

**Supreme Court Dismisses Review Petitions on Police Reform:
Compliance – the only option**

**An Update on the *Prakash Singh* Case
Press Release from the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative – Friday 24
August 2007**

The Supreme Court, yesterday, dismissed review petitions by a number of state governments as having no merit. In doing this, the Court has upheld its directives handed down in the judgment delivered in the Prakash Singh case from 22 September last year where the Court ordered governments to comply with a set of 7 directives laying down practical mechanisms to kick-start reform.

The Court's dismissal of review petitions from Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Punjab, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka should provide a much-needed boost to police reform activities in these states. This also sends a firm message to the centre and other state governments that compliance with the directives must be adhered to without delay.

In dismissing the review petitions, the Court has echoed the sentiments of civil society groups. In recent months they have objected to their state governments resisting the police reform process through filing for review/modification of the Court's directives. Civil society in several states have considered legal action in the form of writ petitions and counter affidavits to the stance taken by their state governments.

"One wonders how much clearer it needs to be said that the people of this country are desperate for police reform. Reform means making the police more accountable. It is regrettable that even the states which are passing new police laws are doing so in order to get out of obeying the Court's directives. It shows a scorn for the scheme that the Court has tried to bring in. What the Court has directed is designed to make the police more accountable as well as improve their lot. And laws that are made deep inside bureaucratic back rooms without wide public consultation are destined to create worse policing and much more misery for the ordinary citizen," said Maja Daruwala, Director of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

In addition to implementing the Supreme Court's directives on police reform, many states are also drafting new police laws. Meanwhile the public awaits news of the Model Police Act 2006, which was submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs in October 2006. If enacted, this Act would replace the archaic and colonial Police Act of 1861, which continues to govern policing in India.

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

http://www.humanrightinitiative.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 realization of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth.