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Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

India: Treatment of Sikhs in Punjab (2013-April 2015) [IND105132.E]

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Sources report that Sikhs account for approximately 2 percent of the population in India (US 28 July 2014, 1; Global Security.org n.d.a), which amounts to approximately 16 million people (ibid.). According to Global Security.org, a website that focuses on security and compiles information from a variety of sources (ibid. n.d.b), approximately 80 percent of Sikhs live in Punjab, which accounts for the majority of the inhabitants of that state (ibid. n.d.a). According to India's National Commission for Minorities, an organization to safeguard the constitutional and legal rights of minorities, the *National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992* grants minority community status for Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists (India n.d.). The US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2013* notes that "[t]he constitution provides that Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism are considered subsets of Hinduism; however these groups view themselves as distinct faiths" (US 28 July 2014, 4).

2. Treatment of Sikhs in Punjab by Authorities

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative from the World Sikh Organization (WSO) of Canada, a human rights organization promoting the rights and protection of Sikhs in Canada and around the world (WSO n.d.), stated that Sikh communities that "advocate for and support a separate Sikh state or Khalistan" or challenge the power of the state government in religious matters, activists against Deras [groups of Hindu, Sikh, Muslim or Christian devotees who follow the teachings of a spiritual guru (*The Indian Express* 29 Apr. 2010) [1]], and Sikhs who are suspected of being "militant sympathizers" are "subject to monitoring and in some cases, detention and torture" (WSO 17 Apr. 2015). The representative also noted that "while Punjab has not seen a return to wide-scale violence that marked the years 1980-1995 in which the Sikh community as a whole faced hardships ... segments of the Sikh population in India continue to face harassment, detention and torture due to their political or religious beliefs" (ibid.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an assistant professor of political science at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio, who has published books and journal articles on Sikhism in India, noted that "there is no evidence of widespread or systematic mistreatment of Sikhs in Punjab during the 2013-2015 period" (19 Apr. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A 7 July 2013 article by Panthic, an online Sikh news publication (Panthic n.d.), states that "in the presence of human rights workers and media," Surjit Singh, a Sub-Inspector of the Punjab Police, "openly exposed the systematic and widespread human rights abuses carried [out] by Punjab police during [the] 1980s-90s in Punjab" (ibid. 7 July 2013). Sources report that Surjit openly admitted to killing 83 Sikh youth (ibid.; *The*

Times of India 2 July 2013; The Indo-Canadian Voice 19 July 2013). Sources note that as a result of Surjit's public admission, he has been suspended by Tarn Taran police, Punjab police force, and has since gone into hiding (ibid.; Panthic 7 July 2013).

2.1 Conflict with Deras

The WSO representative indicated that many Sikh Community members "feel threatened by the activities of Deras or heretical cults, led by individuals who claim divine powers" (WSO 17 Apr. 2015). Sources report that the Deras have strong connections to politicians and political parties in Punjab, especially during election campaigns, as Deras are able to exercise their influence on their followers to mobilize support for candidates (ibid.; Verma Mar. 2014, 85; *The Times of India* 20 Nov. 2014). According to a 20 November 2014 article in the *Times of India*, an English-language daily newspaper published in Mumbai, Delhi and Ahmadabad, this has "helped Deras in the region to flourish" (ibid.). In a 2014 journal article on Deras and electoral mobilization in Punjab, Ashutosh Kumar, a professor of political science at Panjab University in Chandigarh, India, whose research focuses on state-level electoral politics in India, especially Punjab, notes that politics in Punjab have become more complex in the last decade due to

the increasing visibility and significance of deras in the electoral arena. During the recent elections in the state, political leaders and candidates cutting across the party lines were seen to flock to deras, seeking blessings and support from the different dera chiefs. (Kumar 2014, 335)

The Times of India notes that there is "a symbiotic relationship between politicians and Deras who help each other to grow as these sects hold complete sway over the minds of their followers" (20 Nov. 2014). The WSO representative indicated that "Sikhs who oppose the activities of the Deras have faced harassment and prejudicial treatment from the police who act under political influence" (WSO 17 Apr. 2015). Furthermore, Sikhs who actively oppose Deras are "monitored and often subject to preventative detention by the Punjab Police whenever it is suspected a protest may be taking place" (ibid.). The same source indicates that Sikh activists opposing Deras have been charged with terrorism-related offences (ibid.). The WSO representative added that in July 2010, the Punjab police arrested four "Babbar Khalsa" activists associated with the group "'Shiromani Tat Khalsa'," a group who strongly opposes the Deras (ibid.). The activists had earlier been shot and "severely injured" by the police during a protest (ibid.). The representative noted that "it was believed by many" that the arrested were targeted by the Punjab Police due to the fact that they opposed the Deras, and in November 2014 they were acquitted (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A 28 October 2014 article by Sikh Siyasat News indicates that during a Sikh protest against the activities of a Dera sect, the Punjab police reportedly opened fire and six to eight protesters sustained injuries, including a gunshot wound. Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

A 16 March 2015 article by the *Daily Mail*, the UK-based daily newspaper, notes that the conflict between Sikhs and Dera followers has become "the rule" rather than the exception in Punjab. Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.2 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots

Amnesty International (AI) indicates that November 2014 marked the 30th anniversary of the 1984 anti-Sikh violence in Delhi, which killed thousands of Sikhs (AI 25 Feb. 2015, 179). According to the *Times of India*, the riots were triggered by the assassination of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who was killed by two of her Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984 (*The Times of India* 25 Mar. 2015). The same source reports that almost 3,000 Sikhs were killed in the violence (ibid.). According to the *Diplomat*, a current affairs magazine for the Asia-Pacific region, "over 8,000 Sikhs were murdered in riots organized and supported by numerous members of India's then-ruling Congress Party" (*The Diplomat* 31 Oct. 2014). The same source reports that there were "widespread attacks against Sikhs," especially in Delhi (ibid.). According to the same source, "today, most Sikhs have reconciled with the Indian government, especially after Manmohan Singh, a Sikh, became Prime Minister in 2004. However, Singh's Congress Government did very little to compensate riot victims or bring perpetrators to justice" (ibid.).

2.2.1 Government Inaction

Despite "large public demonstrations seeking an end to impunity," hundreds of criminal cases pertaining to Sikh murders in 1984 that were closed by the police have not been reopened (AI 25 Feb. 2015, 179). Minority Rights Group International (MRG)'s *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples* reports that although several commissions have been set up by the government in order to investigate the 1984 riots, there has been "no move to punish the perpetrators of the violence or even to prosecute cases against them" (n.d.).

A 29 October 2014 article by Human Rights Watch reports that only 30 people have been convicted since the 1984 violence; no police officers have been convicted and no prosecutions for rape have been made.

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an associate professor with the Department of Asian Studies who is also Chair of Punjabi Language, Literature and Sikh studies at the University of British Columbia stated that there is a "continued silence" regarding what happened to Sikhs in 1984 (Associate Professor 27 Apr. 2015). The same source notes that

[t]he government has consistently resisted investigation, and even investigations that have been pursued have ended largely in nothing in terms of real action. There are many cases languishing in the courts, and many powerful political leaders with ties to the violence remain powerful. There has been no effort at reconciliation along these lines, no memorials built by the government to acknowledge what went wrong. Anyone who brings up 1984 is deemed anti-national. This continues today. (ibid.)

The South Asia Director at Human Rights Watch, quoted in the 29 October 2014 article, said that "India's failure to prosecute those most responsible for the anti-Sikh violence in 1984 has not only denied justice to Sikhs, but has made all Indians more vulnerable to communal violence" (Human Rights Watch 29 Oct. 2014).

The US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2013* reports that in 2012 a Delhi court took on a case initiated by a US citizen alleging that former Congress Party leader Jagdish Tytler instigated the 1984 anti-Sikh riots (US 28 July 2014, 10). Sources report that in April 2013 the Delhi court ordered further investigation into this case (ibid.; North India Press 21 Apr. 2014). Sources report that on 24 December 2014 the Central Bureau of Investigation filed its closure report in an attempt to close the court case against Tytler (*The Times of India* 25 Mar. 2015; *Hindustan Times* 25 Mar. 2015) for the third time (ibid.). According to the *Times of India*, this was done "quietly" (25 Mar. 2015). Similarly, the *Hindustan Times* reports that the closure was done "secretly" (25 Mar. 2015).

The US *International Religious Freedom Report for 2013* further notes that cases from the 1984 violence remain pending and that verdicts in civil cases generally take approximately 15 years and verdicts for criminal cases can take up to 20 years (US 28 July 2014, 10).

2.3 Treatment of Political Activists

Sources report that in January 2015 Surat Singh [Surat Singh Khalsa], a US Sikh human rights activist, began a hunger strike seeking the release of Sikh political prisoners who continue to be detained unlawfully despite having completed their sentences (ENSAAF 15 Apr. 2015; Sikh24.com 5 Apr. 2015; Assistant Professor 19 Apr. 2015). Sources report that Surat Singh was forcibly brought to the Civil Hospital under police watch (Countercurrents.org 28 Mar. 2015; *The Indian Express* 1 Apr. 2015; ENSAAF 15 Apr. 2015) after being placed under house arrest (ibid.). According to Countercurrents.org, a news website that provides analyses on major world events reports that police prevented his family from caring for him and restrictions were placed on visitors, who were also intimidated and "scared off by the police" (Countercurrents.org 28 Mar. 2015). In contrast, the *Indian Express*, an English-language newspaper in India, reports in a 1 April 2015 article that "there had been no restrictions on his family to take care of him, but on February 26, the police took him into preventive custody, imposed restrictions on visitors and force-fed him" (*The Indian Express* 1 Apr. 2015). Sources similarly report that Surat Singh was being force-fed (Assistant Professor 19 Apr. 2015; Professor 21 Apr. 2015; ENSAAF 15 Apr. 2015). Sources report that on 23 April 2015 Surat Singh was released from preventive custody (Sikh Religious Society of Chicago 24 Apr. 2015; Singh Station 24 Apr. 2015; *The Tribune* 24 Apr. 2015).

A 15 April 2015 letter from the Co-Directors of ENSAAF, a non-profit organization "working to end impunity and achieve justice for mass state crimes in India, with a focus on Punjab" (ENSAAF n.d.), to a congressman in Washington, DC, states that on 28 January 2015 Surat Singh's son, Ravinderjeet Singh, left the US to visit his father in Punjab (ibid. 15 Apr. 2015). Sources report that Ravinderjeet Singh was arrested by the police, as a way to convince his father to end his hunger strike (Sikh Siyasat News 17 Apr. 2015; ENSAAF 15 Apr. 2015), on 26 February 2015 (ibid.). According to the Assistant Professor, supporters of Surat Singh have "reportedly been threatened" for their support of the activist (19 Apr. 2015). ENSAAF's letter to the congressman also notes that Ravinderjeet's family was informed that he had been detained under penal code sections 107, "apprehension of breach of peace and tranquility of an area" and 151, "arrest to prevent the commission of cognizable offences" (ibid.). Media sources similarly report that Ravinderjeet was arrested under sections 107/151 of the penal code (Sikh24.com 25 Mar. 2015; Sikh Siyasat News 7 Apr. 2015). In an interview with the Research Directorate, an ENSAAF Co-Director noted that Ravinderjeet has had no "substantive" hearing and that "he has been severely beaten" (ENSAAF 22 Apr. 2015). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report that in January 2015 Sikh activist Gurbaksh Singh Khalsa ended his 64-day hunger strike for the release of Sikh political/legal prisoners (Sikh Net 15 Jan. 2015; Assistant Professor 19 Apr. 2015). The Assistant Professor indicated that Gurbaksh Singh Khalsa supporters were alleged to have been threatened by the police with the loss of government jobs and other family consequences for their continued support for his agitation. As a result, many withdrew support and the agitation failed. (ibid.)

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to Sikh Siyasat News, a Sikh news website, Mohkam Singh, a leader of the political party United Akali Dal, was detained in February 2015 along with two other Sikhs under the preventive detention clauses, Sections 107/151 (Sikh Siyasat News 28 Feb. 2015). Another article written by the same source reports that Mohkam Singh was detained for criticizing the Punjab government for failing to release Sikh political prisoners who, having completed their jail sentences, remain in jail (ibid. 10 Mar. 2015). Media sources report that these arrests are being used by the police as a method to suppress fasting Sikh activist Singh Khalsa (ibid. 28 Feb. 2015; Sikh24.com 5 Mar. 2015). Media sources report that Mohkam Singh was released on bail approximately two weeks after his arrest (Sikh Siyasat News 10 Mar. 2015; Sikh24.com 10 Mar. 2015) without charges (ibid.).

An article by the *Times of India* reports that on 2 November 2014, there was a "crackdown" on individuals protesting for Sikh rights and addressing the "denial of justice" to the 1984 victims and "impunity" to perpetrators of the violence against the Sikh community. Police arrested protestors including members of the All India Sikh Students Federation, [a Sikh students union and political organization in India (AISSF n.d.)] (*The Times of India* 2 Nov. 2014).

An October 2014 news article by Sikh Siyasat News reports that at a rally for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, five top leaders of the Shiromani Akal Dal Amritsar (Mann) political party were arrested for waving black flags upon his arrival. The leaders were released on bail later that evening, however dozens of Shiromani Akali Dal (Mann) supporters, who had gathered near the rally spot, were also detained by the police prior to the Prime Minister's arrival (Sikh Siyasat News 4 Oct. 2014). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.3.1 Treatment of Advocates for Khalistan

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Director of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies [2] at the University of California, who has published over 300 articles and 20 books on South Asian religion and politics, indicated that "in the past, any Sikhs who have been supporters of the Khalistani separatist movement have been closely watched and detained, and many of them claim to have been abused at the hands of the police" (Orfalea Center 10 Apr. 2015). The WSO representative similarly noted that "Sikhs who advocate for and support a separate Sikh state or Khalistan continue to face serious human rights violations" (17 Apr. 2015). According to the same source, Sikhs who support Khalistan

often find themselves harassed by the police and are detained and tortured. Similarly, religious ... Sikhs are in certain instances suspected of harboring separatist tendencies and [are] the target of scrutiny by the Punjab Police. Former militants are also closely monitored in Punjab and often arbitrarily detained and questioned. (17 Apr. 2015)

The Assistant Professor indicated that the Akali Dal (Amritsar) [a "splinter" Akali Dal party formed in the mid 1990's (Australia 17 Dec. 2009)], and Dal Khalsa [a political group promoting an independent Sikh state in Punjab (Terrorism.com 26 Apr. 2014)], and other "radical" Sikh "ethnonationalist" political parties and organizations "continue to operate above ground" (Assistant Professor 19 Apr. 2015). Furthermore, the Dal Khalsa was able to "contest democratic elections with little hindrance" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Assistant Professor noted that if the government "perceives a threat to communal peace and law-and-order because of specific planned rallies or marches by Sikh ethnonationalists," the state may place leaders of the Sikh political party members and or activists in preventative custody (ibid.). The same source further stated that once in preventative custody, activists usually do not face physical abuse; however, in some instances, activists may "periodically" have "legal cases ... placed on [them] ... for secessionist and/or provocative speeches" (ibid.). The representative from the WSO similarly noted that Khalistan advocates are "often" arrested during peaceful protests and are subject to "preventative arrest" (WSO 17 Apr. 2015). Leaders and workers of other Sikh nationalist parties "are routinely detained under preventative detention clauses" (ibid.). According to the Assistant Professor, government officials who perceive Sikh ethnonationalists and activists as a threat to the stability of the ruling government "are subject to police and/or legal harassment" and that those who openly challenge or criticize the ruling Akali Dal are "prone to various forms of personal harassment" (Assistant Professor 19 Apr. 2015).

The Assistant Professor further indicated that in September 2012, the President of the Akali Dal (Panch Pardani) political party, Kulvir Singh Barapind [3], "a former 'militant' who had been exonerated from all legal charges pending from decades earlier," was arrested by the Punjab Police (ibid.). Sources report that he was arrested on charges of sedition and possessing illegal arms (ibid.; ENSAAF 26 Sept. 2012; Human Rights Watch 27 Sept. 2012). Sources note that while in police custody, Kulvir Singh Barapind was subjected to "torture" (Advocate 25 Mar. 2015; CK News Group 11 May 2013; Sikh Siyasat News 25 Oct. 2012). Sources report that police applied electric shocks to Barapind while he was detained (Human Rights Watch 27 Sept. 2012; ENSAAF 26 Sept. 2012; Sikh Siyasat News 25 Oct. 2012). Sources further state that following a complaint by Barapind's lawyer to the magistrate, the court ordered the police to conduct a medical examination, but that the medical exam was never conducted (ibid.; CK News Group 11 May 2013; Advocate 25 Mar. 2015). Sources report that Barapind was subsequently acquitted of all charges and released two years later in September 2014 (ibid.; Advocate 25 Mar. 2015; Assistant Professor 19 Apr. 2015). The Assistant Professor further noted that "it was widely believed, but cannot be clearly proven, that he had been arrested as a form of personal/political harassment for his vocal criticism of the Akali Dal (Badal) in the Sikh media" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sikh media sources report that in September 2013, at least 19 Sikh youth were arrested by Punjab police (Sikh Siyasat News 18 Sept. 2013; Sikh24.com 18 Sept. 2013; Panthic 19 Sept. 2013) for allegedly attempting to "revive militancy" in Punjab (ibid.; Sikh Siyasat News 18 Sept. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.4 Terrorism Charges

According to the representative from the WSO, there have been "regular" arrests of alleged Sikh "terrorists," often based on false charges, and the arrests are "used as a tool to harass or silence political opponents" (WSO 17 Apr. 2015). A November 2014 article by Sikh24.com, a news portal for members of the Sikh community (Sikh24.com n.d.), similarly notes that the "Punjab police continues to violate the human rights of Sikhs by arresting Sikh Youths illegitimately by using the blanket term 'dangerous terrorists'" (7 Nov. 2014).

Sources report the following incidents of Sikh activists charged with terrorism in Punjab, including but not limited to:

Jasbir Singh, a Sikh activist, was accused of and arrested for being a member of the Khalistan Commando Force in November 2014 (WSO 17 Apr. 2015; PTI 9 Nov. 2014). The Press Trust of India (PTI), an Indian news agency, quotes the police as saying that "Jasbir is a close associate of Paramjit Singh Panjwar, chief of [the] Khalistan Commando Force outfit in Pakistan" (PTI 9 Nov. 2014).

Ramandeep Singh, a Sikh Khalistan supporter, was arrested in November 2014 on terrorism charges and accused of being a member of Babbar Khalsa [Babbar Khalsa International is one of the oldest and most organized Khalistan terrorist groups (SATP n.d.)] (WSO 17 Apr. 2015). A 20 November 2014 op-ed article written by the Sikh Organisation for Prisoner Welfare (SOPW), a registered charity in the UK working to "ensure the civil rights of Sikh political prisoners" in India (SOPW n.d.b), and published by Sikh24.com, reports that the police have not found any evidence that he possessed any explosive materials even though they have extended his remand period three times (ibid. 20 Nov. 2014).

Professor Devinder Pal Singh Bhullar was arrested in 2001 on the basis of a forced confession (Sikh Siyasat News 12 Apr. 2013; Panthic 2 Apr. 2014). According to a 2 April 2014 article published by Panthic, this arrest took place under the *Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act*, "a law that contains provisions incompatible with international fair trial standards" (ibid.). Sources report that Professor Bhullar was initially sentenced to death, however, as a result of a delay in execution, his deteriorating mental health and a disagreement between the Supreme Court judges regarding his guilt, his sentence was reduced to life imprisonment in March 2014 (ibid.; Indo-Canadian Voice 30 Mar. 2015).

SOPW notes that their senior team member Bhai Parminder Singh [who was arrested in 2007, "accused of arms possession and attempted murder," and eventually acquitted of the murder charges but found guilty of arms possession (SOPW n.d.a)], was approached by the National Investigations Agency (NIA), a federal agency responsible for combating terror in India, to assist them with questioning families of "prisoners supported by SOPW" (ibid.). According to the SOPW, upon Bhai Singh's refusal to assist the NIA, the officers threatened him "with arrest and 10 days remand which we know means ten days torture in an interrogation centre, hidden away from the public and more importantly the media's attention" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

3. Treatment by Other Groups

Media sources report that in July 2014, a clash occurred in Saharanpur following a high court verdict regarding a land dispute (Free Press Journal 31 July 2014; Indo-Asian News Service 28 July 2014; *DNA India* 29 July 2014). A 29 July 2014 article by *Daily News and Analysis (DNA) India*, an English daily newspaper originally launched in Mumbai, reports that the "long-standing" land dispute is between the Muslim and Sikh communities who both regard the land as their own (ibid.). Sources report that there was a "violent clash" in which the two communities "pelted stones and fired at each other" (Indo-Asian News Service 28 July 2014; Free Press Journal 31 July 2014). *DNA India* reports that there was also "brick batting and arson" (*DNA India* 29 July 2014). According to the same source, Sikhs from the area state that the violence seemed to have been pre-meditated, that gun shots were fired at them, that people with swords ran after the Sikhs in the area and that shops belonging to Sikhs in Nehru Market were set on fire (ibid.). Sources report that this incident resulted in the death of three people and injured over three dozen (Free Press Journal 31 July 2014; Indo-Asian News Service 28 July 2014).

4. Recourse and Protection in Cases of Mistreatment

The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013* indicates that India's "judiciary remained overburdened, and court backlogs led to lengthy delays or the denial of justice" (US 27 Feb 2014, 1). The same source further notes that

[t]he law provides for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence, although judicial corruption was widespread. The judicial system remained seriously overburdened and lacked modern case management systems, often delaying or denying justice. (ibid., 15)

The Assistant Professor stated that India has a "largely robust, open, and independent judicial system in which Indian citizens can approach the courts for relief including against illegal or inappropriate actions by the state and its agents" (10 Apr. 2015). While the judicial system is independent, "it is also subject to periodic interpersonal pressure from government/political officials or ideological corruption to its stated impartiality" (ibid.). The Assistant Professor further stated that

the constitutional rights and liberties of Indian citizens can be abridged by the government through the implementation of various types of national security legislation for "disturbed areas" of the country experiencing insurgency or insurrection. To the best of my knowledge, none of these special national security legislations are currently in effect in Punjab. (ibid.)

The Co-Director of ENSAAF indicates that recourse is not available to Sikhs or political activists opposing the ruling government in Punjab (22 Apr. 2015). Government officials use procedural tactics in order to demonstrate that they are following the law, however "the police or state government may influence the decision of judges resulting in an unfair trial or no trial at all" (ibid.). The Co-Director further notes that if a Sikh community member, activist or member of an opposition party reports mistreatment to the police, the police do not follow up on the complaints and police officers and or government officials are not suspended or prosecuted" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

For further and corroborating information on the treatment of political activists and members of opposition parties in Punjab see Response to Information Request IND105131. For further and corroborating information on incidents of violence instigated by members of the Shiromani Akali Dal in Punjab and Haryana, including in Darar, see Response to information Request IND105060.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] According to a journal article written by Ashutosh Kumar, a professor of political science at Panjab University in Chandigarh, India,

Dera followers belong to a religious sect that is often 'an offshoot of an established religion.' They share common beliefs ... including some novel concepts distinct from the mother religion.' A dera as such 'may reject some norms existing in the mainstream religion and replace obsolete elements with new practices'" (Kumar 2 June 2014, 345, Note 1).

[2] The Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies at the University of California aims to "provide an intellectual and programmatic focus for the University's activities in global, international, and area studies" (Orfalea Center n.d.).

[3] Barapind was the President of Akali Dal Panch Pardhani, a political party "holding dissenting views and ideology" seeking "proper" political status for Sikhs in India (Sikh Siyasat News 25 Oct. 2012). The Assistant Professor noted that Barapind "is the only representative to the prestigious democratically-elected management board for Sikh shrines from the Doaba region of Punjab, who does not belong to the Akali Dal-Badal party" (19 Apr. 2015).

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Oral sources: The following were unable to provide information for this Response: associate professor, Carleton University; Director of the South Asia Center, University of Pennsylvania; associate professor, International Studies and South Asian Studies, University of Washington; Chair, Sikh and Punjabi Studies, University of California; Network of Sikh Organisations.

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