

**The Supreme Court Wavers On Police Reform:
An update on the *Prakash Singh* case**

**Press release from the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative – Tuesday 10
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On 22 September 2006, the Supreme Court ordered governments to begin the process of reforming the police in India. It gave the center and states three months to put in place a number of practical mechanisms to do this.

This week the center and state governments were to report back to the Court. Alarming, a quick reading of their affidavits shows that a meagre 11% are totally compliant, 40% are non-compliant and 46% only partially compliant. Most states want more time or a review of the original directives. Some are busy cobbling together new police acts without any consultation with the public.

On 9 April, the Supreme Court took less than 5 minutes to set yet another date to look at applications for extension and modification! This leeway is a radical departure from the Court's earlier no-nonsense stand of 11 January that 'no extension can be granted to any government in this respect.'

This wavering by the Court has opened the doors wide for states to file review applications. The danger of this stance is that:

- the entire original judgment of 22 September 2006 is now up for re-examination, possibly with a view to diluting it; and
- the insubstantial objections by the states and their resistance to taking ANY steps towards police reform will be given credence.

Mrs. Maja Daruwala, Executive Director of CHRI, comments: "Police reform in India has been on the backburner for far too long. The Court's strong stance on compliance is crucial to shake states out of their lethargy on the issue of police reform. Without the Court monitoring this process, this simply will not happen. We need democratic policing and we need it now."

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Additional information on the Supreme Court judgment can be found at:

http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/programs/aj/police/india/initiatives/writ_petition.htm

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent, non-partisan, international NGO working for the practical realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth.