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# PAKISTAN

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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION BULLETIN

1/2005

Home Office Science and Research Group

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE**

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.01 This Country of Origin Information Bulletin (COI Bulletin) has been produced by Research Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, from information about Pakistan obtained from a wide variety of recognised sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- 1.02 This COI Bulletin has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom
- 1.03 The COI Bulletin 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.
- 1.04 This COI Bulletin is intended to cover major developments that have taken place in Pakistan since publication of the Pakistan Country of Origin Information Report (COI Report) in October 2005 and must be read in conjunction with that. The COI Bulletin is intended to cover the South Asia earthquake that took place on 8 October 2005. It also gives information on the current human rights situation for Ahmadis based on reports published since 1 September 2005, the cut off date for information included in the October 2005 COI Report. The COI Bulletin only includes reports considered to be relevant to those involved in the asylum/human rights determination process
- 1.05 This COI Bulletin and the accompanying source material are publicly disclosable. Where sources identified in the COI Bulletin are available in electronic form the relevant link has been included. The date that the relevant link was accessed in preparing the COI Bulletin is also included. Paper copies of the sources have been distributed to nominated officers in Asylum Caseworking Directorate and all Presenting Officer Units.

## 2 South Asia earthquake

### Overview

- 2.01 Travel advice issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, updated on 17 October 2005, and still current as at 25 October 2005, reported that:

“A large earthquake on 8 October with its epicentre near Muzaffarabad in Azad Kashmir has caused widespread damage and loss of life. Infrastructure and services in northern Azad Kashmir and surrounding areas have been severely disrupted. The main devastation is in the towns of Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Bagh, Balakot and Mansehra. There have been some law and order problems as desperate people try to find the supplies they need, and see aid reaching others.

There is an intensive rescue and relief operation.” [1a] (p5)

- 2.02 A BBC News Overview of the earthquake, updated on 20 October 2005, stated that:

“Pakistan has confirmed 49,739 deaths, most of them in Pakistani-administered Kashmir. India says more than 1,400 have died in the sector it administers. Tens of thousands were injured and up to three million left homeless in the quake zone, the vast majority of them in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

The World Food Programme says some 500,000 people in remote areas have received no aid at all. One of the biggest problems is meeting the demand for tents that can provide shelter as the cold weather worsens. Fears are mounting of a second wave of deaths from untreated injuries and exposure.” [2a] (p1)

- 2.03 The Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reported that fresh tremors took place on Sunday 23 October 2005. Their article of 24 October 2005 noted that:

“The tremors, which measured 5.9 on the Richter scale, have been the most severe aftershocks still being felt almost every day since the massive earthquake that hit the region on 8 October, killing more than 50,000 people. Sunday’s tremors immediately created panic in many affected areas, including the villages scattered across the Allai administrative area of Battagram and the adjacent Shangla district...The death toll in the scattered settlements of the Shangla and Allai areas is still unclear. However, it is thought over 1,000 people died in the remote Allai area, in Battagram district and at least 289 in Shangla district. Over 500,000 people have been affected. Roads reaching many parts of the area are still to be opened and the first snows have already covered the hills around Allai in a thin coat of white.

On Monday, some relief workers were seen moving out of the area due to the threat from the aftershocks...Relief workers that have opted to stay in the area also fear the departure of a number of volunteers could affect relief operations. ‘The situation is very bad. People are still trapped in the mountains. They cannot get down and we must try and reach them. If doctors and other volunteers go away, it will take longer to provide them help,’ said Khizar Abbas, a volunteer doctor...The fresh tremors, difficult living conditions and biting cold are all helping to drive volunteers away...Not only volunteers, who have gone up to quake-devastated areas from Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Quetta and other Pakistani cities, but also many of the survivors, have begun making an exodus down the roads that lead south.” [3a]

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## Relief aid

- 2.04 In a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) article accessed on 25 October 2005, it was reported that, after the earthquake had struck:

“The UN refugee agency had stockpiles of life-saving supplies and operational capacity on the ground where it has worked for 25 years, caring for Afghan refugees. UNHCR immediately started distributing urgently needed tents and blankets from its Pakistan warehouses. Then, a massive airlift from UNHCR's global and regional stockpiles around the world got underway flying in urgently needed tents and shelter materials. On the ground aid workers struggled around the clock to overcome awesome logistical challenges. Funds from government and private donors have been dangerously slow to emerge... UNHCR committed most of its worldwide stock of tents – some 20,000 family tents in all – and began airlifting and trucking them into Pakistan, along with other vital items, including hundreds of thousands of blankets, from its regional and local stockpiles in Copenhagen, Amman, Dubai, Afghanistan, and within Pakistan itself. Then on 19 October, NATO planes began taking off from the Incirlik base in Turkey – the start of a huge airlift of around 10,000 tents, 104,000 blankets and 2,000 stoves – virtually the entire UNHCR stockpile in Turkey.

By the end of Week Two, UNHCR had also sent a number of trained emergency staff to bolster its existing team in Pakistan, and five emergency teams had been deployed across the earthquake zone.” [5]

- 2.05 On 25 October 2005, the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) further recorded that:

“The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pakistani health ministry have established an early warning and response network to identify and respond to outbreaks of disease in quake-ravaged areas of the country.

“It's up and running and routine data is slowly coming in,” Altaf Musani, emergency operations manager and a spokesman for the World Health Organization (WHO), told IRIN in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, noting as of Monday, there had been no reported outbreaks.

Working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH), the surveillance mechanism had been dispatched throughout the quake-affected area, Musani explained, with key locations at Balakot and Mansehra in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Muzaffarabad, Bagh and Rawalakot in Pakistan-administered Kashmir... The ministry has dispatched over 100 people with the support of WHO to provide services and continue assessments, with plans in the pipeline for another 200, including surveillance officers.” [3b]

- 2.06 An Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) News Summary, reporting on the Pakistan Government's website, stated on 18 October 2005 that:

“An international donors conference has been convened in Geneva on October 24 to assess Pakistan's needs for rehabilitation and reconstruction in the quake ravaged areas, a foreign office spokesperson said on Monday. The U.N. sponsored conference will look into the kind of funds Pakistan will need to rehabilitate and rebuild destructive areas spread over 28,000 kilometers including in Azad Kashmir and the NFWP [sic]. Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said the requirement would go far beyond an initial assessment of 5 billion dollars as the government was in touch both at the bilateral as well as multilateral level.

An internal meeting of the European Union next week was also do [sic] discuss Pakistan's reconstruction needs, she added. She said the damage assessment of the quake hit areas

was not yet over but recalled a last week statement [sic] by the U.N. Under Secretary General Jan Egeland, who estimated the loss to be in billions of dollars. The spokesperson said the death toll confirmed was over 40,000 and likely to rise. 'There are areas from where evacuation has not taken place but we hope for the best', she said but feared the number will rise.

The spokesperson said that [the] quake has destroyed infrastructure spread over 28,000 kilometers with 3.5 to 4 million people displaced." [4a] (p1)

The same article listed countries which had contributed to rescue efforts and medical aid/relief goods. [4a] (p1-2)

- 2.07 A later APP News Summary noted on 25 October 2005 that the "Government [of Pakistan] has established an authority to be called the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) for carrying out post-disaster damage assessment, reconstruction and rehabilitation of quake- affected areas." [4c] (p5-6) The News Summary also recorded that the:

"Federal Relief Commission and Earthquake Rehabilitation Authority [sic] were working in close coordination with all related agencies for the relief and rescue work as well as for reconstruction and rebuilding of the affected areas. The Prime Minister [Shaukat Aziz] appreciated the spirit of volunteerism shown by the people and international community to contribute into the government's efforts in the relief and rescue work. However, he said much more needs to be done and government and the people need to sustain this spirit." [4c] (p4)

- 2.08 The Pakistan Government's website also publicised the 'President's Relief Fund for Earthquake Victims – 2005', and gave details of how donations could be given to it. [4b]

- 2.09 On 28 October 2005, the BBC reported that:

"Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf has approved the release of more than \$30m for the reconstruction of homes destroyed by the 8 October earthquake. The money is to be divided between the two worst-affected areas, North-West Frontier Province and Pakistani-administered Kashmir. The UN says with winter looming, more than three million people in mountain villages lack food and shelter. More than 55,000 people died in the earthquake in Pakistan...Chairing the first meeting of the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority, President Musharraf expressed concern that some people in remote areas had not yet received any relief. He promised tents within two weeks for those without shelter to save them from the severe cold. But the UN has previously warned the world does not have sufficient supplies of the right kind of winter tents for the 800,000 people it estimates are without shelter. And time is fast running out before winter cuts remote mountainous areas off from possible help...On Thursday [27 October 2005], UN data revealed only 2% of \$95m needed for shelter and non-food supplies had been received and only 4% of \$58m for food." [2d]

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### 3 Ahmadis

#### **October 2005 gun attack at mosque**

- 3.01 As reported by a Public Statement issued by Amnesty International on 11 October 2005:

"The continued violence against the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan has again been illustrated in an attack on worshippers in a mosque in the village of Mong, near the town of

Mandi Behauddin in Punjab Province, on 7 October 2005. Eight people were killed and at least 18 injured in the attack. Police have reported that three masked men approached the mosque on a motorcycle before entering the mosque and firing on those gathered for Friday prayers. Witnesses report that the men then escaped on the motorcycle leaving eight dead and many people crying and covered in blood.” [6]

- 3.02 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) issued a Press Release on 7 October 2005 which noted:

“The most shocking aspect of the outrage at Moong is that, despite simmering tensions over the past 15 days or more, authorities failed to take any measures to calm the situation. Although numerous complaints were made by the Ahmadi community, no serious effort was made to prevent highly provocative material from being published in local newspapers. The Ahmadi place of worship was not protected, nor, according to reports received by HRCP, any attempt made to prevent clerics in the area from fanning hatred against the community.” [7]

- 3.03 However, on 7 October 2005, in an article headed ‘Rare attack on Pakistan Ahmadis’, the BBC reported that:

“The attack on an Ahmadiyya place of worship has taken most Pakistani observers by surprise - there was no build up to it as is the case in most instances of sectarian violence.

The Friday attack followed a long period of relative peace for the Ahmadis through most of the 1990s, despite pressure from what is known as the anti-Ahmadiyya movement...The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has recorded dozens of cases against them [Ahmadis] over the years.

However, it seemed that the anti-Ahmadiyya movement was satisfied with using the courts against them - the level of overt violence remained relatively low.

The last serious attack took place near the eastern Punjab town of Sialkot in October 2000, when gunmen stormed a mosque killing five worshippers and injuring many others...One recent indication that the anti-Ahmadiyya movement was rearing its head again came in August when 16 publications brought out by the Ahmadiyya Jamaat were banned.

But even so, few could have imagined that members of the community - now a small minority in Pakistan - would come under direct attack.” [2b]

- 3.04 In another article published on 7 October 2005, the BBC stated that “Human rights groups have constantly highlighted the persecution suffered by the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan...Sectarian violence in Pakistan mostly concerns the rift between the majority Sunnis and minority Shia and has claimed around 4,000 lives in the past decade.” [2c]

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## Positions of authority/voting figures

- 3.05 In a letter addressed to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, dated 21 October 2005, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated that “Recent enquiries through the British High Commission in Islamabad show that very few Ahmadis are represented in public and semi public organisations in Rabwah. Approximately 54% of the voting population of Rabwah are Ahmadi, but it appears that Ahmadis do not normally vote in or contest elections for a variety of reasons.” [1b]

## List of sources

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- a 20 October 2005, Overview: Quake aftermath, **accessed 20 October 2005**.
  - b 7 October 2005, Rare attack on Pakistan Ahmadis, **accessed 12 October 2005**.
  - c 7 October 2005, Eight die in Pakistan sect attack, **accessed 10 October 2005**.
  - d 28 October 2005, Pakistan releases more quake aid, **accessed 28 October 2005**.
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  - b 25 October 2005, PAKISTAN: Disease warning network established, **accessed 25 October 2005**
- [4] **Government of Pakistan via <http://www.pak.gov.pk>**
- a 18 October 2005, Associated Press of Pakistan News Summary, **accessed 18 October 2005**.
  - b President's Relief Fund for Earthquake Victims – 2005, **accessed 18 October 2005**.
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- [5] **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Pakistan Earthquake, accessed 25 October 2005 via <http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/teaxis/vtx/earthquake>**
- [6] **Amnesty International Public Statement ASA 33/028/2005, issued 11 October 2005, Pakistan: Killing of Ahmadis continues amid impunity, accessed 18 October 2005 via <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa330282005>**
- [7] **Human Rights Commission of Pakistan Press Release dated 7 October 2005, HRCP appalled by massacre of Ahmadis, accessed 12 October 2005 via [http://www.hrcp-web.org/P\\_releases.cfm#HRCP%20appalled%20by%20massacre%20of%20Ahmadis](http://www.hrcp-web.org/P_releases.cfm#HRCP%20appalled%20by%20massacre%20of%20Ahmadis)**

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