

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

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**Questions**

- 1. Are those of Bengali origins included as Mohajirs?**
- 2. Have Pakistanis with Bengali origins who are not politically active faced serious harm or discrimination in the last five years in Karachi or elsewhere in Pakistan?**

**RESPONSE**

**1. Are those of Bengali origins included as Mohajirs?**

Information was found to indicate that the term Mohajir (or Muhajir) initially had a broad application in Pakistan, referring to any person who relocated to Pakistan as a result of the Partition. Information was found to indicate that over time, the term Mohajir came to refer particularly to those Urdu-speaking migrants who relocated to Karachi in Sindh province, and who did not integrate with the local Sindi population (in contrast to Partition-era Punjabi-speaking migrants who assimilated more easily with the local Punjab speaking population in the north) (For discussions of early applications of the term Mohajir in Pakistan see Bose, Nayana 2001, 'Mohajirs, the Refugees By Choice', *Refugee Watch*, Issue No. 14, June [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/rw\\_files/RW14.DOC](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/rw_files/RW14.DOC) – Accessed 14 February – Attachment 1, and Verkaaik, Oscar 1994, *A People of Migrants: Ethnicity, State and Religion in Karachi*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 11-12 – Attachment 5).

Information was found to indicate that some ethnic Bengalis were among those who migrated to Karachi around the time of Partition, and so could be characterized as Mohajirs in the earliest and broadest sense of the term as it has been used in Pakistan. However, information was found to indicate that Partition-era ethnic Bengali migrants to Karachi were significantly outnumbered by Urdu-speaking migrants from other areas of India. Sources consulted

regarding Mohajirs in Pakistan focused on Urdu-speaking migrants, and no specific discussion of ethnic Bengali migrants in the development of Mohajir identity in Pakistan was found (for information on Partition-era migration of ethnic Bengalis to Karachi see Ansari, Sarah 2005 “‘Borders’ and ‘Boundaries’ in Karachi: 1948-1955’, in *Life After Partition – Migration, Community, and Strife in Sindh: 1947-1962*, Oxford University Press, Pakistan pp 127, 150 – Attachment 8, and Gazdar, Haris 2005, ‘Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation’, in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, p. 156, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

Information was found to indicate that the term Mohajir was taken up by the Mohajir Quami Mahaz (Mohajir People’s Movement – MQM) in its protests against perceived socio-economic and political exclusion of Mohajirs, and that the MQM further refined the meaning of the term in Pakistan, so that came to focus on urban, middle-class Urdu-speakers, who had from the 1970s onward become disadvantaged within the broader Pakistani polity. Information was also found which indicates that the term Mohajir has been employed in Pakistan in different ways in different contexts, depending on the aims of the speaker (for a discussion of the use and modification of the term Mohajir by the MQM see Verkaaik, Oscar 1994, *A People of Migrants: Ethnicity, State and Religion in Karachi*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 14, 46-47 – Attachment 5).

Information was found to indicate that while the ethnic Bengali population of Karachi decreased immediately after the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, ethnic Bengalis began migrating to Karachi in the 1980s and 1990s. Estimates were found which indicated that ethnic Bengalis may constitute as much as 10 percent of the current population of Karachi, although commentary was found which indicated that these figures are unsubstantiated, and subject to manipulation for political ends. No specific information was found which indicated that members of the Bengali community in Karachi currently use the term Mohajir to refer to themselves. Nonetheless, recent information was found to indicate that at the level of public discourse, members of the ethnic Bengali community in Karachi have been glossing themselves as being at least pre-1971 immigrants to Pakistan (or descendents thereof), if not Partition-era immigrants. Information was located to indicate that these claims are connected with current issues surrounding the treatment, and citizenship status, of ethnic Bengalis in Pakistan (for information on the fluctuations in the Bengali population in Karachi see Raman, B. 2003, ‘The case for more fences’, *Asia Times Online* website, 6 February [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/EB06Df03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/EB06Df03.html) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 10, and Mansoor, Hasan 2003, ‘Illegal Lives’ *Himal South Asian* website <http://www.himalmag.com/2003/july/report.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 11; for a critique of conflicting claims regarding the current Bengali population of Karachi see Gazdar, Haris 2003, ‘A Review of Migration Issues in Pakistan’, *Livelihoods Connect* website, p. 13 [http://www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/docs/Dhaka\\_CP\\_4.pdf](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/Dhaka_CP_4.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 21; for information on claims that the majority of Bengalis in Karachi have resided there since before 1971 see Gazdar, Haris 2005, ‘Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation’, in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 169-170, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9, and ‘Bengali-speaking people threaten protest’ 2003, *Dawn* website, 11 February <http://www.dawn.com/2003/02/11/local20.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 24).

Information was found to indicate that in 1990 the MQM dropped the word “Mohajir” from its name, and was re-titled the Muttahida Quami Mahaz (United People’s Movement) in an attempt to broaden its support base. Information was found to indicate that more recently, Bengali political associations in Karachi have formed links with the MQM (for information on the recent MQM-ethnic Bengali relationship see ‘LG minister to visit Bengali localities soon’ 2007, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 15 February – Attachment 27, and ‘Bengalis Action Committee to back MQM in polls’ 2007, *Daily Times* website, 26 November [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\11\26\story\\_26-11-2007\\_pg12\\_4](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\11\26\story_26-11-2007_pg12_4) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 29).

An overview of source material on these issues is provided below under the following subheadings: [Mohajirs in Pakistan](#), [Post-Partition Bengali migration to Karachi](#), [The Mohajir Quami Mahaz \(MQM\) and Mohajir Identity](#), [Growth of the Bengali population in Karachi](#), [Recent MQM – Bengali alliances](#).

### **Mohajirs in Pakistan**

RRT Research Response *PAK12874* addresses the issue of Mohajir identity in Pakistan. This response refers to information from a variety of Government and NGO sources, including a 1997 United States Department of State Office of Asylum Affairs report, which defines a Mohajir as a person who migrated to Pakistan from India at the time of Partition (or a descendent thereof), and whose native language is Urdu (RRT Country Research 1998, *Research Advice PAK12874*, 18 March – Attachment 16).

An essay by Nayana Bose, published in *Refugee Watch* in 2001, provides basic information on the early use and application of the term Mohajir in Pakistan. Bose indicates that the term Mohajir initially had a broad definition, but that its meaning became restricted, coming to primarily denote the Urdu-speaking migrants who settled in the southern Sindh province:

Defined by the Census of Pakistan, 1951, “A Mohajir is a person who has moved into Pakistan as a result of Partition or for fear of disturbances connected therewith”. Those who were lucky to survive the massacres of the partition streamed into the Punjab and Sindh. In an unprecedented population movement, eight million people migrated to West Pakistan.

East Punjabis were allowed to settle in West Punjab. The language and culture of these refugees, these Mohajirs was identical to that of the indigenous population. The refugees settled in the urban areas as well as the rural areas. Ironically, these were the people who had suffered the terror of Partition; these were the people who best fitted the definition of “Mohajir”, yet these are the people who are seldom, if at all, are referred to as such. The government of Punjab made it easier for the refugees to settle. The people had a shared history of violence, shared culture, music, and food and spoke a common language. Very quickly, they became and were accepted, in every sense of the word, as Pakistani.

The term Mohajir politically refers to those who came from the rest of India and chose to settle in Sindh. They include the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan. They were the Muslim elite from the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), they were the people who fought the ideological battles for the creation of a separate Muslim state in the Indian heartland. They brought with them the culture of the nawabi courts, also their language, Urdu. They came to their created ‘homeland’ with cultural linkages from the past. Assimilation with the local Sindhi population was and remains a distant after thought. Mohajirs were well educated, were already in finance and business and therefore had little problem in establishing themselves in the new country (Bose, Nayana 2001, ‘Mohajirs, the Refugees By Choice’, *Refugee Watch*, Issue No. 14, June [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/rw\\_files/RW14.DOC](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/rw_files/RW14.DOC) – Accessed 14 February – Attachment 1).

Information was found to indicate that the majority of Urdu-speaking Partition-era migrants to Pakistan settled in the province of Sindh, and its capital, Karachi, which in 1948 became the capital of Pakistan. A 1992 paper produced by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board provides the following information on Mohajirs:

...In the months immediately following the 1947 partition of the sub-continent, about 4 million people crossed the borders between India and Pakistan. Eight million Muslims from India migrated to Pakistan and six million non-Muslims left Pakistan for India. Most of the refugees came from the north-central provinces of India and some migrated from the eastern district of the Punjab, which remained part of India. The mainly Urdu-speaking refugees from northern and central India settled in Sindh and its capital city, Karachi.

...Mohajirs replaced the Hindu communities which had controlled trade, commerce, and banking before the partition. Members of traditional trading communities began to settle largely in Karachi. The Memons from Gujarat took over the textile import business from Hindu traders. They soon expanded into textile manufacturing, the production of other consumer goods, banking and insurance. They became not only prominent in trade but also leading industrialists (Canadian Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration And Refugee Board 1992, 'Cultural Profile Pakistan: The Mohajirs', Research Directorate, Ottawa, Canada, September – Attachment 2).

In an article published in *Comparative Politics* in 1991, Theodore Wright indicated that Mohajirs gravitated towards the urban centre of Karachi in Sindh province:

The Urdu and Gujarati speaking *Muhajirin* (refugees) who emigrated in millions (8 percent of the population by 1951) from India, mostly to the port city of Karachi, continued to share the rule politically and economically by reason of their high literacy (70 percent), relative modernity, and historic role in the Pakistan movement. This shared centrality, with Karachi as the national capital, continued at least until the coup of General Ayub Khan, a Pathan, in 1958, and the symbolically significant removal of the seat of national government to Islamabad in the northern Punjab. In the elite civil service of Pakistan, the Muhajir share remained disproportionately large throughout the 1960s (Wright, Theodore 1991, 'Center-Periphery Relations and Ethnic Conflict in Pakistan: Sindhis, Muhajirs, and Punjabis', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 300 – Attachment 3).

Laurent Gayer provides background information on Karachi in a paper on ethnic and religious conflict in the city (Gayer, Laurent 2003, 'A Divided City: "Ethnic" and "Religious" conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan', Centre D'études et de Recherches Internationales website, May <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/archive/mai03/artlg.pdf> – Accessed 16 May 2007 – Attachment 4).

In a 1994 book on Mohajirs in Karachi, Oscar Verkaaik provides a discussion of the religious origins of the term Mohajir and its use in post-Partition Pakistan. Verkaaik indicates that the term originally had a broad application to the Partition migrants, and carried a positive connotation with regard to the relationship between the migrants and the pre-existing populations of the areas which received them:

According to the Quran the people of Mecca initially treated Mohammed with hostility and even physical persecution when his preaching of the new religion of Islam grew fiercer. Those who had already converted to Islam left for Medina, a migration initiated by the prophet himself, where they were welcomed and helped by the ansar or inhabitants of Medina. The Quran calls these Meccans mohajirs: migrants for the sake of religion. Since then Muslims are allowed, or even obliged – according to different readings of the Quran – to

leave their homelands if they cannot say their prayers properly there. The word Mohajir also refers to the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca every Muslim is obliged to make once in his or her lifetime. Lastly, the mass migration to Medina is the beginning of the Islamic calendar.

All this is remembered very well by present-day mohajirs. Without literally mentioning the Quran, for instance, they compare partition to 'the beginning of a new era'. They like to be compared to Mohammed's followers, interpreting their migration as a type of pilgrimage. Yet they did not start to use the word 'mohajir' themselves.

...The word did not have an ethnic connotation yet. On the contrary, in the early years of Pakistan it emphasized the brotherhood and religious solidarity between migrants and locals, between mohajirs and ansars...The use of the word was meant to be inclusive (Verkaaik, Oscar 1994, *A People of Migrants: Ethnicity, State and Religion in Karachi*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 11-12 – Attachment 5).

Adeel Khan notes that in the years after Partition, rather than emphasizing ethnic identity, Mohajirs focused on locating themselves as participants in a broad based Pakistani national identity:

Until the 1970's, the Mohajirs highlighted their Muslim and Pakistani identity, and looked down on ethnic identity as "provincial" and "parochial". Thus they voted either for the Muslim League, the founding party of Pakistan, or the Jamat-I-Islami, an extremely conservative religious group based in urban centres (Khan, Adeel 2004, 'Mohajir Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan: El Dorado Gone Sour', *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 28, p. 41 – Attachment 6).

Information was found to indicate that while Mohajirs as a social group in Karachi included migrants of several ethnicities, the Urdu language developed as a primary nexus of Mohajir identity. A paper by Yunas Samad provides general information on the formation of Mohajir identity in Karachi:

Mohajir identification represents a new ethnicity, as it does not fit the anthropological notion of ethnicity. The two main factors that make Mohajir identification a form of new ethnicity was the multi-various origins of the different Urdu-speakers, and the second was the lack of a common language. In general terms, Urdu-speaking mohajirs migrated mainly from Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar or Hyderabad (the Deccan), and the only commonality they had was the Urdu language and the courtly culture, which it was associated with. There were variations in their understanding of Urdu language and culture, and sectarian differences such as those of Sunnis and Shias, which in other circumstances would have become markers of differentiation. Mohajir identity politics subsumes Urdu-speakers as one component (the largest one), and includes Gujarati-speakers, which includes the trading communities that settled in Karachi after Partition (Samad, Yunus 2002, 'In and Out of Power but not Down and Out: Mohajir Identity Politics', in *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation?*, ed. C. Jaffrelot, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 65-66 – Attachment 7).

A 1992 paper produced by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board provides a similar summary of the constitution of Mohajir identity in Pakistan, which identifies a confluence of common language and socio-economic profile as defining features of Mohajir identity:

The term "Mohajir" ("refugee" in English) is a political concept which refers to those Muslims who migrated to Pakistan in 1947 from the north-central region of British India. Mohajirs are united in part by language and by their social and economic distinctiveness, which sets them apart from indigenous Pakistanis. However, they do not constitute one ethnic group with common customs and traditions, but include Muslims belonging to different

ethno-cultural and religious communities (Canadian Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration And Refugee Board 1992, 'Cultural Profile Pakistan: The Mohajirs', Research Directorate, Ottawa, Canada, September – Attachment 2).

### **Post-Partition Bengali migration to Karachi**

Specific information on the number of ethnic Bengalis or Bengali speakers who migrated to Karachi as a result of Partition was not found. Sources consulted focused primarily on the Urdu-speaking migrants to Karachi, and no specific references to the role or circumstances of ethnic Bengalis as Partition-era migrants to Karachi were found. However, information was located to indicate that the proportion of Bengalis among the Partition-era migrants to Karachi was not high. In a book on post-Partition Sindh, Sarah Ansari refers to information from the 1951 Pakistan census which indicates that about 20,000 refugees from the east of India had arrived in Karachi by 1951, and that this group constituted only 3.2 percent of the refugees in Karachi, and 1.2 per cent of the total population. The bulk of the refugees were identified as being from the United Provinces and Punjab regions, who together constituted about 67 per cent of the refugee population in Karachi (Ansari, Sarah 2005 ““Borders” and “Boundaries” in Karachi: 1948-1955”, in *Life After Partition – Migration, Community, and Strife in Sindh: 1947-1962*, Oxford University Press, Pakistan pp. 127, 150 – Attachment 8).

Haris Gazdar notes that between 1947 and 1971, there was a free flow of migrants between East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan:

Bangladesh and Pakistan were two provinces of one federal entity (comprised of East and West Pakistan), and there was free flow of migrants between them. In 1971 after the independence of Bangladesh, both Bangladesh and Pakistan were confronted with the problem of 'stranded' populations (Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, p. 156, *Miurbal* website

[http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

Information was found to indicate that after the events surrounding the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the ethnic Bengali population of Karachi decreased. Varying estimates were found which place the ethnic Bengali population at between 10,000 to 25,000 persons in the period immediately following the independence of Bangladesh. (Raman, B. 2003, 'The case for more fences', *Asia Times Online* website, 6 February

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/EB06Df03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/EB06Df03.html) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 10; Mansoor, Hasan 2003, 'Illegal Lives' *Himal South Asian* website

<http://www.himalmag.com/2003/july/report.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 11). A source was located which reported that a Pakistan Government census report placed the total population of Karachi in 1972 at 3,606,746 persons ('Population in Karachi' (undated), Urban Resource Centre Karachi website

<http://www.urckarachi.org/Population.HTM> – Accessed 18 February 2008 – Attachment 12).

### **The Mohajir Quami Mahaz (MQM) and Mohajir Identity**

Information was found to indicate that in the years following Partition, Urdu-speaking Mohajirs had occupied a favourable social and economic position in Pakistan. However events in the 1970s socially, economically, and politically marginalized Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, and these changes prompted a re-focussing of Mohajir identity. Smruti Pattanaik provides the following analysis of the shift in Mohajir politics in the 1970s:

During the pre-1971 period, the Mohajirs had vigorously stressed on the religious unity of Pakistan for two reasons. First, their vision of Pakistan was based on the ideology of Islam, and propagation of any other identity based on ethno-linguistic ingredients was anti-Islam. Thus, they propagated a unified Pakistan by underplaying other religious, linguistic and regional identities. By appealing for the religious unity, they could strengthen their hold on power. Second, along with the Punjabis, they were the dominant ethnic group, holding positions in the bureaucracy and the military. Dilution of Pakistani identity will threaten their position in the power structure. But with the dissolution of the one-unit formula after the creation of Bangladesh, they realised that the distribution of resources on the basis of ethnicity would threaten their position in the society. Moreover, the creation of four provinces as administrative units confined them to Sindh where they had to share power with the Sindhis.

The Sindh politics after 1971 was characterised by inter-ethnic competition for power and the Mohajirs were marginalised, given the dynamics of the emerging power equations. In Pakistan there is an organic linkage between the salariat class and the landowners owing to the fact that some in the salariat class (bureaucrats) belong to the landowners' group. By virtue of their privileged position, they were better educated. Some of them who were foreign educated were better positioned in the society. Thus, the elite, foreign educated groups are from the land-owning class. In this context, the Mohajirs lagged behind. And after 1971, the Mohajirs' presence in politics was also declining. Certain reasons can be cited to explain this: they did not have the political constituency to fight elections from and they lacked social roots for mass mobilisation.

...For 24 years Mohajirs were the junior partners of the military masters. Being co-partners in the authoritarian rule had alienated them substantially from the masses with whom they had neither social linkages nor political affiliations. In 1972, Sindhi was declared as the official language of Sindh, further constraining socio-economic aspirations of Mohajirs (Pattanaik, Smruti S. 1999, 'Ethnic Aspirations and Political Power: Defining Mohajirs' Grievances in Sindh', *Strategic Analysis* Vol. XXIII, No. 3, [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa\\_99pas03.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_99pas03.html) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 13).

Moonis Ahmar identifies the election of Gohar Ayub Khan to the Pakistani presidency in 1964 (and subsequent Pathan-Mohajir ethnic riots), the adoption of Sindhi as a provincial language in Sindh in 1972, and the growth of Sindhi nationalism, as events which caused the Urdu-speaking mohajir community in Karachi to feel threatened (Ahmar, Moonis 1996, 'Ethnicity and State Power in Pakistan: the Karachi Crisis', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 10, pp 1032 – Attachment 14; for further information on these events see Samad, Yunus 2002, 'In and Out of Power but not Down and Out: Mohajir Identity Politics', in *Pakistan: Nationalism without a Nation?*, ed. C. Jaffrelot, Manohar, New Delhi, pp. 66-67 – Attachment 7). Smruti Pattanaik also makes note of post-1971 changes in the employment quota system, which limited opportunities in Pakistan's civil service for Mohajirs, and the post-1971 refusal of the Pakistan government to resettle Urdu-speaking Biharis who had supported West Pakistan against the Bangladeshi independence movement, identifying both developments as threats to the socio-economic position of Mohajirs (Pattanaik, Smruti S. 1999, 'Ethnic Aspirations and Political Power: Defining Mohajirs' Grievances in Sindh', *Strategic Analysis* Vol. XXIII, No. 3 [http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa\\_99pas03.html](http://www.ciaonet.org/olj/sa/sa_99pas03.html) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 13).

A 1992 paper produced by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board provides background information on the Mohajir Quami Mahaz (MQM) in Pakistan, indicating that contrary to the earlier self-identification of Mohajirs as participants in pan-ethnic Pakistani

national identity, the MQM propagated an idea of Mohajirs as distinct ethnic group, and campaigned for corresponding official recognition at the national level:

The Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) or Mohajir National Front was formed in March 1986 for the protection of immigrants. The existence of the movement is also an indication that Mohajirs no longer accept their identity as Pakistanis and Muslims as they had done previously, but that they have redefined themselves as an ethnic group. In its demand for increased Mohajir quotas for government service and access to education, MQM is a nationalist movement which seeks official recognition of Mohajirs as the fifth nationality of Pakistan. Since the movement draws its support from second generation Mohajirs, that is, those born in Pakistan, the claim to constituting an ethnic or national group is based not on a common origin in India, but on linguistic and cultural differences. Even though Mohajirs speak other languages, such as Gujarati, and dialects, Urdu is seen as the common bond among them, not because it is Pakistan's official language but because it is the mother-tongue of the first and second generation. The MQM explicitly states, that it will- "protect and develop Gujarati, Naimen, Naiwati, Khatiawari, other Mohajir languages and dialects, beside the Urdu language, which is spoken by the majority of Mohajirs". By deliberately using Urdu as the common ethnic-bond, the movement tries to formulate an over-arching ethnicity which, for political purposes, would unite the ethnically and religiously divided Mohajirs. Yet, at the same time, the movement does not appear to discourage the various Mohajir communities from abandoning their culturally distinctive characteristics (Canadian Documentation, Information and Research Branch, Immigration And Refugee Board 1992, 'Cultural Profile Pakistan: The Mohajirs', Research Directorate, Ottawa, Canada, September – Attachment 2).

Oscar Verkaaik contends that the MQM functioned primarily as a middle class movement, and refined the notion of Mohajir identity:

It was only a small group of young, urban, middle-class students, frustrated by the diminishing meaning of being middle class, that lit the fire of a mohajir ethnic identity. They translated frustration and political aspirations into ethnic terms, precisely because they felt the quota system did not discriminate social-economic or linguistic categories – urban middle class Urdu-speakers – per se, but a people that shared those characteristics.

...The typical mohajir at the time of partition, therefore, is now considered to have been an urban civil servant, and those that did not respond to that image, like the farmer from Rajasthan and Bihar or the urban labourers from cities all over India, are not remembered as contributing to the cultural characteristics of the mohajir nation, if they are remembered at all.

...The middle class faction of mohajirs has defined the core characteristics of mohajir cultural identity: education, Urdu, resistance, urbanism. These characteristics are the privileges and qualities that were taken for granted for decades, but were threatened in the 1960s and 1970s. These privileges and qualities are of central importance in the reading of history and have become part of mohajir culture. Therefore, all Mohajirs are considered middle-class, even the slum-dwellers in Usmania Mohajir Colony and the men who take their lunch in five-star hotels inclusive (Verkaaik, Oscar 1994, *A People of Migrants: Ethnicity, State and Religion in Karachi*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 46-47 – Attachment 5).

An *RRT Research Desk Background Briefing Paper* provides further information on the Mohajirs in Pakistan, their initial successes, the subsequent difficulties they faced, and the resultant formation of the MQM (RRT Research & Information 1994, *RRT Research Desk Background Briefing Paper, The Mohajirs In Pakistan and the Mohajir Quami Movement*, 13 April – Attachment 15). Further information on Mohajir politics, identity, and the MQM is available in subsequent journal articles by Moonis Ahmar and Adeel Khan (Khan, Adeel 2004, 'Mohajir Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan: El Dorado Gone Sour', *Asian Studies Review*,



Vol. 28, pp 41-56 – Attachment 6; Ahmar, Moonis 1996, 'Ethnicity and State Power in Pakistan: the Karachi Crisis', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 10, pp 1031-1048 – Attachment 14). Recent RRT *Research Response PAK30819* provides information on the situation of Mohajirs, and the activities of the MQM, current to 2006 (RRT Research & Information 2006, *Research Response PAK30819*, 17 November – Attachment 17). RRT *Research Advice PAK21514* provides background information on the MQM, and problems faced by MQM members up to 1997 (RRT Country Research 1997, *Research Advice PAK21514*, 14 October – Attachment 18). RRT *Research Response PAK17477* provides information on MQM activities in the period 2004-2005 (RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response PAK17477*, 5 September – Attachment 19).

Information was found to indicate that the term Mohajir is applied in different ways for different purposes in Pakistan. In an article published on the *Logos* website in 2005, Sayeed Hasan Khan argued that the use of the term Mohajir in Pakistan can be subjective:

During the early period of Islam when the prophet Mohammad found life perilous in Mecca he migrated to Medina along with his followers, who were called Mohajirs. Most Muslims even today situate themselves in that holy tradition of the prophet. Recently, even former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto who is living in luxurious exile in London and Dubai, had the temerity to describe herself as a mohajir. This free use of the term 'mohajir' is now used in whatever forms one likes. It functions as a slogan in the absence of any meaningful political program (Khan, Sayeed H. 2005 'Critical Reflections of a Mohajir' [http://www.logosjournal.com/issue\\_4.1/khan\\_printable.htm](http://www.logosjournal.com/issue_4.1/khan_printable.htm) – Accessed 13 February 2008 – Attachment 30).

Oscar Verkaaik refers to MQM founder and leader Altaf Hussein as having used and defined the term Mohajir in different ways in different contexts, and argues that Mohajir is a term which does not have a fixed definition in Pakistan:

He used the most recent meaning, that of an ethnic group that did not take the heritage of the migration too strictly, when he wanted to invite supposedly related groups into the ranks of Mohajirs and his MQM. To be a mohajir, he said, you only had to be reasonably fluent in Urdu, a city-dweller, and a member of the 'oppressed middle class' that shared a 'common interest'. To picture the injustice done to that middle class, however, he immediately added the second meaning of the word, being a migrant, saying the locals had never liked the urban middle class because to them they were not 'the sons of the soil'. Already the next sentence referred to the first, religious meaning of the word mohajir: Altaf described how 'we' had sacrificed 'our blood and lives' for the sake of Muslim unity, threatening 'we could do that again'. Present-day mohajir discourse was not something new. It rather was the addition of a constructed memory (the religiously inspired migration) to the older mohajir discourse (the denial of the specialness of migrants) that made for an ethnic group that claimed it was born out of partition, while at almost the same time declaring it was not.

This is not to say mohajirs are irrational. Instead I argue that ethnicity in this case is an ad-hoc ideology. 'Everyone can be a pilgrim for fifteen minutes', a mohajir painter said, which also means that everyone can be a middle class city-dweller the next quarter of an hour. To be a mohajir means different, even contradictory, things in different circumstances. The past is a tool that can be manipulated, reinterpreted, even pushed aside momentarily. As a group, mohajirs adopted a definition of their ethnicity that worked (Verkaaik, Oscar 1994, *A People of Migrants: Ethnicity, State and Religion in Karachi*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, p. 14 – Attachment 5).

## **Growth of the Bengali population in Karachi**

In a 2005 paper, Haris Gazdar reported claims that in the 1980's, ethnic Bengalis began to migrate illegally to Karachi:

It is claimed that in the 1980s, a large number of ethnic Bengalis also began to migrate towards Pakistan in search of livelihoods, and most of them arrived in Karachi through irregular channels. Whereas the 'stranded' Pakistanis or Biharis were quickly assimilated as citizens of Pakistan, the ethnic Bengali migrants and residents are officially regarded as irregular international migrants. Although both groups are thought to be economically marginalised, the Bengalis are also politically excluded, and are considered as one of the poorest communities in Karachi (Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 156, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

A report published on the *Himal* website in 2003 placed the number of illegal immigrants of Bengali ethnicity in Karachi at 1.3 million people, of a total estimated population of 12 million (Mansoor, Hasan 2003, 'Illegal Lives' *Himal South Asian* website <http://www.himalmag.com/2003/july/report.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 11). An article published on the Pakistani *Daily Times* website in 2006 quoted unofficial estimates which placed the ethnic Bengali population of Karachi at between 2 and 3 million people (Naqvi, Abbas 2006, 'Falling Back', *Daily Times* website, 17 December [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C12%5C17%5Cstory\\_17-12-2006\\_pg12\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C12%5C17%5Cstory_17-12-2006_pg12_3) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 20).

A 2003 paper on migration issues in Pakistan by Haris Gazdar provides background information on the number of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi. Gazdar expresses skepticism regarding contemporary claims concerning the number of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi, and indicates that estimates vary according to the political aims of their authors:

Including the population of ethnic Bengalis who are longstanding citizens of Pakistan, some commentators have claimed that there are over a million ethnic Bengalis and perhaps 200,000 Burmese in Karachi. However, the idea that around 10% of the entire population of Karachi is made up of migrants and refugees from Bangladesh and Burma remains implausible and untested. The debate is further complicated by the ethnic demography of particular areas. Sindhi ethnic nationalists, for example, have been claiming that large numbers of Bengalis and Burmese (and Biharis) were illegally settled in Sindh by federal agencies in order to turn Sindhis into a minority in Sindh... On other occasions the ethnic nationalists have argued that these non- Sindhi communities do not (yet) represent a significant segment of the population. Representatives and leaders of the Bengali community also cite the number of migrants as being very large (to claim political weight) and small (to alleviate ethnic insecurity). In any case, there are significant ethnic Bengali and Burmese communities in Karachi, and they appear to be concentrated close to the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy. People from these communities work in relatively low-paid jobs. They are also highly vulnerable to arbitrary detention and police harassment – their uncertain legal status is usually the pretext for extracting bribes. Although many people have acquired Pakistani citizenship documents – in some cases through illicit means – their vulnerability and lack of security remains high. The source of vulnerability lies both in the police system and in the proliferation of ethnicity-based politics in Karachi (Gazdar, Haris 2003, 'A Review of Migration Issues in Pakistan', *Livelihoods Connect* website, p. 13 [http://www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/docs/Dhaka\\_CP\\_4.pdf](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/Dhaka_CP_4.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 21).

Information was found to indicate that the Pakistani government began a program to register non-citizens in Karachi in 2002, and that all ethnic Bengalis were treated as *prima facie* non-citizens, and were asked to register with the government regardless of whether or not they migrated to Karachi prior to the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. However, information was found to indicate that Pakistani government officials announced that ethnic Bengalis living in West Pakistan prior to 1971 may be eligible for citizenship, if they could prove their residence history ('Bengalis living in Pakistan before 1971 to get citizenship' 2002, *Dawn* website, 13 November <http://www.dawn.com/2002/11/13/local17.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 22; 'Aliens again told to get registered', 2002, *Dawn Internet Edition* website, 6 July <http://www.dawn.com/2002/07/06/local18.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 23).

A 2003 article by Hasan Mansoor, published on the *Himal* website, provides a summary of recent Pakistani government approaches to the ethnic Bengali population in Karachi:

While many Bangla speakers in Pakistan arrived relatively recently, there is also the challenge of adjudicating the citizenship claims of Bengalis whose residence dates to the 24 years between the 1947 partition and Bangladeshi independence... After Bangladesh's war of independence, fewer than 25,000 Bengalis opted to remain in Pakistan, according to NARA director general Shaikh, while most of the rest migrated to the former eastern wing. A 1978 amendment to the Citizenship Act nullified the Pakistani citizenship of those domiciled in erstwhile East Pakistan. Bengalis remaining in Pakistan were required to submit a Form E-I to the home department of their province of residence and apply for citizenship, although according to the Sindh home department, no Bengalis submitted such forms in that province after the war. Many of these people have led a precarious legal existence for the past three decades.

The government committee also held meetings with Bengali community representatives and, in response to concerns that they lack documentary proof of residence, proposed that local police officials be empowered to recommend the granting of citizenship after verification. Critics, however, say that this proposal would only lead to massive corruption among police officers. Another widely shared concern among non-citizen residents is the suspicion that the entire government registration process is merely a plot to launch deportation proceedings once particulars are known to authorities. Interior ministry officials dismiss this claim, and note that none of the 35,000 migrants registered to date have been deported. "On the contrary, we are trying to resolve their civic and social problems, including extending them educational, health and other facilities", says one official. He also discloses that the government committee has been asked to review other countries' immigration and citizenship policies in order to suggest improvements in Pakistan's system (Mansoor, Hasan 2003, 'Illegal Lives' *Himal South Asian* website <http://www.himalmag.com/2003/july/report.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 11).

Information was also found to indicate that Bengalis have been subject to police harassment in Karachi on the basis of their ethnicity in recent years ('Bengali-speaking people threaten protest' 2003, *Dawn* website, 11 February <http://www.dawn.com/2003/02/11/local20.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 24). More detailed information on the nature and extent of the issues recently faced by ethnic Bengalis in Karachi is presented below in response to [Question 2](#).

Despite estimates which indicate that a significant proportion of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi arrived in Pakistan after 1971, information was found to indicate that in this context of

government scrutiny of the residence rights of ethnic Bengalis, many ethnic Bengalis in Karachi have positioned themselves as pre-1971 immigrants, a claim which would give them a stronger claim to Pakistani nationality and citizenship. In a 2005 paper, Haris Gazdar reports that:

In random interviews conducted for this chapter in Bengali communities, very few individual admitted to having arrived in Pakistan after 1971. Well-placed informants assert that perhaps as little as 15 per cent of the Bengalis of Karachi are 'border crossers' or post-1971 irregular migrants (Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 169-170, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

Articles were also located in the Pakistani media which reported claims that the majority of Bengalis in Karachi had arrived prior to 1971 ('Bengali-speaking people threaten protest' 2003, *Dawn* website, 11 February <http://www.dawn.com/2003/02/11/local20.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 24; 'Bengalis celebrate Pakistan Day with fervour' 2007, *Karachipage* website, 24 March [http://karachipage.com/news/Mar\\_07/032407.html#Bengali](http://karachipage.com/news/Mar_07/032407.html#Bengali) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 25).

An article by Dr Moonis Ahmar, published in 2002, provides an example of the discussion of the issue of the Pakistani government drive to register all ethnic Bengalis in Karachi:

...not much is known about one million Bengalis who are living in Pakistan since decades and who despite their loyalty and allegiance to their country are still facing an identity crisis and humiliation from official circles.

One vivid example of the plight of Pakistani Bengalis could be gauged from the fact that on the occasion of last elections held on October 10 this year, a major issue on the question of nationality of these Bengalis was raised by the government. They were asked to either register themselves or face deportation. The children of those Bengalis who were born in present day Pakistan and whose forefathers had fought for Pakistan movement suddenly realised that they had to prove their allegiance to their country. As a result of growing insecurity and pressure, Bengali Muslims living in Pakistan, particularly in Karachi were forced to raise their voice, hold demonstrations and file petitions before the government to respect their loyalty to Pakistan and exempt them for registration and other humiliating requirements.

In order to help Pakistani Bengalis from further hardships some political organisations of Pakistan also raised their voice and demanded from the government that the illogical requirement for seeking registration for the Bengalis should be withdrawn. They also questioned the rationale on the part of Federal Interior Ministry to ask Bengalis to fill various forms and get white passports so that they can visit their country of origin – Bangladesh. It is strange that why only Bengalis have been singled out to prove their identity when millions of Afghans and other foreign nationals are living in Pakistan illegally and why all such policies are being formulated and implemented when Pakistan claims that it has excellent relations with Bangladesh (Ahmar, Moonis 2002, 'Victims of History', *Jang* website <http://web.archive.org/web/20031028075725/http://jang.com.pk/thenews/dec2002-daily/24-12-2002/oped/o4.htm> – Accessed 13 February 2008 – Attachment 26).

## **Recent MQM – Bengali alliances**

Oscar Verkaaik provides information to indicate that in 1990, the MQM attempted to broaden its support base, and changed its name from Mohajir Quami Mahaz to Muttahida (United) Quami Mahaz:

The MQM, as an ethnic party, had reached its limits in 1990. As long as it continued to be a party merely for mohajirs, its influence would never extend beyond the boundaries of urban Sindh. Feeling certain of the support of the bulk of the mohajir community, MQM leaders in 1991 attempted to expand the scope of the party by suggesting to change the party's name from Mohajir Quami Mahaz into Muttahida (United) Quami Mahaz. In the party's rhetoric the mohajir bias was dropped. Instead, 'all oppressed classes' were addressed, which included, according to the MQM, 98 per cent of the Pakistanis. This figure of 98 per cent was repeated so consistently that it became inseparably connected to the MQM and synonymous with the party's great expectations. It was hoped that eventually the oppressed of all ethnic groups would enter the party's ranks, but for the time being the MQM especially invited the smaller groups. During the national elections campaign of 1990, for example, a Baluchi migrant in Karachi was made the MQM's candidate in a sure to win district. Pathan settlers in Karachi were lured into the extended MQM community by giving them access to the various social organizations of the MQM. The party even gave more attention to another relatively small group, the Seraikis from south Punjab, who have recently discovered their distinct ethnic identity (Verkaaik, Oscar 1994, *A People of Migrants: Ethnicity, State and Religion in Karachi*, VU University Press, Amsterdam, pp. 73-74 – Attachment 5).

Pakistani media reports were found to indicate that the MQM has recently formed political alliances with the Bengali community in Pakistan. Articles from February and May 2007 reported statements by MQM member and Sindh Minister for Local Government, Katchi Abadies and Spatial Development in support of the Bengali community of Karachi ('LG minister to visit Bengali localities soon' 2007, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 15 February – Attachment 27; 'Pakistan provincial minister highlights problems facing Bengalis' 2007, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 31 May – Attachment 28).

An article published on the Pakistan *Daily Times* website indicates that Karachi's Pakistan Bengali Action Committee (PBAC) had allied with the MQM for the January 2008 elections ('Bengalis Action Committee to back MQM in polls' 2007, *Daily Times* website, 26 November [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\11\26\story\\_26-11-2007\\_pg12\\_4](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\11\26\story_26-11-2007_pg12_4) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 29).

## **2. Have Pakistanis with Bengali origins who are not politically active faced serious harm or discrimination in the last five years in Karachi or elsewhere in Pakistan?**

Claims that persons of Bengali ethnicity were subject to harassment, extortion, violence and torture by police in Karachi on the basis of their language and ethnicity between 2002 and 2007 were found in the Pakistani media, and in a report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (for discussions of these claims see Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2005, 'Freedom of Movement' in *The State of Human Rights in 2005* [http://www.hrcp-web.org/images/publication/annual\\_report/pdf\\_2005/3-1.pdf](http://www.hrcp-web.org/images/publication/annual_report/pdf_2005/3-1.pdf) – Accessed 14 May 2007 – Attachment 44, and Gazdar, Haris 2003, 'A Review of Migration Issues in Pakistan', *Livelihoods Connect* website, p. 13 [http://www.livelihoods.org/hot\\_topics/docs/Dhaka\\_CP\\_4.pdf](http://www.livelihoods.org/hot_topics/docs/Dhaka_CP_4.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 21; for Pakistani media reports on police violence against ethnic Bengalis refer to 'Bengali-speaking people threaten protest' 2003, *Dawn* website, 11 February <http://www.dawn.com/2003/02/11/local20.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment

24, 'Equal rights for all citizens demanded' 2004, *Dawn* website, 6 September <http://www.dawn.com/2004/09/06/local13.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 45, and 'Bengali Body Seeks Help Against Police Harassment' 2007, *The Nation* website, 26 January <http://www.nation.com.pk/daily/jan-2007/26/nationalnews12.php> – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 48).

Information was found to indicate that ethnic Bengali political movements have been operating in Karachi in the past 5 years, and have been active in advocating for ethnic Bengali rights. In particular, these movements have protested against the actions of the police against ethnic Bengalis, and have demanded citizenship rights for ethnic Bengalis. Information was found to indicate that local and national government officials have responded to and engaged with the claims of these organisations. Information was found to indicate that these movements have developed affiliations with numerous Pakistani political parties, including the Muttahida Quami Mahaz (MQM), the Pakistan Muslim League – “Quaid-i-Azam” (PML-Q), the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan Party. No information was found to indicate that these ethnic Bengali political movements have been involved in violent actions, or that the actions of these political movements (including large public rallies) have resulted in any violent action against ethnic Bengalis by the government of Pakistan, or by any other political groups (for Pakistani media reports on Bengali political and community groups see Rahaman, Mashiur 2007, ‘Thousands turn up for new Bengali Party’, *Daily Times* website, 24 March [http://dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\03\24\story\\_24-3-2007\\_pg12\\_2](http://dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\03\24\story_24-3-2007_pg12_2) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 53, and ‘Pakistan-based Bengalis form another faction of PML; announce to contest next general polls’ 2006, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 24 March – Attachment 57; for information on support for the Bengali community from other political parties see ‘PML, PPP back Bangla-speaking people’ 2004, *Daily Times* website, 6 September [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_6-9-2004\\_pg7\\_36](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_6-9-2004_pg7_36) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 51, and ‘Bengalis celebrate Pakistan Day with fervour’ 2007, *Karachipage* website, 24 March [http://karachipage.com/news/Mar\\_07/032407.html#Bengali](http://karachipage.com/news/Mar_07/032407.html#Bengali) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 25).

Information was found which indicated that ethnic Bengalis have been the subject of negative societal attitudes in Pakistan, and that while the origins of these attitudes pre-date Partition, they were exacerbated by the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. Information was found to indicate that many Bengalis who were resident in West Pakistan in 1971 departed the country at or around the time of Bangladeshi independence. Information was found to indicate that in the 1990’s the Pakistani government made efforts to deport some ethnic Bengalis to Bangladesh (for background on negative attitudes to Bengalis in Pakistan see ‘The Beloved Country: Details crucial facts from our history’ 2002, *Views on News* website, December <http://viewsonnews.net/articles/South%20East%20Asia/Pakistan%20Army/beloved-country.html> – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 32; for a discussion of position of Bengalis in Pakistan after 1971 see ‘Memories of Mujib, 1971, haunt Bengalis in Pakistan’ 2006, *Hindustan Times*, 17 December – Attachment 31).

As noted above in response to [Question 1](#), information was found to indicate that since the 1980’s the number of persons of Bengali ethnicity in Karachi has increased, that there is currently a significant population of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi, and that illegal immigration was a significant contributor in this trend. Information was not found regarding the treatment

of ethnic Bengalis elsewhere in Pakistan. Information was not found to indicate that significant populations of ethnic Bengalis existed elsewhere in Pakistan (for information on the growth of the Bengali population in Karachi see Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 156, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9, and Mansoor, Hasan 2003, 'Illegal Lives' *Himal South Asian* website <http://www.himalmag.com/2003/july/report.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 11).

A report, published by UN-Habitat in 2005, contains information to indicate that ethnic Bengalis in Karachi are socially and economically marginalised, and have recently been treated by the Pakistani government as non-citizens by default of their ethnicity. Information was found to indicate that Bengalis may be subject to state and police harassment on the basis of their ethnicity (Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 151-186, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

Corresponding information was found in the Pakistani media to indicate that in the early 2000s, the Pakistan Interior Ministry commenced an initiative to register illegal aliens in Pakistan, and that this initiative focussed on Bengalis in Karachi. Information was found to indicate that the Pakistan Citizenship Act of 1951 was amended in 1978 to provide that persons normally domiciled in East Pakistan prior to the independence of Bangladesh would cease to be Pakistani citizens. Information was found to indicate that government officials in Karachi treated all Bengalis in Karachi as non-citizens, irrespective of whether they had been domiciled in West Pakistan prior to 1971. Information was found to indicate that ethnic Bengalis failed to respond to this registration initiative in significant numbers, and that while the Pakistani government announced that ethnic Bengalis residing in West Pakistan prior to 1971 may be eligible for Pakistani citizenship, it still required that they register, irrespective of their individual citizenship status and any corresponding documentation they may possess (for media reports on government treatment of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi as non-citizens see 'Aliens again told to get registered', 2002, *Dawn Internet Edition* website, 6 July <http://www.dawn.com/2002/07/06/local18.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 23, 'Bengalis living in Pakistan before 1971 to get citizenship' 2002, *Dawn* website, 13 November <http://www.dawn.com/2002/11/13/local17.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 22, and 'Crackdown on aliens planned' 2003, *Dawn* website, 5 August <http://www.dawn.com/2003/08/05/local22.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 42).

An overview of source material on these issues is provided below under the following subheadings: [Background on treatment of Bengalis in Pakistan](#), [Recent treatment of Bengalis in Pakistan](#), [National Aliens Registration Authority \(NARA\)](#), [Media reports of harassment of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi](#), and [Ethnic Bengali political movements in Karachi](#).

### **Background on treatment of Bengalis in Pakistan**

A December 2006 article from the *Hindustan Times* provides information to indicate that ethnic Bengalis in Karachi have suffered discrimination as a result of negative attitudes stemming from the 1971 independence of Bangladesh:

“The fall of Dhaka”, as the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 is referred to in Pakistan, is something the estimated two million-plus Bengalis of Karachi can never forget but also do not want to speak about. After 35 years, many of them confess to having “a soft corner” for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh’s founding father, but are afraid of being condemned as ‘traitors’ and inviting the wrath of Karachi Police. The belief in the Muslim League’s ideology forced them to migrate to Pakistan after the 1971 war. For numerous others, their having lived in the erstwhile West Pakistan made them stay on, the Daily Times said Sunday after a survey. Bangladesh was the eastern wing of Pakistan until 1971 when a Bengali nationalist struggle for freedom led to an India-Pakistan war ultimately to the break up of the east as an independent country. Almost all the people in Karachi’s Chittagong Colony have had to, at one point or another, make a decision about their status in Karachi and how they want to deal with the authorities.

...Life has not been easy as they were huddled together by authorities and ill-treated by the locals – who were themselves migrants from India at the time of partition in 1947. They are treated as foreigners under a changed policy since 1995 that requires them to register with the National Aliens Registration Authority (NARA). But registration, which gives some facilities, also leads to official harassment. Though figures for Bengalis vary between 2-2.5 million in Karachi alone, NARA has registered only 100,000 (‘Memories of Mujib, 1971, haunt Bengalis in Pakistan’ 2006, *Hindustan Times*, 17 December – Attachment 31).

An article published on the Pakistan *Daily Times* website indicates that the Bengali community in Karachi required government protection at the time of the secession of Bangladesh in 1971 (Naqvi, Abbas 2006, ‘Falling Back’, *Daily Times* website, 17 December [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C12%5C17%5Cstory\\_17-12-2006\\_pg12\\_3](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C12%5C17%5Cstory_17-12-2006_pg12_3) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 20).

A paper by Dr Moonis Ahmar provides commentary on negative attitudes to Bengalis in Pakistan in a 2002 article:

Despite the tragic separation of East Pakistan and the growing realization among the people of “New Pakistan” that great injustice was done to Bengalis in all walks of life and a new era of friendship and cooperation should be unleashed between Dhaka and Islamabad, there still exists a strong lobby in Pakistan who is not in favour of giving a fair deal to those who are the genuine heirs of united Pakistan. For such people, an element of superiority complex vis-a-vis Bengalis still exist and they look down upon that community as they used to do when East Pakistan was with us. To them, Bengalis were unpatriotic people and should not be given any scope in remaining Pakistan (Ahmar, Moonis 2002, ‘Victims of History’, *Jang* website <http://web.archive.org/web/20031028075725/http://jang.com.pk/thenews/dec2002-daily/24-12-2002/oped/o4.htm> – Accessed 13 February 2008 – Attachment 26).

An article originally published in the Pakistan *Defence Journal* (and reproduced on and sourced for this response from the *Views on News* website) also provides an extended overview of attitudes towards, and bias against, ethnic Bengalis in Pakistan (‘The Beloved Country: Details crucial facts from our history’ 2002, *Views on News* website, December <http://viewsonnews.net/articles/South%20East%20Asia/Pakistan%20Army/beloved-country.html> – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 32).

A commentary piece by B. Raman, a former counter-terrorism head at India’s Research and Analysis Wing, published on the *Asia Times Online* website in February 2003, contends that after the independence of Bangladesh, the Bengali population of Karachi dropped to around 10,0000 people, but by 1995, had swelled to 1,626,324 people, or around 10 per cent of the



population. This article also provides information about subsequent action taken by the Pakistani government regarding the Bengali population of Karachi:

In a secret report submitted to Benazir Bhutto, then the Pakistani prime minister, in 1995, the inspector-general of police in Karachi at the time pointed out that the activities of different terrorist groups could not be controlled unless action was taken to stop further illegal immigration of Muslims into Karachi from other countries and those already living illegally there were expelled. He expressed concern over the alarming increase in the influx of Bangladeshis through India and cautioned that if this continued, in another 20 years, Bengali-speaking people would overtake the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs as the largest ethnic group in Karachi and that this could lead to a demand for a second Bangladesh.

Alarmed by his report, she ordered the arrest and deportation of all Bangladeshi migrants in Karachi. The Khalida Zia government, which was then in power in Dhaka, refused to accept them and sent two planeloads back to Pakistan. Her action created tension in Pakistan-Bangladesh relations and was criticized by the religious fundamentalist parties as anti-Islam. She was ultimately forced to abandon it (Raman, B. 2003, 'The case for more fences', *Asia Times Online* website, 6 February [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/EB06Df03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/EB06Df03.html) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 10).

Information was found to indicate that Pakistan deported some ethnic Bengalis from Karachi in November 1995:

Pakistan deported approximately 150 Bengali migrants during the first phase of its crackdown on "illegal migrants." The Bengalis were blamed for causing unemployment, ethnic tension and political violence, and the government claimed that they had no work permits. The Bengalis claimed that they were living there legally and that their passports and papers had been seized in Karachi before their deportation ('Chronology for Mohajirs in Pakistan' 2007, *Minorities at Risk* website, 10 January <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/chronology.asp?groupId=77007> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 33).

### **Recent treatment of Bengalis in Pakistan**

A letter to the editor of Karachi news outlet *Dawn* by Moonis Ahmar provides a useful summary of prevailing opinions on the issue of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi in 2002:

Two divergent opinions exist on the issue of Bengalis living in Pakistan. First, a majority of the Bengali population lived in this country even before 1971. They are legally Pakistanis and have all legitimate rights as citizens of Pakistan. Therefore, they should not give proof of their stay in the then West Pakistan.

Second, out of one million Bengalis living in Pakistan, a majority of them are aliens and have been illegally living in this country and should be either deported to Bangladesh or be issued alien registration cards.

...If seen from a historical and ideological point of view, the government cannot equate Bengalis living in Pakistan with Afghans, Iranians or Indians because they were Pakistanis till 1971 and their contribution to the Pakistan Movement cannot be denied. It is suggested that, instead of harassing the Bengali population and putting them at the mercy of the special branch of police or the home department for the issuance of alien registration cards or citizenship certificates, they should be properly treated (Ahmar, Moonis 2002, 'Are Bengalis aliens in Pakistan?' *Dawn* website, 19 November <http://www.dawn.com/2002/11/19/letted.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 34).

A 2005 report by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan provided information to indicate that some persons of Bengali origin were treated as foreign nationals in Pakistan by government officials, and were denied passports:

The National Authority for the Registration of Aliens (NARA) continued efforts to register foreign nationals present in the country. A lack of trust and a failure to inform people as to the purposes behind the registration meant many non-Pakistanis were reluctant to register. A still more alarming dimension of this issue was the alleged refusal of officials at the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to accept Bengali or Bihari speakers as Pakistani nationals, apparently purely on the basis of their language. In July, HRCP received complaints in Karachi that the National Identity Cards (NICS) of some citizens of Bengali or Bihari origin, holding were being withheld by NADRA and passports being denied to them. HRCP contacted the Pakistani Fundamental Rights Forum which confirmed this. Offices of NADRA had not responded to HRCP queries in the matter into September (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2005, 'Freedom of Movement' in *The State of Human Rights in 2005* [http://www.hrcp-web.org/images/publication/annual\\_report/pdf\\_2005/3-1.pdf](http://www.hrcp-web.org/images/publication/annual_report/pdf_2005/3-1.pdf) – Accessed 14 May 2007 – Attachment 44).

A 2005 paper by Haris Gazdar, published by UN-Habitat, analyzes the position of different ethnic communities in Karachi, making a distinction between “regularity” (whether a person’s legal status has been regularized) and “conspicuousness” (whether people are social accepted, or socially vulnerable). This report identifies persons of Bengali ethnicity in Karachi as being particularly vulnerable:

The ‘conspicuous’ communities of international migrants in Karachi today – people from Bangladesh, Myanmar and Afghanistan – are a subset of historical and even current flows of international migration. Among international migrants from South and Southeast Asia, for example, Muslim migrants from India and ‘Bihari’ migrants from Bangladesh have been more readily assimilated, integrated, and naturalised than people of Bengali and Burmese ethnic origins. Similarly, Pashtun migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, particularly those from areas bordering Pakistan, are far less conspicuous compared to migrants belonging to other more distant ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Therefore, ethnicity seems to play an important role in the treatment of international migrants from various countries of origin.

On the whole, it can be said that the conspicuous international migrants face insecurity and vulnerability in Pakistan due to their uncertain legal status in the country. They tend to reside in clusters, but in this regard their condition is not very different from those of other communities of ‘natives’, internal migrants or naturalised international migrants in Karachi. Conspicuous international migrants are politically marginalised, socially excluded, and economically underprivileged. Moreover, there are differences even among conspicuous international migrants, with the ethnic Bengalis and Burmese being the most vulnerable (Gazdar, Haris 2005, ‘Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation’, in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 157-158, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

The same paper goes on to provide the following assessment of the situation of Bengalis in Karachi:

- Whereas international migrants of various origins arrived in Karachi in large numbers over the past six decades, some groups – such as people from Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Afghanistan – have been identified as being particularly conspicuous. These migrants – of

which many among the Bengali and Burmese ethnic communities claim not to be ‘foreign migrants’ at all – face insecurity due to their uncertain legal status and lack of the protection otherwise enjoyed by assimilated groups.

- On top of their uncertain legal status, migrants deemed to be ‘irregular’ are vulnerable to extortion from corrupt civil servants. Far from gaining protection from government institutions, irregular migrants are the victims of unscrupulous officials demanding bribes. Vulnerability to government institutions also exposes such migrants to abusive practices such as trafficking and bonded labour. The government’s policy of arbitrarily labelling all ethnic Bengali and Burmese people as suspected illegal aliens has contributed to the sense of insecurity and vulnerability.

- Conspicuous irregular international migrants tend to suffer underprivileged economic and social conditions. They are clustered in low-income irregular settlements and work in low-paid jobs. Labour markets are highly segmented and these groups earn a living in some of the most unpleasant and low-paid segments. Bengali and Burmese ethnic groups tend to be found in the poorest localities such as Machhar Colony ... and slum dwellings on the coastal fringe of Korangi (Gazdar, Haris 2005, ‘Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation’, in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 161-163, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

In the same paper, Gazdar specifies that the general situation of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi is primarily determined by their ethnicity, not by whether or not they personally have regularised their legal status:

The condition of international migrants depends not so much on their status as irregular migrants, than on their prior position within the social, cultural and political hierarchy. Initial Muslim migrants from post-partition India – particularly from the Urdu-speaking areas – as well as irregular migrants who arrived from those communities subsequently, are well-integrated, and are regarded as the core population of Karachi. Bengalis as a group, however, have been disenfranchised, regardless of individual status, on the basis of race and ethnicity by official fiat. Similar contrasts exist between Pashtun Afghans and non-Pashtuns and, among non-Pashtuns, between those such as Ismailis who have prior sectarian affiliation in Pakistan, and others. It is more appropriate specifically to address the situation of ‘conspicuous’ international migrants, such as ethnic Bengalis, Burmese, and segments of the Afghans, rather than international migrants in general. Pakistan’s national policy towards conspicuous international migrants appears to have been effective to the extent that it has considerably increased the costs and reduced the incentives for new migration from Bangladesh, Burma and Afghanistan. The policy has imposed severe costs and constraints on the existing population of conspicuous migrants – people who are, in any case, amongst the most marginalised communities among migrants and nonmigrants alike. The declared welfare- and rights-oriented promises of the national policy of regularisation (through NARA) have not been achieved. Ethnic Bengalis and Burmese are more vulnerable now than they have been in the past (Gazdar, Haris 2005, ‘Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation’, in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 181-182, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

### **National Aliens Registration Authority (NARA)**

A 2005 paper published by UN-Habitat indicates that the federal Pakistani Interior Ministry has responsibility for implementing policy on international immigrants in Pakistan, and that

in 2000, the ministry established the National Aliens Registration Authority (NARA) to collect information on immigrants. This paper notes that although NARA's mandate extends across Pakistan, the focus of its activities has been on Karachi (Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 155, 166, *Miurbal* website [http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

Information about NARA's mandate and activities, and about the project to issue identity cards to Pakistani citizens through the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) was located on the Pakistan Government web portal ('National Alien Registration Authority' 2004, Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Interior website, 10 May [http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/divisions/ContentInfo.jsp?DivID=23&cPath=221\\_227\\_309&ContentID=782](http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/divisions/ContentInfo.jsp?DivID=23&cPath=221_227_309&ContentID=782) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 35; 'National Database and Registration Authority' 2007, Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Interior website, 13 March [http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/divisions/ContentInfo.jsp?DivID=23&cPath=221\\_227\\_309&ContentID=781](http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/divisions/ContentInfo.jsp?DivID=23&cPath=221_227_309&ContentID=781) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 36).

A 2005 paper published by UN-Habitat indicates that NARA automatically considers all ethnic Bengalis to have irregular citizenship status, and provides a summary of the issues surrounding NARA's activities:

Whereas the policy objective of NARA is to record and regulate existing irregular migrants, the agency's operational definition of its task focuses almost exclusively on people belonging to specific ethnic groups – particularly Bengalis and Burmese. NARA officially declares all ethnic Bengalis as irregular migrants – regardless of their length of stay, or the fact that they might have arrived in West Pakistan as Pakistani citizens prior to the secession of East Pakistan, or even that the Bengali residents of Karachi are registered voters and many of them have been living in the city for decades. NARA's almost exclusive focus on ethnic Bengalis means that other possible illegal entrants – say, from India, or Biharis from Bangladesh – are presumed to be de facto citizens. Not only is this operational definition racist in its approach, it also symbolises the complete ineffectiveness of past and current policy-making.

In random interviews conducted for this chapter in Bengali communities, very few individual admitted to having arrived in Pakistan after 1971. Well-placed informants assert that perhaps as little as 15 per cent of the Bengalis of Karachi are 'border crossers' or post-1971 irregular migrants. Ethnic Bengalis argue that far from enhancing their rights, regularisation as migrants through NARA would erode their claims to citizenship. This is why so few have volunteered to register with NARA. Another factor behind Bengali reluctance to give up their claims to full citizenship is the current confused governance arrangements. As mentioned earlier, in Karachi members of this community remain registered voters and even have a number of elected representatives, including over 70 councillors and at least one nazim (head of local government) of a Union Council.

Putting to the test the mutually conflicting claims of NARA and the Bengali community is a challenge. The fact that Pakistani authorities, including the Interior Ministry (of which NARA is an agency) are unable to wield effective control over civil servants is a major problem. Many irregular migrants have been able to obtain the documents required to prove Pakistani nationality – such as a national identity card – through bribes to civil servants. The documents thus obtained are not fakes, in the sense that they have been issued officially. In an implicit acknowledgement of the corruption among their own staff, State agencies arbitrarily operate on the principle that this type of document is not adequate evidence of Pakistani nationality.

Instead they fall back on the racist strategy of presuming that all members of a particular ethnic group are irregular migrants. NARA has had other consequences for ethnic Bengali and Burmese migrants in Karachi. Police squads specially created to enforce NARA regulations have gained powers of detention of suspected irregular migrants. Bengali and Burmese residents complain that these police units randomly arrest people and charge them with being irregular migrants. Such a course of action is of a racist nature, too, since it relies on identifying Bengali and Burmese individuals on the basis of appearance, language and accent. Pakistani courts have tended to acquit those people who have documentary proof of citizenship. Many complain that police officers use their special powers of arrest not in the pursuit of national policy but in a bid to extract bribes from ethnic Bengali and Burmese people. For all its stated intentions, NARA has not gone anywhere near a resolution of the problem of irregular migrants, nor provided protection to these migrants either. On the contrary, ethnic Bengalis and Burmese complain that they have been virtually marginalised into particular economic activities, because they feel vulnerable when commuting away from their own localities (Gazdar, Haris 2005, 'Karachi, Pakistan: Between Regulation And Regularisation', in *International Migrants and the City* ed. M. Balbo, UN-Habitat, Venice, pp. 169-171, *Miurbal* website

[http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001\\_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf](http://www.miurbal.net/documents/p001_International%20Migrants%20and%20the%20City.pdf) – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 9).

Reports in the Pakistani media were located which chart the activities of NARA in Karachi. A 2001 article on the *Dawn* website provides general information on NARA ('NARA delays drive for registration of aliens' 2001, *Dawn* website, 5 October

<http://www.dawn.com/2001/10/05/local14.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 37). Articles published on the *Dawn* website in 2002 reported that Bengalis who had resided in West Pakistan prior to 1971 would be eligible for citizenship, but that they would need to register with NARA, regardless of whether they already had documentation ('Aliens again told to get registered', 2002, *Dawn* website, 6 July

<http://www.dawn.com/2002/07/06/local18.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 23; 'Bengalis living in Pakistan before 1971 to get citizenship' 2002, *Dawn* website, 13 November <http://www.dawn.com/2002/11/13/local17.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 22).

A current version of the Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951 was not located through the Pakistani Government web portal. An excerpt of the relevant section (16-A) of the Act was located on a website regarding stateless persons in Bangladesh ('Pakistani Citizenship Act 1951 Excerpts' 2006, 'Pakistani Citizenship Act 1951 Excerpts' 2006 [http://www.statelesspeopleinbangladesh.net/pak\\_citizen\\_act.php](http://www.statelesspeopleinbangladesh.net/pak_citizen_act.php) – Accessed 19 February 2008 – Attachment 56).

An article published on the *Dawn* website in March 2003 indicated that more than a year after NARA commenced operations in Karachi, only 26,000 persons had registered as aliens with the agency ('Only 26,000 aliens registered so far' 2003, *Dawn* website, 29 March

<http://www.dawn.com/2003/03/29/local16.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 38). Subsequent articles were found which reported reassurances from government officials that Bengalis residing in West Pakistan prior to 1971 were entitled to citizenship and would receive appropriate documentation if they registered with NARA ('Bengalis to get citizenship, says Nazim' 2003, *Dawn* website, 1 April

<http://www.dawn.com/2003/04/01/local5.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 39; 'Federal government considering granting citizenship to Bengalis settled in Pakistan before and born here after 1971' 2004, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 19 May – Attachment 40). A March 2005 article reported on a commitment from the Interior Affairs Minister to pro-actively issue NICs to pre-1971 Bengalis ('Policy to issue NICs to old

Bengalis in final phase, says Waseem Shahzad' 2005, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 5 March – Attachment 41).

An article published on the *Dawn* website on 5 August 2003 reported that NARA was planning a further crackdown on immigrants in Karachi, particularly Bengalis. It also reported that government officials who had fraudulently issued identity documents would be prosecuted and that only the citizenship papers issued by NARA would be accepted by authorities ('Crackdown on aliens planned' 2003, *Dawn* website, 5 August <http://www.dawn.com/2003/08/05/local22.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 42). A 2004 article on the *Dawn* website reported an "official source" as stating that although Bengalis arriving in Pakistan prior to 1971 had had their citizenship invalidated by a 1978 amendment to the *Pakistan Citizen Act 1951*, the administration would consider granting them citizenship ('NARA to send aliens' record to police' 2004, *Dawn* website, 5 February <http://www.dawn.com/2004/02/05/nat22.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 43).

### **Media reports of harassment of ethnic Bengalis in Karachi**

An article published on the *Dawn* website in February 2003 reported claims that indicated that Bengali speaking residents of Karachi were being harassed by police:

...at present Bengalis were being randomly picked, taken to police stations and bribe was demanded. If bribe was paid, they were allowed to go, if not, then FIR was registered and they were sent to prison ('Bengali-speaking people threaten protest' 2003, *Dawn* website, 11 February <http://www.dawn.com/2003/02/11/local20.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 24).

An article published on the *Dawn* website in February 2004 reported NARA as indicating that it would be passing on the names of aliens who registered with NARA to the police, so that they would not be harassed ('NARA to send aliens' record to police' 2004, *Dawn Internet Edition* website, 5 February <http://www.dawn.com/2004/02/05/nat22.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 43).

A 2004 article published on the *Dawn* website reported claims made by Dr Saleh Zahoor, founder of the Pakistani Bengali Charitable Association (PBCA), that ethnic Bengalis had been tortured:

Dr Saleh Zahoor, founder and chief PBCA, while speaking to the gathering said the Bengali speaking Pakistanis were being deprived of their rights since 1971, adding they were living in their own country like strangers.

He observed that Bengalis could not move freely in the city and go to their work places of the fear of police and other agencies. He claimed that Pakistani Bengalis were being tortured by the police, NARA, NADRA and other agencies despite the fact that they were living in the country since 1970, possessed national identity cards, and passports ('Equal rights for all citizens demanded' 2004, *Dawn* website, 6 September <http://www.dawn.com/2004/09/06/local13.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 45).

An article published on the *Dawn* website in December 2004 indicated that 3 policemen had been arrested for extorting money from ethnic Bengalis in Karachi ('3 policemen arrested for extortion' 2004, *Dawn* website, 10 December <http://www.dawn.com/2004/12/10/local8.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 46).

An article published on the *Dawn* website in March 2005 reported claims that ethnic Bengali residents of Karachi were being harassed by police, and being extorted for bribes, and that those who could not pay the bribes were being imprisoned on false charges ('CNICs for Bengalis demanded' 2005, *Dawn* website, 29 March <http://www.dawn.com/2005/03/29/local17.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 47).

More recently, an article published on *The Nation* website in January 2007 reported claims that ethnic Bengalis in Karachi, including citizens with legal papers, continued to be harassed and detained by police ('Bengali Body Seeks Help Against Police Harassment' 2007, *The Nation* website, 26 January <http://www.nation.com.pk/daily/jan-2007/26/nationalnews12.php> – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 48).

An article published on the *Dawn* website in March 2007 reported claims by a Bengali action group that Pakistani citizens of Bengali ethnicity in Karachi had been subject to discrimination, and that they:

...were being denied education facilities, employment opportunities and basic amenities at different levels ('Bengalis demand equal treatment' 2007, *Dawn* website, 27 March <http://dawn.com/2007/03/27/local21.htm> – Accessed 12 February 2008 – Attachment 49).

### **Ethnic Bengali political movements in Karachi**

Information was found to indicate that ethnic Bengali political movements have been active in Karachi since 2001, that they have organized rallies, and have engaged with local and national government officials regarding issues facing the Bengali community. Information was found to indicate that these parties received the support of members of existing Pakistani political parties, including the PML-Q, PPP, PTI, and the MQM. No information was found to indicate that these movements have committed violent acts, or to indicate that their activities have resulted in any violent reprisals.

A news report in September 2001 indicated that the Karachi-based Action Committee for Pakistani Bengalis had sent a letter of protest to President Musharraf regarding the treatment of ethnic Bengalis ('Pak-based Bengalis resent denial of citizenship rights' 2001, *Press Trust of India*, 9 September – Attachment 50).

A 2004 article indicated that members of the PML and PPP parties had spoken in support of the Bengali community in Karachi ('PML, PPP back Bangla-speaking people' 2004, *Daily Times* website, 6 September [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story\\_6-9-2004\\_pg7\\_36](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_6-9-2004_pg7_36) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 51). A 2005 article indicated that the President of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan Party had made complaints concerning the treatment on Bengalis in Karachi, and indicated that even Bengalis with valid identity papers were being harassed and extorted ('JUP decries "excesses on Bengali Pakistanis"' 2005, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 22 June – Attachment 52).

An article published on *The Nation* website in January 2007 indicated that a delegation of the Bengali Action Committee approached the Sindh home affairs adviser in Karachi to request an end to police harassment of the Bengali community ('Bengali Body Seeks Help Against Police Harassment' 2007, *The Nation* website, 26 January <http://www.nation.com.pk/daily/jan-2007/26/nationalnews12.php> – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 48).

An article published on the Pakistan *Daily Times* website provides information concerning the 2007 launch of an ethnic Bengali political party, the Pakistani Bengali's Action Committee (PBAC), in Karachi, and reports allegations of abuse of ethnic Bengalis (Rahaman, Mashiur 2007, 'Thousands turn up for new Bengali Party', *Daily Times* website, 24 March

[http://dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\03\24\story\\_24-3-2007\\_pg12\\_2](http://dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2007\03\24\story_24-3-2007_pg12_2) – Accessed 14 February 2008 – Attachment 53).

An article of March 2006 indicated that an ethnic Bengali party, called the Pakistan Muslim League Sher-e-Bengal A. K Fazle Haq (PML-SB), had been formed as a faction of the Pakistan Muslim League ('Pakistan-based Bengalis form another faction of PML; announce to contest next general polls' 2006, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 24 March – Attachment 57). Other articles located indicated that the Vice-President of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Q), Akhtar Pervez, and Sindh President of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Zubair Khan, had attended a large and conspicuously timed public rally in support of the PML-SB on Pakistan Day ('Bengalis celebrate Pakistan Day with fervour' 2007, *Karachipage* website, 24 March

[http://karachipage.com/news/Mar\\_07/032407.html#Bengali](http://karachipage.com/news/Mar_07/032407.html#Bengali) – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 25; 'Rally held for Sher-i-Bengal Day in Pakistan' 2007, *Dawn* website, 24 March <http://dawn.com/2007/03/24/local21.htm> – Accessed 15 February 2008 – Attachment 54).

Articles published in 2007 indicated that the MQM had also publicly supported the rights of ethnic Bengalis (LG minister to visit Bengali localities soon' 2007, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 15 February – Attachment 27; 'Pakistan provincial minister highlights problems facing Bengalis' 2007, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) 30 May, 31 May – Attachment 28).

A 2007 article was found which reported statements made by an adviser to the Sindh Chief Minister for Home Affairs Waseem Akhtar, which claimed that the Sindh administration was engaging with the demands of the Bengali community issues ('MQM believes in serving masses without discrimination: Waseem Akhtar' 2007, *Pakistan Press International Information Services*, 9 June – Attachment 55).

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*The Nation* website <http://www.nation.com.pk/>

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Urban Resource Centre Karachi website <http://www.urckarachi.org/Home.HTM>

Frontline website <http://www.frontlineonnet.com/>

### **Pakistan Government**

Pakistan Government web portal <http://www.pakistan.gov.pk/index.jsp>

### **United Nations**

UNHCR Refworld website <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?docid=>

### **Non-Government Organisations**

European Country of Origin Information Network website <http://www.ecoi.net/>

Minorities at Risk website <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/>

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan website <http://www.hrcp-web.org/>

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch website <http://www.hrw.org/>

Freedom House website <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR) website <http://www.safhr.org/index.php>

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The Economist website <http://www.economist.com/>

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