

Pakistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 5 May 2009

Information as to whether there was violent conflict during the February 2008 elections between the Pakistani Muslim League (PML) and the Muslim League (also called MNA).

The Executive Summary of a *European Union Election Observation Mission* report on the February 2008 elections in Pakistan states:

“The elections took place in a difficult security environment in which the threat of violence and an atmosphere of fear prevailed. As a result of attacks on political party gatherings, over 100 party supporters were killed during the campaign. In addition, over 50 people were reportedly killed in clashes between supporters during this period.” (European Union Election Observation Mission (16 April 2008) *Islamic Republic Of Pakistan – Final Report: National and Provincial Assembly Elections 18 February 2008*, p.3)

In a section titled “Election Day” this report states:

“There were less incidents of violence than had been anticipated and election locations did not appear to have been targeted by terrorists as had been feared. However a number of very violent events did take place across the country. The night before the election, a PML-N candidate in Lahore was killed with his staff, and an MQM office in Quetta was attacked with a hand-grenade resulting in five people being injured. By 2pm on election day there were already 35 different violent incidents reported in the media. These included bomb blasts at eight different polling stations, weapon firings at 12 polling stations, three kidnappings from polling stations, dozens of people injured and seven people killed. Parties also later reported instances of threats and actual physical violence to agents, including deaths, from rival political factions.” (ibid, p.52)

A *Press Trust of India* report on a clash between supporters of Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) and supporters of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) states:

“At least four persons were killed and several others injured when supporters of PML-Q and PML-N exchanged heavy fire near the garrison city of Rawalpindi today as former Pakistan Prime Minister and PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif was addressing meetings in the area. A group of PML-Q workers reportedly opened fire on PML-N supporters who were gathering about three kilometres from the airport in Rawalpindi for a meeting to be addressed by Sharif. TV channels reported the two sides used small arms and AK-47 assault rifles in the intense gun battle, which caused chaos and panic in the area. The firing continued for over 30 minutes.” (Press Trust of India, The (27 December 2007) *Supporters of PML-Q, Sharif exchange fire, four killed*)

A *Balochistan Times* report states:

“Local police said it was an incident of cross firing between two groups, one was confirmed PML-N workers, and added that they were trying to determine who instigated this tragic incident. Police sources also confirmed that four people were killed and three were wounded in the incident. 'Gunmen opened fire on PML-N supporters, when they were taking out a rally to receive their leader,' PML-N sources said adding that the injured were shifted to General Hospital Rawalpindi where some among them were said to be in critical condition. The PML-N immediately held its election rival Pakistan Muslim League (Q) responsible for the incident.” (Balochistan Times (27 December 2007) *Four killed, six injured in firing at PML-N rally --- Police say it was cross firing between two groups*)

An *Irish Examiner* report states:

“Members of Mr Sharif’s PML-N party say they came under attack from supporters of the rival PML-Q party, which backs President Pervez Musharraf. The shooting took place near Pakistan’s main garrison town, Rawalpindi, where former prime minister Benazir Bhutto was assassinated yesterday. Correspondents say it is the worst election-related violence ahead of elections on January 8.” (Irish Examiner (28 December 2007) *At least four killed ahead of Sharif rally*)

A report from the Pakistani newspaper *The Nation* refers to election day violence as follows:

“At least 25 people were killed and scores injured in election-related violence across the country on Monday. However, no major terrorist incident took place but clashes between political workers, forcible stamping of ballots at a handful of polling stations in Sindh and Punjab and two blasts in Quetta were reported. In isolated incidents of violence in different places, 25 people were killed and scores injured. In Mansehra, three PML-Q supporters were killed in exchange of firing incident. A PML-Q supporter, Aadil, allegedly shot dead PML-N worker Lala Fiaz in village Aadha-Daska outside a male polling station in constituency NA-112 and PP-129 over political dispute of casting the vote.” (Nation, The (18 February 2008) *Election violence claims 25 lives*)

An *Associated Press of Pakistan* report states:

“A PML-Q [Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid] activist was gunned down at a nearby village here on Monday [18 February] evening. According to police, PML-N [Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz] and PML-Q activists from NA-80 resorted to firing after exchange of hot words in chak No. 208 RB here Monday evening. As a result, Abdus Sattar alias Kalia, an activist of PML-Q was killed on the spot. Police have registered a case.” (Associated Press of Pakistan (19 February 2008) *Pakistan: Political party activist killed*)

An *Agence France Presse* report states:

“In Lahore, the victims of Sunday’s shooting included a provincial assembly candidate from former prime minister Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League-N

party.” (Agence France Presse (18 February 2008) *14 killed in Pakistan poll violence: officials*)

This report also states:

“In other unrest, a worker for Sharif’s PML-N party was shot dead by rivals outside a polling station in the industrial city of Sialkot, north of Lahore, on Monday, said party vice president Javed Hashmi.” (ibid)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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