



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## Pakistan

Pakistan – PAK37790 – Muslims in Italy –  
Taliban activity in Italy  
29 November 2010

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**1. Please provide any information about the Muslim population in Italy and any reports of Muslims in Italy targeting people they consider might be insulting Islam, or Christians from Pakistan.**

Muslims form a part of the non-Catholic population in Italy estimated at less than 5% of the total population. They are a diverse community as reflected by the large numbers who have migrated from North Africa, South Asia and the Middle East. Muslim groups have not reached an accord with the government which would grant them certain rights. In addition, Muslims have had difficulty obtaining approvals to build mosques. There are also reports of government officials, or the public, objecting to women wearing the burqa. No information was found on the general Muslim population targeting people whom they consider might be insulting Islam. It has been reported, however, that Italy could now be regarded as an eligible target for terrorist attacks. No information was found on Muslims in Italy targeting Christians from Pakistan.

Non-Catholics in Italy comprise less than 5% of the total population and Muslims fall within this estimate. Muslim migration, mainly from North Africa, South Asia and the Middle East, has added large non-Christian groups to the Italian population. It has been estimated that some 1.25 million Muslims migrated to Italy in 2008.<sup>1</sup> Over the past two decades Muslims have arrived from a number of countries and cultural backgrounds and as a result the Italian Muslim community is diverse.<sup>2</sup>

There are reportedly over 700 places of worship in the country, often officially called “cultural centres” and unofficially “garage” mosques, concentrated in the Lombardy, Veneto, Lazio, Emilia Romagna and Tuscany regions.<sup>3</sup> Muslim groups have experienced difficulties in obtaining approvals to construct mosques.<sup>4</sup> There have been reports of government officials, or the public, objecting to women wearing the burqa. Differences between Muslim organisations, as well as the absence of a single national leader, have hampered their efforts to seek an accord (intesa) with the government. An intesa between

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of State 2010, ‘Religious Demography’ in *International Religious Freedom Report 2010 – Italy*, 17 November – Attachment 1.

<sup>2</sup> International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) 2005, *Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU Developments since September 11 – Italy*, March, p.96 [http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc\\_id=6237](http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=6237) – Accessed 30 March 2009 – Attachment 2

<sup>3</sup> US Department of State 2010, ‘Religious Demography’ in *International Religious Freedom Report 2010 – Italy*, 17 November – Attachment 1.

<sup>4</sup> US Department of State 2010, ‘Legal/Policy Framework’, ‘Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom’ in *International Religious Freedom Report 2010 – Italy*, 17 November – Attachment 1.

the government and a religious group grants to the group certain rights, such as automatic access to state hospitals for its clergy, civil registration of religious marriages, and also facilitates special religious practices for funerals. The absence of an intesa does not affect a religious group's ability to worship.<sup>5</sup>

Although no information was found on the general Muslim population targeting people whom they consider might be insulting Islam, it has been reported that there are potential targets in Italy for terrorist activity, including Christian churches and historical monuments.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Is there any information of the Taliban or equivalent being active in Italy?

There is Taliban or equivalent activity in Italy. Historically, such activities were largely confined to fundraising, recruitment and obtaining documents for militants. An October 2009 attack on carabinieri barracks in Milan, however, has shown that Italy is now regarded as an eligible target for terrorist attacks.

A November 2009 *TerrorismMonitor* article reports that the Islamist panorama in Italy is characterised by small, fluid extremist groups often led by charismatic leaders who have previous experience in militant activities. The highest risk areas are in northern region of Lombardy and its capital Milan because of the presence of substantial Islamic communities. Historically, the main activities of these groups were largely confined to fundraising, recruitment and obtaining documents for militants. These groups have had some relations with Italian organised crime groups.<sup>7</sup>

An October 2009 attack on carabinieri barracks in Milan, however, has shown that Italy is now regarded as an eligible target for terrorist attacks. The *TerrorismMonitor* article indicated that there are over 13,000 potential targets for terrorists, including leading politicians and notable Christian churches and historical monuments.<sup>8</sup> As recently as September 2010 police arrested a man in Naples of suspected al Qaeda links.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> US Department of State 2010, 'Legal/Policy Framework' in *International Religious Freedom Report 2010 – Italy*, 17 November – Attachment 1.

<sup>6</sup> Cristiani, Dario 2009, 'A Shift in Terrorist Strategy Threatens Italian National Security', *TerrorismMonitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. VII, Iss. 35, 20 November, p.4, UNHCR REFWORLD website <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c7782ed1a.pdf> - Accessed 26 November 2010 – Attachment 3.

<sup>7</sup> Cristiani, Dario 2009, 'A Shift in Terrorist Strategy Threatens Italian National Security', *TerrorismMonitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. VII, Iss. 35, 20 November, -p.3, UNHCR REFWORLD website <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c7782ed1a.pdf> - Accessed 26 November 2010 – Attachment 3.

<sup>8</sup> Cristiani, Dario 2009, 'A Shift in Terrorist Strategy Threatens Italian National Security', *TerrorismMonitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. VII, Iss. 35, 20 November, - pp.3-4, UNHCR REFWORLD website <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c7782ed1a.pdf> - Accessed 26 November 2010 – Attachment 3.

<sup>9</sup> 'France: 3 Militant-Linked Suspects Arrested' 2010, STRATFOR, 5 October [http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20101005\\_france\\_3\\_militant\\_linked\\_suspects\\_arrested](http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20101005_france_3_militant_linked_suspects_arrested) - Accessed 25 November 2010 – Attachment 4.

## Attachments

1. US Department of State 2010, 'Religious Demography' in *International Religious Freedom Report 2010 – Italy*, 17 November.
2. International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) 2005, *Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in the EU Developments since September 11 – Italy*, March [http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc\\_id=6237](http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=6237) – Accessed 30 March 2009.
3. Cristiani, Dario 2009, 'A Shift in Terrorist Strategy Threatens Italian National Security', *Terrorism Monitor*, The Jamestown Foundation, Vol. VII, Iss. 35, 20 November, pp.2-4, UNHCR REF WORLD website <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4c7782ed1a.pdf> - Accessed 26 November 2010.
4. 'France: 3 Militant-Linked Suspects Arrested' 2010, STRATFOR, 5 October [http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20101005\\_france\\_3\\_militant\\_linked\\_suspects\\_arrested](http://www.stratfor.com/sitrep/20101005_france_3_militant_linked_suspects_arrested) - Accessed 25 November 2010. (STRATFOR)