police were aware that the victim is a SIMI member?).

RESPONSE

Questions of different nature, but in relation to similar matters, were addressed by RRT Country Research in *Research Response IND16026* of 2 September 2003. This response is supplied as Attachment 19 (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IND16026*, 2 September – Attachment 19).

Please advise on the following

1. the activities of Muslims helping Dalits (whether through SIMI or otherwise) in Tamil Nadu until 2003;
2. the relationship between RSS / VHP groups and Muslims / SIMI in Tamil Nadu until 2003;

Muslim assistance to Dalit communities in Tamil Nadu has proven controversial for Hindu nationalist groups in India insofar as such help has often come in the form of encouraging and facilitating the conversion of Hindu Dalits to Islam. It has been claimed that the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) has played an integral role in orchestrating conversions of this kind through its alleged links with an organisation known as *Manitha Neethi Pasarai* (MNP; or the Human Justice Forum). In October 2004, the Tamil Nadu police accused the MNA of converting Dalits to Islam as a means of recruiting and training militant cadres for purpose of committing acts of terrorism; arresting fifteen MNA members in the Tamil Nadu Municipality of Nellikuppam. “According to the police sources, the MNP was said to be having a nationwide network and was suspected to have links with the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front of Yasin Malik and acted as a recruiting agency to beef up the terrorist forces in Jammu and Kashmir”. The MNA denied the charges and claimed that the Tamil Nadu Police had “become the watchdog of conversions”. According to the MNA the arrests had been made when a local dispute involving “the marriage of a converted Muslim girl” was mishandled by intervening police. The MNA further claimed that “cases filed by MNP against the police”, along with the MNP’s campaign “against BJP in the last Lok Saba elections”, had created police enmity towards them. At the time of the arrests *The Hindu* reported that the MNP was “suspected to be a resurrection of the proscribed Students Islamic Movement of India”, and that, according to the reports sources, “[t]he MNP was part of an institution, ‘Arivagam’ at Muthudevanpatti in Theni district, and had contacts with the Tamil Nadu Development Foundation Trust [the TNDFT] at Periyapet in Chennai. While the former was training cadres in combat tactics, the latter was teaching the tenets of Islam to the converts”. A more recent article, published in *The Indian Express*, has reported that the MNP’s M Gulam Mohammed, who founded the organisation, was also “a co-founder and former Tamil Nadu unit chief of SIMI”; claiming that “MNP, founded by a former SIMI leader, has trained over 2,500 converts in five years”. (For information on the 2004 arrest in Nellikuppam, see Rangunathan, A. V. 2004, ‘Fundamentalist outfit busted in Nellikuppam’, *The Hindu* online edition, 29 October <http://www.hindu.com/2004/10/29/stories/2004102908420100.htm> – Accessed 19 January 2006 – Attachment 1; see also: ‘JKLF recruiting outfit busted in TN’ 2004, *The Deccan Herald* online edition, 30 October <http://67.18.142.206/deccanherald/oct302004/n10.asp> - Accessed 20 January 2006 – Attachment 2; for the MNP’s response to the 2004 arrests and allegations, see: ‘Rejoinders: Manitha Neethi Pasarai’ 2005, *The Milli Gazette* website, 1-15 January <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2005/01-15Jan05-Print-Edition/011501200542.htm> – Accessed 21 January 2006 – Attachment 3; for alternative information on the incident involving the converted Muslim girl, see: ‘Arrests, arms seizure bring group under police scanner’ 2004, *The Hindu* online edition, 2 November <http://www.hindu.com/2004/11/02/stories/2004110209940400.htm> – Accessed 21 January 2006 – Attachment 4; for the recent *India Express* report, see: Menon, J. 2006, ‘TN, radical Islamic outfit’s latest recruits are fresh converts’, *Indian Express* website, 27 July <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/9401.html> – Accessed 23 August 2006 – Attachment 5.)

The conversion issue is closely tied to matters of sectarian violence and the rise of militant Hindu nationalism in Tamil Nadu and in India at large. The controversy led to a number of outbreaks of communal violence in the eighties and nineties and then, in 2002, to the institution of *The Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Ordinance* by the then ruling Tamil Nadu state government of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) (who had come to associate themselves with the Hindu nationalist movement). Subsequent electoral setbacks saw the AIADMK repeal the law in November 2004 and, when a number of Dalit conversions to Islam followed, militant Hindu nationalist

groups, and in particular the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founded Hindu Munnani organisation, threatened to forcefully intervene in order to prevent any future conversions. Even so, no reports could be located which would indicate that any outbreaks of communal violence have ensued against Muslims involved in Dalit relief and/or conversion (although, as is noted above, pressures have been applied to such movements through police arrests). (For information on the rise of the Hindu nationalist movement and the outbreaks of communal violence which occurred in response to the Dalit conversions to Islam in Tamil Nadu, see: Rajamohan, P.G. 2005, 'Tamil Nadu: The Rise of Islamist Fundamentalism', *Faultlines*, South Asia Terrorism Portal website, vol.16, 12 January, pp.129-130 <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume16/Article5.htm> – Accessed 24 August 2006 – Attachment 6; and: Karat, P. 1998, 'A grim warning', *Frontline* website, vol.15: no.5, 7-20 March <http://www.flonnet.com/fl1505/15050210.htm> – Accessed 23 March 2004 – Attachment 7; and also: DIMI Country Information Service 2003, *Country Issues Brief: The Political Situation and Hindu- Muslim Relations in the State of Tamil Nadu*, (sourced from Protection Decision Support Section advice, dated July 2003), 21 August – Attachment 8.)

An overview of the source materials which inform this summary follow below, grouped as information on the pre-2003 and post-2003 periods. For background information on SIMI, see *Research Response IND30143* which is supplied as Attachment 9; for background on the social and political situation of Dalits in Tamil Nadu, see Attachment 10 (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IND30143*, 15 May – Attachment 9; Nagaraj, K, 2005, 'Dalit situation in Tamil Nadu' 2005, *The Hindu*, 23 August – Attachment 10).

Pre-2003: Muslim–Dalit issues in Tamil Nadu

A report published by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) in January 2005 provides historical information on the relationship between the Muslim conversion of Dalits, and the attacks of Hindu nationalist groups, in the context of its discussion of Islamist groups in Tamil Nadu.

The roots of communal tension in the State are generally believed to date back to the early 1980s, when more than 1,200 Dalits (the poorest and most oppressed in the Hindu caste system) of Meenakshipuram, a village in the Kanyakumari district, embraced Islam on February 19, 1981, and even changed their village name to 'Rehmatnagar'. Thereafter, there was a wave of conversions in many places, including Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram and Thanjavur districts, as also stray incidents of conversion or threat to conversion in some other districts such as Madurai, Madras (Chennai) and North Arcot as well. Conversion was generally seen as a means register protest by, and to uplift the social status of, the Dalits. The converted Dalits felt that the caste system in Hinduism was responsible for their low status, whereas Islam purportedly provided liberation from this stigma as it did not recognize social divisions on the basis of caste. Hindu activists wanted to stop these conversions and many national-level Hindu leaders visited the tiny hamlet of 'Rehmatnagar' and other areas affected by the conversions in order to 'bring back' the converted Dalits into their fold. It was these incidents of conversion and the Hindu response that are believed to have ignited tensions between the two main religious groups in Tamil Nadu.

Communal riots first broke out at Mandaikadu in the Kanyakumari district in March 1982, ironically between the Hindu and Christian communities, though again due to the alleged conversion activities undertaken by Christian missionaries. The growing religious tensions in Tamil Nadu had already manifested themselves in violence, when, in the first such recorded

incident, Islamist fundamentalists assaulted Tirukovilur Sundaram, a Hindu Munnani leader, at R. S. Puram in Coimbatore in 1981, after he was accused of delivering speeches against Islam and the Prophet Mohammed. Soon afterwards, radical elements of the Hindu Munnani are said to have publicly abused and reviled Islam. Within the Hindu community, a more radical element had crystallized with the formation of the Hindu Munnani in 1981 by Rama Gopalan, who had received training from the RSS. Much later, the Hindu Makkal Katchi (Hindu People's Party) formed in 1993 as an offshoot of the Hindu Munnani, also joined forces with the Hindu fundamentalists. Analysts observe that Islamist and Hindu fundamentalists were emboldened by each others' actions and repeatedly accused each other of wrongdoing in public meetings.

Meanwhile, during this period, the long surviving 'Tamil identity' was gradually being overrun by competing religious identities. The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (AIADMK) bid to secure more Hindu votes by curbing Islamist fundamentalist organizations and the DMK's strategy of appeasing the Muslims led to a further polarization in the State's political spectrum (Rajamohan, P.G. 2005, 'Tamil Nadu: The Rise of Islamist Fundamentalism', *Faultlines*, South Asia Terrorism Portal website, vol.16, 12 January, pp.129-130 <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume16/Article5.htm> – Accessed 24 August 2006 – Attachment 6).

A *Frontline* report of March 1998 provides further background on the manner in which "[t]he RSS set up the Hindu Munnani as its front for its political and communal activities in Tamil Nadu in 1980". The report notes the sectarian violence to which the Hindu nationalist movement has been a party, and the nexus of support which has formed between the RSS, the Hindu Munnani, the BJP, the Tamil Nadu Police and the ruling AIADMK. Some pertinent extracts follow:

For one-and-a-half decades now, the Hindu Munnani has been the platform of the RSS combine. As in many other urban industrial centres the pattern unfolded in a typical way. Religious processions were promoted – such as the Vinayaka Chaturthi procession, which was a new feature in Tamil Nadu. Just as the Ganesh Chaturthi processions in Maharashtra were used as a vehicle for communal mobilisation and propaganda against minorities, these processions sharply escalated tensions. Clashes took place even in Chennai as a result of such processions. (*Frontline*, October 22, 1993) Significantly, another front organisation set up by the RSS was the Tamil Nadu Hindu Merchants Association. This was used to rally Hindu merchants and to communalise commercial rivalries with Muslim traders.

Inflammatory propaganda from the Hindu Munnani platforms against the minorities and Islam soon led to a response. Muslim fundamentalist organisations, hitherto unheard of, sprang up to counter the RSS-sponsored activities. The Jihad Committee and Al-Umma were products of this communal competition.

In Coimbatore, in August 1989, a Hindu Munnani worker was killed; this was followed by another similar murder in September 1991. In retaliation a Muslim preacher was killed on the same day. After the demolition of the Babri Masjid, violence erupted in Muslim-dominated areas marking the emergence of Al-Umma. It was after the demolition of the Babri Masjid that Muslim fundamentalist organisations grew in the State. One of the retaliatory acts was the explosion in the RSS office in Chennai in 1993 in which 11 people were killed.

Coimbatore became a centre for the attacks and counter-attacks of the RSS-led Hindu Munnani and Hindu Makkal Katchi and Muslim fundamentalist organisations like Al-Umma and the Jihad Committee. After the murder of Palani Baba, the leader of the Jihad Committee, in January 1997, violence broke out in Coimbatore. This was a repetition of the events which

took place after the murder of the Hindu Munnani president Rajagopalan in 1993. Once again in September 1997, communal incidents took place.

The culmination of the series of incidents was the unprecedented violence which hit the city for three days between November 29 and December 1, 1997 – just three months back. It was sparked off by the cold-blooded murder of a traffic constable by some extremist Muslim youth. In retaliation, with the police in a state of revolt, three days of murder, arson and loot took place. Eighteen Muslims and two Hindus died. A shocking incident, which occurred in the city General Hospital, reveals the depths of dehumanisation and bestiality which have been injected by the communal poison. Muslims wounded in the riots who were brought to the hospital were waylaid by a mob of Hindu fanatics and three of them were lynched and burnt alive in front of watching policemen.

...The BJP's alliance with the AIADMK will provide it with further opportunities to spread the RSS ideology in the State (Karat, P. 1998, 'A grim warning', *Frontline* website, vol.15: no.5, 7-20 March <http://www.flonnet.com/fl1505/15050210.htm> – Accessed 23 March 2004 – Attachment 7).

In July 2003 DIMA's Protection Decision Support Section provided background advice on the political situation in Tamil Nadu; the relationship between the Hindu nationalist movement and the local authorities; and the treatment of Muslims. Some pertinent extracts follow:

The dominant parties in Tamil Nadu politics are the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), and its rival, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

... The DMK has been more willing to compromise to minority groups than the AIADMK, which probably led it to officially cut ties with the BJP in December 2002. On winning office in February 2002, the normally pro Congress AIADMK party allied itself with the BJP, and presided over the passing of the pro Hindu, Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Bill in October 2002.

...There are a number of small Muslim parties and political organisations in Tamil Nadu, with the largest being the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK). Members of these groups are little known outside their respective organisations. Al-Umma members have been convicted for a number of terrorist actions in the 1990s and late 1980s, and both it and the Jihad Committee were banned by the Tamil Nadu government on 14 February 1998. Al-Umma has attacked Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) – Hindu Munnani targets, although blame for recent violence is commonly ascribed to the Jihad committee.

...Muslims perceive the police to be biased against them. The AIADMK admits that the police have suffered from corruption and political interference its manifesto, and notes that much work remained to be done to restore public confidence in the police.

...The Muslim community views the AIADMK as less sympathetic to it than the DMK. However Muslims distrust both of the leading parties, on account of their links with the BJP, and because both are willing to accommodate Muslim interests only if it suits their immediate electoral objectives. Coimbatore is often a focus for such vote buying because a large Muslim minority live there.

Moreover, minority communities perceive that their members have often been unfairly targeted under the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and its successor POTA Act, and that Hindu politicians are seldom punished if they incite sectarian violence.

...Among the 23 organisations that were labeled terrorist in the POTA Act were the Student Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), Deendar Anjman, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Hizbul Mujahideen.

POTA's definition of terrorism is vague, for example, "terrorist" organisations need not have committed or participated in terrorist acts; it is enough that they are found to "encourage" terrorism or are "otherwise involved" in it or promote a loosely defined "terrorist ideology". "Sympathisers" of such organisations can be sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment whilst "members" are liable to be imprisoned for 10 years – whether they have engaged in any violent act or not. Those who raise funds can be sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. Under POTA, an officer of the rank of superintendent of police is empowered to extract confessions from an accused and present them as evidence of his terrorist connections. It is well known that torture is frequently used to extract confessions.

...Indianist Frank Fanselow argues that communalist violence originated in South India in the reaction to the conversion of some scheduled caste villagers to Islam. This happened in Meenakshipuram, Tamil Nadu in 1981 and was very controversial at the time. Communal violence against Muslims in South India had been rare as compared with the North prior to the 1980s.

...Several other articles note that incidents of Muslim extremism in Tamil Nadu have followed the rise of Hindu communalism in India, often directly responding to religious clashes in other states. The anti conversion legislation that was passed in Tamil Nadu during October 2002 is seen as explicit discrimination against minority religions by members of those religions. Religious minorities feel increasingly threatened, as Hindu fundamentalist parties have obtained major electoral victories in recent years at state, as well as national level. Even the Congress party shows signs of succumbing to the pressure to support Hindu values in secular society (DIMI Country Information Service 2003, *Country Issues Brief: The Political Situation and Hindu- Muslim Relations in the State of Tamil Nadu*, (sourced from Protection Decision Support Section advice, dated July 2003), 21 August – Attachment 8).

For further information on: sectarian violence in this period, claims that the Hindu Nationalist violence enjoyed the tacit support of the authorities and claims that the authorities targeted Muslim organisations through the powers of *The Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Ordinance*; see: *Research Response IND16591*, which is supplied as Attachment 11 (RRT Country Research 2004, *Research Response IND16591*, 29 March – Attachment 11).

Post-2003: Muslim–Dalit issues in Tamil Nadu

In November 2004 *The South Asia Times* reported that "[w]ithin few days after Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Ms. J. Jayalalithaa ordered the repeal of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion Act 2002, six Dalits have converted to Islam evoking strong protests from the state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Hindu Munnani". The report provides further information on the involvement of the TNDFT in organising the conversions and on militant reaction of the Hindu Munnani movement. Some pertinent extracts follow:

There are 12,000 panchayats in Tamil Nadu and the Hindu Munnai plans to recruit at least 1,50,000 youths to oppose religious conversions.

"They will keep an eye on Muslim clerics and Christian missionaries and resist them whenever they go to convert Hindus. Our men will oppose them in all forms even physically," he said.

Asked about possible communal clashes between two religious communities, Mr. Gopalan said, "It is they (Muslims and Christians) who are entering our (Hindu) villages and provoking. In case of riots and communal clashes it will be the responsibility of the respective religious leaders trying to convert and the state government, which is acting as a blind spectator."

According to reports reaching here, six Dalits, socially and economically backward classes among Hindus, converted to Islam at Melmandhai village in Thoothukudi district, 750 kms from here on May 23.

They said that they were embracing Islam to protest against the indignity they suffered being Hindus and to enhance their social status.

Unlike in Haryana where Dalits have been converting to Buddhism, in Tamil Nadu they are embracing either Islam or Christianity because of the strong presence of Muslim clerics and Christian missionaries in south India.

...A Chennai based organization, Tamil Nadu Development Foundation Trust, will organize a formal conversion ceremony shortly and many more Dalits are expected to convert on that day.

...Though Tamil Nadu government officials who visited the village said that they did not find any evidence of "forcible conversions", the Hindu Munnani is up in arms against the Jayalaitaa government for revoking the law banning religious conversions.

The BJP and the Hindu Munnani have decided to organize a statewide agitation on June 14 demanding the ban on conversions be re-imposed.

Mr. Gopalan said that in most cases the poor Dalits were lured with false promises of jobs in Saudi Arabia and that they would be made rich if they became Muslims.

He alleged, "A lot of money is being pumped in to Tamil Nadu from abroad to convert poor Hindus into Muslims and Christians. We cannot be mere spectators. We have to take retaliatory step failing which this will turn into a national security problem."

Mr. Gopalan demanded to know why Christian missionaries did not dare to enter Muslim villages and try to convert or vice versa.

"Christian missionaries trying to convert Muslims will be butchered and they know this. We Hindus are passive and they take advantage of that. We are going to tolerate this no more," he threatened.

Religious conversions in Tamil Nadu have been going on in large numbers over the last few decades.

When around 300 Dalit families at Meenakshipuram in another southern district of Tirunelveli, adjoining Thoothokudi embraced Islam in 1980 a hue and cry was raised throughout the country. It was alleged that they were allured with money and material benefits to convert (Sharma, A. 'Controversy over Dalit religious conversions in Ta [sic]', *The South Asia Times* online edition, November <http://www.southasiatimes.com.au/newsprint64.aspx> – Accessed 19 January 2006 – Attachment 12).

A January 2005 report provides information which suggests that Muslim relief work operations for Dalits have engendered enmity on the part of local Hindu communities in Tamil Nadu:

CHENNAI/CUDDALORE: The aftermath of the tsunami in Tamil Nadu has thrown up some touching examples of communal amity, but it has also revealed how deep caste antagonism runs.

Travelling across the affected areas, one regularly hears of examples of communal amity. One example that keeps cropping up in conversation with NGO activists working in the area is of the Jamaath, a Muslim organisation, which has been running four relief camps in the Parangipettai area of Cuddalore district.

The overwhelming majority of the victims are non-Muslims but that has not prevented the Jamaath from giving them three meals a day for over three days. Considering there are an estimated 40,000 people in these camps, that's quite an achievement.

The same NGO activists also tell stories which are depressing, stories of how Dalits are losing out in the relief effort. Some claim they have come across cases where others have prevented Dalits from entering relief camps.

I did not personally come across any such case, but I did hear fisherwomen in several places talking dismissively of the food being provided by relief workers as "stuff that may be good enough for some of the others, but is beneath our dignity to eat". The veiled reference to the Dalits is hard to miss (Raghuraman, S. 2005, 'Caste antagonism in providing relief?', *Times of India*, 2 January – Attachment 13).

Research dealing specifically with the activities of the TNDFT was recently completed in February 2006 and is supplied as Attachment 14 (RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IND17769*, 2 February – Attachment 14).

Elections were recently held in Tamil Nadu, in May 2006, and the result saw the AIADMK swept from office by the DMK-led Democratic Progressive Alliance (which "includes the Congress, Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), CPI, CPI (M) and the Indian Union Muslim League") ('TN polls 'peaceful'' 2006, *The Hindu Business Line* website, 8 May <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2006/05/09/stories/2006050903541900.htm> – Accessed 24 August 2006 – Attachment 15).

3. the activities of Muslims helping Dalits (whether through SIMI or otherwise) in Mumbai since 2003;

No information on Muslim programs of assistance for Dalits in Mumbai could be located for this period. Reports referring to reactions against the Muslim conversion of Dalit to Islam were similarly not locatable. Nonetheless, reports indicate that the conversion issue – along with the matter of the Muslim-Dalit identity and its status in regard to the issue of scheduled castes – has been a significant feature of Hindu nationalist discourse in Maharashtra state in this period. Campaigns staged by Muslim and Christian Dalits seeking the right to apply for scheduled caste status in Maharashtra have been the subject of counter-campaigns by the Hindu nationalist movement; and the "BJP [has] insisted that Muslim and Christian Dalits embrace Hinduism again in order to qualify for reservation benefits". In 2003 the BJP attempted to conduct mass re-conversion rallies in areas of Maharashtra where Dalits had converted to Christianity. Christian advocacy groups have sought to draw international attention to the manner in which the Hindu nationalist movement in Maharashtra has agitated

against missionary initiatives with Dalits. Christian groups have also taken issue with Maharashtra's Indian National Congress Party (INC; or Congress (I); or, simply, Congress) and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) coalition government for mooted legislation which, it is claimed, would serve as "fresh measures against [the] conversion activities of missionaries in the state". (For information on the counter-campaign against Muslim and Christian Dalits, see: 'India's Christian & Muslim "untouchables" continue rights quest' 2003, *BP News*, source: *Baptist Press*, 31 December <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=17370> – Accessed 23 August 2006 – Attachment 27; see also: Nair, M.R. 2006, 'VHP heckles speakers at TISS meet', *Mumbai Mirror*, 25 August – <http://www.mumbaimirror.com> Accessed 25 August 2006 – Attachment 29; for further background on the matter of the Muslim-Dalit identity and the campaign for the right of Dalit converts to Islam to access reservation benefits for scheduled castes, see: Sikand, Y. 2001, 'A New Indian Muslim Agenda: The Dalit Muslims', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp.287-296 – Attachment 28; for information on the claims of Christian advocacy groups, see: 'Conversion issue in Maharashtra upsets Christian bodies' 2005, World Wide Religious News website, 13 April <http://www.wwrn.org/article.php?idd=16452&sec=56&con=18> – Accessed 23 August 2006 – Attachment 30.)

4. the relationship between RSS / VHP groups and Muslims / SIMI in Mumbai since 2003;

The present relationship between Hindu nationalist groups and Muslims in Mumbai is relatively calm although communal violence along communal and political lines continues to occur. Early July saw significant rioting in the nearby Maharashtra city of Bhiwandi, where the construction of "a police station adjacent to a mosque and a graveyard" led first to the attempt of Muslim "demonstrators tried to pull down the station"; the "killing [of] three Muslims" by police fire; the subsequent lynching of "[t]wo policemen...by a mob"; and then "clashes between members of the Hindu right-wing party and workers of the [Muslim supported] Samajwadi Party". Mumbai has, in the past, seen much larger episodes of communal violence with major attacks on Muslim communities being orchestrated by the *Shiv Sena* party and associates of the Hindu nationalist movement. Police complicity in such violence has also been a problem in previous times. In recent months, there have been reports that the July 2006 Mumbai bombings have created a heightened sense of unease in the city. Widely voiced suspicions that the bombings may have been the work of a militant Islamist group (SIMI is itself one of a number of groups suspected of having caused the blasts) have caused Muslim communities much concern, and there have been reports of some police sweeps through Muslim suburbs as there were in the aftermath of the March 1993 bombings. Research on the present Muslim unease in Mumbai was recently completed and is available in *Research Response IND30381* which is supplied as Attachment 16 (see under Question 1 and Question 5). *Research Response IND30381* also provides information on anti-Muslim violence in Mumbai and the involvement of Hindu nationalist forces (see Question 4 and Question 5). Information on the relationship between these forces and the local police is also provided (see Question 2). (For information on the recent outbreak of political violence along communal lines in Bhiwandi, see Kumar, A. 2006, 'Terror bombs cause mayhem on Mumbai's lifeline: Over 160 killed, 600 injured', *Dawn* website, 12 July <http://www.dawn.com/2006/07/12/top1.htm> – Accessed 9 August 2006 – Attachment 26; RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response IND30381*, 10 August – Attachment 16; for an example of the reports which have pointed to SIMI as the possible author of the recent

July 2005 bombings, see: Ramachandran, S. 2006, 'Mumbai attacks: A new spiral of violence', *Asia Times*, 13 July http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/HG13Df02.html – Accessed 8 August 2006 – Attachment 17; and: Chopra, A. 2006, 'Mumbai probe eyes local Muslim group', *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 July <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0719/p06s01-wosc.html> – Accessed 21 July 2006 – Attachment 18; see also: 'Soft handling of SIMI proves costly' 2006, *The Economic Times*, 13 July – Attachment 20; and: Huggler, J. 2006, 'Mumbai police arrest 350 in city-wide hunt for "the enemy within"', *The Independent*, 14 July – Attachment 24).

5. any reported incidents of violence / murders of Muslim activists in Mumbai since 2003 for social activities such as helping the Dalits (and whether such violence is likely to have been perpetrated by 'professionals' / hired people);

No information could be located which would indicate that professional killers have been employed in Mumbai to assassinate Muslims involved in providing assistance to Dalits. Nonetheless, groups associated with the Hindu nationalist movement in Mumbai, such as the *Shiv Sena*, are thought to be involved with violent criminal networks. Gerard Heuze's 2000 study of the *Shiv Sena* movement discusses the involvement of the party's cadres in security protection racketeering, and states that "the Shiv Sena became and remains involved to a very great extent in the installation and functioning of these criminal systems". (For information on the links between the *Shiv Sena* organisation and criminality, see: Heuze, G. 2000, 'Populism, religion and Nation in Contemporary India: the Evolution of the Shiv Sena', *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol.20: no.1, p13 – Attachment 22; see also: Seabrook, J. 1998, 'Very political crimes in Bombay', *Le Monde diplomatique* (English edition) website, June <http://mondediplo.com/1998/06/10india2> – Accessed 20 June 2006 – Attachment 21).

6. the conduct of authorities and police in responding to possible violence between RSS/VHP and Muslims (would this be different if the police were aware that the victim is a SIMI member?).

The relationship between the authorities and the police towards violence between Hindu nationalist movements and Muslim communities in Tamil Nadu and in Maharashtra is addressed above. In regard to the question of how security forces would treat a SIMI activist, it is likely that he would be arrested for membership of a proscribed terrorist organisation. Suspected SIMI activists have been regularly detained and/or arrested by the police throughout India since the group was first proscribed in 2001 and, in the aftermath of the recent Mumbai bombings, several persons with alleged links to SIMI have been detained by the police. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing it was reported that "Indian authorities [had] detained at least 200 people, most of them belonging to the banned Students Islamic Movement of India"; "sources said the suspects were rounded up by the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Maharashtra state government in overnight raids on places where SIMI activists were thought to congregate". On 5 August it was reported from Maharashtra that "Police [had] detained Ziauddin Ansari, a suspected Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) activist"; and that "Shabbir Ahmed Masiulla, a 32-year-old man from Malegaon in Maharashtra was questioned by the Mumbai Crime Branch here for his alleged links with the banned outfit SIMI". (For the recent arrests, see: 'Islamic student activists detained over Mumbai train

blasts' 2006, *Kyodo News*, 13 July – Attachment 25; and: 'Mumbai blasts: SIMI activist being interrogated in Patna' 2006, *Hindustan Times*, 5 August – Attachment 23; for previous arrests, see: 'Students Islamic Movement of India' 2005, South Asia Terrorism Portal <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/terroristoutfits/simi.htm> – Accessed 9 May 2006 – Attachment 18.)

List of Sources Consulted

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIMA Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

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