

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Keywords: India – Kerala – Tabligh Jamaat – Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) – Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – Abdul Nasser Madani – BJP – UAE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide background on ‘Tablic jamath’(Tabligh Jamaat) with particular reference to Kerala if possible. How is the movement viewed by the authorities and by Hindu political/religious groups?**
- 2. Please provide information about the leadership structure of the ISS/PDP.**
- 3. Is there any indication that the authorities adversely targeted other members of the PDP after the arrest of Madani in 1998 and any indication that other members were imprisoned?**
- 4. Is there any indication that the PDP has been active among Muslim Indians working in the UAE?**
- 5. Please provide an update on the current level of activity of ISS and the PDP, and the current situation of Madani?**
- 6. Is there evidence that the PDP and its members are currently adversely targeted by the authorities, and/or by Hindu political or religious parties such as the BJP and RSS?**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide background on ‘Tablic jamath’ (Tabligh Jamaat) with particular reference to Kerala if possible. How is the movement viewed by the authorities and by Hindu political/religious groups?**

Two previous Research Responses have addressed the subject of the Tabligh Jamaat, although neither with reference to Kerala or Hindu political/religious groups. *RRT Research Response IND15980* from June 2003 provides information on the history of Jamaat-e Tabligh. According to the response, sources indicate that the Jamaat-e Tableegh is a transnational non-political organisation that promotes a revivalist approach to Islam.

Members of the organisation seek to promote adherence to a fundamental and austere practice of Islam amongst their fellow Muslims. It is closely associated with the Deobandi school of thought. This response also provides information regarding the debate over the status of the Tablighi Jamaat, with some sources suggesting that the organisation is a peaceful, purist Islamic proselytising group and others that it is a radical extremist group with links to terrorist activity. *MRT Research Response AUS33081* also addresses the debate over the militancy or otherwise of the Tablighi Jamaat, and provides sources backing both sides of the issue (RRT Country Information 2003, *RRT Research Response IND15980*, 6 June – Attachment 3; MRT Research & Information 2008, *MRT Research Response AUS33081*, 1 April – Attachment 4).

Little information was located regarding the operations of the Tablighi Jamaat in Kerala, or how the local authorities and Hindu political/religious groups view the organisation. However, several references to Tablighi Jamaat meetings in the area were located, one of which was held in Kerala, and the others in Uttar Pradesh, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The Uttar Pradesh report may be of interest because it states that Indian intelligence agencies will be watching the meeting. A May 2006 report in *The Hindu* newspaper states that a meeting of the Tablighi Jamaat was held at Warangode in Kerala. The report states that “hundreds of faithful ... are expected to attend the congregation” and provides the following description of the organisation:

The Tablighi Jamaat, a low-profile but transnational movement capable of commanding crowds second only to the annual Haj, was founded nearly 80 years ago by Maulana Mohammed Ilyas in Mewat, Haryana. Tabligh in Arabic means ‘to deliver (the message),’ and members of the movement claim that preaching of faith is a fundamental duty of a Muslim. The Tablighi Jamaat, which works to bring spiritual awakening to the Muslim world, underscores personal piety as a precondition for any effective Islamic activity in public life (‘Tablighi Jamaat meet begins today’ 2006, *The Hindu*, 24 May <http://www.hindu.com/2006/05/24/stories/2006052410130300.htm> – Accessed 23 April 2008 – Attachment 5).

Much larger-scale international “ijtjema” have been held recently in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, with “nearly two million people” meeting near Dhaka in January 2008, “seven or eight lakh” (hundred thousand) in Uttar Pradesh in December 2007 and “hundreds of thousands” at Raiwind in Pakistan in November 2007. A *Kuwait Times* report on the Bangladesh ijtjema describes Tablighi Jamaat as “a non-political group that urges people to follow Islam in their daily lives” and quotes the claims of an organiser of the event that “Muslims from at least one hundred countries had joined this year’s congregation”. A *Hindustan Times* report on the Uttar Pradesh meeting suggested that it will be “watched by the country’s intelligence agencies”. The report also notes that it will be “the largest ever such international gathering in India”, attended by “Tablighi Jamaat groups from Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and the UK”. A report in the *International Herald Tribune* notes that the Pakistan meeting proceeded without incident, despite the banning of meetings on such a scale by the Pakistani government. The report also notes that “the group, though it publicizes a benign strain of revivalist Islam and is held in esteem in many parts of the world, is suspected by Western intelligence agencies to be a recruiting ground for jihadists” (‘Millions gather for Bangladesh ‘ijtjema’ 2008, *Kuwait Times*, 26 January – Attachment 1; Aron, S. 2007, ‘Close watch on mega meet of Islamic preachers’, *Hindustan Times*, 26 December <http://www.hindustantimes.in/StoryPage/StoryPage.aspx?id=d01d7a7c-e1bf-4d47-a252-c090bee4744e> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 13; Perlez, J. 2007, ‘Pakistan allows

thousands in Muslim group to gather Event contradicts ban on large assemblies’, *International Herald Tribune*, 20 November – Attachment 2).

2. Please provide information about the leadership structure of the ISS/PDP.

RRT Research Response IND32058 of 18 July 2007 provides some information about the history, structure and leadership of the PDP (RRT Research & Information 2007, *RRT Research Response IND32058*, 18 July – Attachment 33).

3. Is there any indication that the authorities adversely targeted other members of the PDP after the arrest of Madani in 1998 and any indication that other members were imprisoned?

The 1998 bombings in Coimbatore, in connection with which Madani was arrested, are addressed in *RRT Research Response IND15565* of November 2002. The response notes that sources suggest that leaders and activists of three groups – Al Umma, the Jihad Committee and Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazgham (TMMK) – were arrested, and no mention is made of PDP members other than Madani being arrested (RRT Country Research 2002, *RRT Research Response IND15565*, 20 November – Attachment 6).

No information was located indicating that authorities adversely targeted other members of the PDP in 1998 or that other members were imprisoned. Nonetheless, a March 2006 report from the Tamil Nadu-based website newstoday.net claimed that of the 166 people arrested in connection with the Coimbatore bombings, 11 were from Kerala, 149 from Tamil Nadu, and 6 from elsewhere. The report states that “the 800-page charge sheet filed by the Tamil Nadu police said the Al-Umma planned and executed the blasts and acts of related violence”. A 2007 *BBC News* report described Al Umma’s leader, S.A. Basha, as being the “mastermind” behind the bombings, and described Al Umma as “the banned radical Muslim group”. The report also notes that Madani was acquitted of all charges, and mentions no other PDP members (Sundaram, V. 2006, ‘An object of electoral worship’, newstoday.net website, 6 March <http://newstoday.net/2006sud/06mar/2003ss1.htm> – Accessed 23 April 2008 – Attachment 8; ‘Convictions over 1998 India bombs’ 2007, *BBC News*, 1 August http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6925924.stm – Accessed 23 April 2008 – Attachment 7).

4. Is there any indication that the PDP has been active among Muslim Indians working in the UAE?

This question was addressed in *RRT Research Response IND14975* of February 2002, which found no information to suggest any connection between the PDP and the UAE (RRT Country Research 2002, *RRT Research Response IND14975*, February – Attachment 12). No current sources were found in the course of this research indicating that the PDP has been active among Muslim Indians working in the UAE.

While no information was found on the PDP, information was found to indicate the work of activists in the UAE and Bahrain sympathetic to Madani. A March 2005 letter to the Prime Minister of India, printed in the Muslim news gazette *Milli Gazette* and submitted by a representative of the Keralite Forum for Civil Liberty, may be of interest because it carries an Abu Dhabi by-line. The letter “request[s] your immediate intervention to the illegal detention of Mr. Madani for seven years without bail and to repair the damages made to the aspirations

of people and to uplift the values of justice and spirit of democracy in the country". A February 2008 report on the *Thaindian News* website states that "Bahrain has threatened an organization raising funds for an Indian political activist with legal action if it continued with its activities". The report goes on to state that "the Anvarul Islam Cultural Forum (AICF) Bahrain Chapter was formed "to spread awareness and promote charity activities" of Abdul Nasir Maudany", and a representative of the Forum was quoted claiming that "we don't intend to politically support Maudany, but are in favour of his charity activities". A report on the *Yale Global* website notes the large number of workers from Kerala in the UAE, and claims that "remittances from workers in the Middle East account for more than 20 percent of the state's income" (Saleem N. 2005, 'Open letter to the Prime Minister', *The Milli Gazette*, 1-15 March <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2005/01-15Mar05-Print-Edition/011503200568a.htm> – Accessed 23 April 2008 – Attachment 11; 'Bahrain warns group supporting Maudany with legal action' 2008, *Thaindian News* website, 28 February http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/bahrain-warns-group-supporting-maudany-with-legal-action-2_10022144.html – Accessed 23 April 2008 – Attachment 10; Raymer, S. 2005, 'Dubai's Kerala Connection', *Yale Global*, 12 July <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=5992> – Accessed 23 April 2008 – Attachment 9).

5. Please provide an update on the current level of activity of ISS and the PDP, and the current situation of Madani?

Recent history of Madani and the PDP

The three sources following below indicate that the ISS "fizzled out" because it was banned by the Indian government in 1992, and, rather than disappearing, channeled its members to the PDP or the National Development Front (NDF). Madani was the leader of the ISS, and formed the PDP as a political organisation after its banning. There are diverging views on whether the arrest and incarceration without trial of Madani was warranted by his status as leader of a terrorist-aligned organisation or was the action of political forces that feared his political and social influence amongst Muslims and Dalits. Three articles, all published in July/August 2006 in the wake of Madani's influence on the Left Democratic Front (LDF) victory in the state election, attempt to position Madani and the PDP as factors in a rising terrorist threat in Kerala. The articles suggest that the PDP remained active and influential during Madani's imprisonment, and had a decisive effect on the 2006 state elections in Kerala.

A 6 August 2006 article on the RSS-aligned *Organiser* website positions Madani as "the notorious terrorist that preached fanaticism of the worst kind and is charged with masterminding 1998 Coimbatore serial blasts". The report notes a unanimous resolution passed by the Keralan Assembly prior to the election demanding Madani's release, after eight years without trial. The report attributes the passage of the motion to Madani's political influence, and that "all these parties were looking for Muslim votes that Mahdani controls in parts of Kerala". The report goes on to claim that the "LDF kept on wooing the terror mastermind" until the "PDP was won over and LDF won hands down in several Muslim-dominated constituencies thanks to the influence of Mahdani and PDP's well-oiled election machine" (Khosla, S. 2006, 'Terror mastermind is "secular" icon', *Organiser*, 6 August <http://www.organiser.org/dynamic/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=142&page=6> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 20).

A 25 July 2006 report on the *Indian Express* website also noted the wooing of Madani and the PDP by Congress and the CPI(M) in the lead-up to the 2006 election. It describes Madani as “a political idiom, a human rights symbol, and a significant tilter of fortunes in Kerala politics”, and the PDP as having “grown large enough not to worry any more about its congenital taint – it is the re-worked version of the Islamic Sevak Sangh, a barely concealed communal outfit that Mahdani ran before it was banned”. According to the report, “days before the Assembly poll in May, Mahdani broke his silence to send a statement from his cell exhorting his ranks to work for the Left – for the first time”. As a result, “the Left won comfortably in many Muslim pockets that it could never have dared to hope for earlier” (Pi, R. 2006, ‘Terror accused Mahdani most valuable ally for Left, Cong’, *Indian Express* website, 24 July <http://www.indianexpress.com/story/9248..html> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 21).

A 22 August 2006 report from the Institute of Defence Studies & Analyses titled ‘Is Kerala Emerging as India’s New Terror Hub?’ claims that:

fundamentalist elements in this region have gained a firm footing with more groups emerging in different roles in the past few years. After earlier groups like the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) and the Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) were banned in the 1990s, they re-emerged in new incarnations and have reportedly established linkages with other pan-Indian extremist groups (Kumar, A. 2006, ‘Is Kerala Emerging as India’s New Terror Hub?’, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses website, 22 August <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/VinodKumar220806.htm> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 22).

The report goes on to claim “possible infiltration by Pakistan’s ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence, the major Pakistani intelligence agency] among extremist groups in this region” and notes “the burning of Tamil Nadu transport buses by suspected ISS/PDP activists in retribution to the incarceration of Abdul Nasser Madhani in Salem Jail”. The following history of the ISS and PDP is provided:

Madhani ... floated the Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS) in the early 1990s and quickly rose as a fire-brand leader inspiring Muslim youth to resist the Hindutva forces. Though ISS was banned after the post-1992 upheaval, he floated a political party called the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), which aligned with the ruling Left Democratic Front in the recent assembly elections. Despite its political identity and limited activism after his arrest, police and intelligence agencies suspect PDP to be maintaining links with other pan-Islamic extremist groups (Kumar, A. 2006, ‘Is Kerala Emerging as India’s New Terror Hub?’, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses website, 22 August <http://www.idsa.in/publications/stratcomments/VinodKumar220806.htm> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 22).

This report also mentions the NDF as a source of potential communal violence, claiming that they “have allegedly masterminded communal violence in recent years” and that “the Kerala Police believes that this outfit, which masquerades as a human rights movement, is another re-incarnation of the ISS”.

Three dissenting articles, published between 2005 and 2007, claim that Madani has been the victim of political forces seeking to harness his personal influence, and that of the PDP, among Muslims and Dalits whilst keeping him safely incarcerated. A 21 May 2005 report in *Tehelka* asks, “what is so special about Abdul Nasar Madani, 39, president of Kerala’s People’s Democratic Party that someone should be so keen to keep him locked up?” The

report claims Madani “had built a bit reputation as dissenter and mocked the RSS by floating the Islamic Seva Sangh (ISS)”, and notes that “the ISS, though banned, has managed to tease and rankle the Hindu right”. The report summarises the political reasons for Madani being kept imprisoned in the following terms:

But nobody is touching him. Jayalalithaa’s government, it appears, has set itself on keeping Madani in Coimbatore. He once commented on the chief minister’s lavish lifestyle and she doesn’t take to that kindly. The Kerala government isn’t helping either. Until it was revised last week, its official position was Madani’s entry into Kerala would create a communal situation. The Hindu Munnani’s won’t. The Muslim League’s won’t. Madani’s will? Is he so big? Is that an acknowledgement of his prowess? It is easy to understand why the Munnani wants Madani in jail. But the Muslim League? Well, that’s easy too. Madani frightens them, just as well he is in jail. But then, is there something called the law too which is meant to be above all of this? (Thakur, S. 2005, ‘Abdul Nasar Madani: the law on trial’, *Tehelka*, 21 May http://www.tehelka.com/story_main12.asp?filename=Ne052105the_mirror.asp – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 23).

Another report in *Tehelka*, from July 2006, characterises Madani as “the magic wand the state’s rival alliances have been using to lure Muslim votes in elections and forget once the ballots are counted”. This report gives another short history of the disbanding of the ISS and the founding of the PDP, and the usefulness of Madani and his party to mainstream political forces in Kerala:

Soon after the Babri Masjid demolition, Madani disbanded the ISS and formed the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) to forge a broad Muslim-dalit-backward alliance and started fielding candidates in elections. His firebrand style captured Muslim votes. Madani’s rising career was watched by two tactful leaders: the Communist patriarch EMS Namboodiripad and Congress kingmaker K. Karunakaran. Both needed his help for sidelining the then mighty Muslim League and they used him. While EMS equated Madani with Mahatma Gandhi, Karunakaran allegedly prevented the police from stopping him from his communally sensitive speeches. But the Coimbatore blasts upset the political manoeuvrings of the two old horses (Gopikrishnan, J. 2006, ‘Kerala’s Fallguy: Anyone recognise this man?’, *Tehelka*, 8 July http://www.tehelka.com/story_main18.asp?filename=Ne070806Anyone_recognise.asp – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 24).

As a measure of the influence of Madani and the PDP in Keralan politics, the same report also notes that, in the 2006 election, “Madani’s photo was preferred over Karl Marx’s in the LDF election posters”.

A 2007 report sourced from the Countercurrents.org website also suggests that the imprisonment of Madani was politically motivated:

It was in 1993 that he founded People’s Democratic Party (PDP), an outfit consisting of backward communities like Muslims and Dalits. For the first time in the history of India, here was a man advocating “power to the untouchable”. Post-Babri demolition, Madani’s political party gained momentum in the context of reasons like the political degradation of parties representing Muslims, like Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), the rise of Hindutva forces and the sidelining of the marginalised sections including Muslims and Dalits. His fiery and articulate speeches on several burning issues annoyed the mainstream political parties, especially IUML, a party claiming to espouse the cause of Muslims.

He intervened on issues like the persecution of Muslims in places like Palakkad post-Babri demolition. One of his targets was the then north DGP Raman Srivastava – whose open call to

his subordinates “I want the dead bodies of Muslim bastards” ended up in the killing of an innocent 11-year-old girl in Palakkad at the height of the post-Babari demolition riots. The many issues that he took up were enough fodder for the extremist Hindutva forces to target him. He lost one of his legs in a bomb attack by the RSS. And the culprits of this crime are still at large (Firos, B. 2007, ‘Madhany: Victim of State Terror’, Countercurrents.org website, 28 April <http://www.countercurrents.org/firos280407.htm> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 25).

The same report states that “in Kerala, he is a hot favorite of both the Right and Left wings in their election campaigns. But no serious efforts were ever taken for his release”

Present situation of Madani and the PDP

A survey of contemporary sources indicates that Madani was found not guilty of involvement in the Coimbatore bombings due to lack of evidence and released from prison on 1 August 2007. Since then he has resumed his public role as leader of the PDP, a role he filled from jail during his nine years imprisonment. Recent reports, from late March 2008, suggest that Madani is attempting to position the PDP as a “third force” in Kerala politics (although he publicly denies this), holding “Social Justice meetings” on behalf of the “backwards, dalits and minorities”. This appears to be consistent with Madani’s claims since his release that he will “shun extremist politics” and “work to uplift Dalits and Muslims”, and that he is “a misunderstood Muslim”. A report from the NDTV.com website suggests that Madani is attempting to carve out political space for himself in a changed political environment, in which “Madhani has become some sort of a living martyr for a sizeable section of Muslims in Kerala”. The report also quotes Madani claiming that “he had nothing to do with Muslim extremist outfits like the NDF”. Madani continued this theme in a January 2008 interview in the *Arab News*, which describes him as a “human rights activist” working “to spread the peaceful message of Islam, strengthening Muslim unity, promoting communal harmony and enhancing the welfare of the whole humanity”. Nonetheless, he “voiced his concern over Hindu extremists gaining ground in India” and the need “to draw a strategy to stop the advance of the ... BJP”, warning that the BJP would attempt to trigger “communal riots” in Kerala for electoral advantage (for the release of Madani, see: Palaniappan, V. 2007, ‘Maudhany freed, Basha found guilty in Coimbatore blast case’, *The Hindu*, 2 August <http://www.hindu.com/2007/08/02/stories/2007080256180100.htm> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 14; and ‘PDP activists welcome Maudhany’s release’ 2007, *The Hindu*, 2 August <http://www.hindu.com/2007/08/02/stories/2007080258330600.htm> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 15; for the “social justice meeting”, see: ‘Social Justice meet not aimed at forging third front’ 2008, Keralanext.com website, 29 March <http://www.keralanext.com/news/?id=1203435> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 16; for Madani’s comments on his release, see: ‘I will shun extremist politics: Madhani’ 2007, *The Times of India*, 2 August <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/2250483.cms> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 17; and ‘Madhani set to form new front in Kerala’ 2007, NDTV.com website, 2 August <http://www.ndtv.com/convergence/ndtv/story.aspx?id=NEWEN20070021229> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 18; for the *Arab News* interview, see: Ghafour, P. 2008, ‘India’s Champion of the Oppressed Talks About Ways to Promote Harmony’, *Arab News*, 7 January <http://www.arabnews.com/?page=9§ion=0&article=105370&d=10&m=1&y=2008> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 19).

6. Is there evidence that the PDP and its members are currently adversely targeted by the authorities, and/or by Hindu political or religious parties such as the BJP and RSS?

No specific reports were located suggesting that the PDP and its members are targeted by the authorities. Several sources suggested that Madani and the PDP are consistently verbally attacked by the BJP and RSS, and some indication of the attitude of the BJP toward Madani and the PDP can be gleaned from their reaction to his acquittal of involvement in the Coimbatore bombings. A report on the Sahara Samay website, from August 2007, states that a senior BJP leader described Madani as “India’s Osama bin Laden” and claimed that “the UPA government and the state government have betrayed the country on this issue and have ‘surrendered before terrorism’”. An August 2007 report in *The Hindu* quoted a BJP spokesman demanding “that an appeal be filed against the verdict on the ‘biggest terror attack in south India.’”. A May 2006 report from the *Organiser* claims that the CPI(M) won the 2006 election by allying itself with “extremists”, including the PDP. The report claims that “the dangerous consequences of this electoral results are the CPM joining with jihadi forces like Madani’s PDP, Jamaat-e- Islami, Kanthapuram Musaliar of Sunni group to defeat Muslim League in its strongholds of North Kerala”.

The *Organiser* goes on to claim that:

the CPM has obtained Muslim votes by promising Madani’s release from Coimbatore jail. If that happens Kerala which is already under regular attack from jihadi terrorists will be in greater danger. In a tiny State where almost 55 per cent Hindus live with 45 per cent Muslims and Christians the effects of a communal confrontation will be unimaginable. The CPM is playing with fire, for temporary electoral benefits, not mindful of its inherent danger (Chandrasekhar, S. 2006, ‘CPM wins Kerala allying with extremists’, *Organiser*, 21 May <http://www.organiser.org/dynamic/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=131&page=3> – Accessed 28 April 2008 – Attachment 36).

A 2005 article in the Muslim-run *Milli Gazette* provides a different perspective, claiming that Hindu political and religious organisations have historically attempted to link Muslim groups in Kerala with Pakistan, and with terrorist activity. The report states that it is “the Sangh Parivar leaders who systematically raised this Pak bogey on different Muslim bodies and their leaders in Kerala”, despite the fact that “no tangible proof or convincing evidence was ever produced to substantiate this oft-repeated charge during the past half century”. The report also claims that evidence against Madani in the Coimbatore case was “elicited by coercion” and torture (‘BJP calls Madani ‘Osama bin Laden of India’ 2007, Sahara Samay website, 3 August <http://www.sahasamay.com/samayhtml/articles.aspx?newsid=81625> – Accessed 28 April 2008 – Attachment 34; ‘BJP demands appeal against Madani acquittal’ 2007, *The Hindu*, 1 August <http://hinduonnet.com/thehindu/holnus/001200708011927.htm> – Accessed 28 April 2008 – Attachment 35; Menon, M. 2005, ‘ISI paranoia on Kerala Muslims’, *The Milli Gazette Online*, 1-15 June <http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/2005/01-15June05-Print-Edition/011506200502.htm> – Accessed 28 April 2008 – Attachment 38).

In February 2007, *RRT Research Response IND31250* found that sources suggest that the BJP and RSS have been involved in violence against Kerala’s Christian and Muslim communities as part of its greater Hindu nation (Hinduvta) vision for India. Although no mention is made of the PDP, the response details a series of attacks on Christians and Muslims throughout 2004 and 2005. *RRT Research Response IND17161*, from 7 January 2005, provides information on conflict between Hindus and Muslims in Kerala, and on the increasing popularity of the RSS throughout Hindu-majority regions of the state (RRT Country Research

2007, *RRT Research Response IND31250*, 14 February – Attachment 26; RRT Country Research 2005, *RRT Research Response IND17161*, 7 January – Attachment 27).

RRT Research Response IND31446, of 19 March 2007, quoted sources indicating that violence has long been a feature of politics in Kerala, and has involved all political parties. Recently, much of the violence appears to have taken place between supporters of the CPI(M), the BJP and Congress. The response draws on a 2001 article quoting Sonia Gandhi, stating that “The Congress chief also reminded the people of the ‘danger’ posed by the RSS and BJP out to spread ‘animosity among people of different faiths by inflaming religious [sic] passion’”. The Response also quotes DFAT advice quoting a human rights activist from Kerala who states that “Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and other Hindu extremist groups have been weakened over the past few years and hence are no serious threat to the religious freedom of Christian and other non-Hindu communities” (RRT Country Research 2007, *RRT Research Response IND31446*, 19 March – Attachment 30; ‘LDF has turned Kerala into “cadre raj” – Sonia’ 2001, Press Trust of India, 5 May – Attachment 28; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2006, *DFAT Report No. 538 – India: RRT Information Request: IND30502*, 20 September – Attachment 29).

Sources indicate that recent politically-motivated violence in Kerala has taken place primarily between supporters of the BJP and CPI(M). A March 2008 report in the *Deccan Herald* quotes BJP and RSS sources claiming that the CPI(M) is murdering their members, and similar counterclaims from the CPI(M). The report notes that “the Kannur district of Kerala is witnessing clashes between the CPI-M and BJP-RSS workers and seven lives have been lost since Wednesday”. A report in *The Hindu*, also from March 2008, notes the Kannur violence and that “citing the Kerala High Court’s observation that Central intervention was needed to end the cycle of violence in Kannur, the BJP demanded the dismissal of the State government”. A March 2008 report in *India Today* provides an overview of the BJP-CPI(M) violence, while claiming that Kerala is “a state not known for the blood and gore variety of politics”. Nonetheless, the report goes on to note that “the offices and of both parties and even those of Congress are always ready for battle with stockpiles of country bombs, guns, swords and other ammunition” (‘BJP to raise Kannur issue in Parliament’ 2008, *Deccan Herald*, 9 March

<http://www.deccanherald.com/Content/Mar92008/national2008030956423.asp?section=updates&news> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 31; ‘Dismiss Kerala government, demands BJP’ 2008, *The Hindu*, 13 March

<http://www.hindu.com/2008/03/13/stories/2008031359581200.htm> – Accessed 24 April 2008 – Attachment 32; Radhakrishnan, M. 2008, ‘Old battle new ground’, *India Today*, 13 March http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&issueid=27&id=5770&Itemid=1§ionid=21 – Accessed 28 April 2008 – Attachment 37).

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Altavista <http://www.altavista.com/>

Ask.com <http://www.ask.com/>

Exalead <http://www.exalead.com/search>

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Staggeration Google API Proximity Search <http://www.staggeration.com/cgi-bin/gaps.cgi>

Yahoo <http://search.yahoo.com/>

Region specific sites

India Today website <http://indiatoday.digitaltoday.in/>

New Kerala.com website <http://www.newkerala.com/>

Sahara Samay website <http://www.sahasasamay.com/samayhtml/>

The Hindu website <http://hinduonnet.com/thehindu/>

The Milli Gazette website <http://www.milligazette.com/>

The Organiser website <http://www.organiser.org/dynamic/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

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

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. 'Millions gather for Bangladesh 'ijtema'' 2008, *Kuwait Times*, 26 January.
2. Perlez, J. 2007, 'Pakistan allows thousands in Muslim group to gather Event contradicts ban on large assemblies', *International Herald Tribune*, 20 November.
3. RRT Country Information 2003, *RRT Research Response IND15980*, 6 June.
4. MRT Research & Information 2008, *MRT Research Response AUS33081*, 1 April.
5. 'Tablighi Jamaat meet begins today' 2006, *The Hindu*, 24 May
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6. RRT Country Research 2002, *RRT Research Response IND15565*, 20 November.
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