

Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan News Report December 2015

One face of Counter Terrorism Department in the Punjab

Arrest of good old Mr. Shakoor Bhai; imprisoned for (5+3) eight years

Police raided the only book-depot in Rabwah bazaar. Septuagenarian proprietor and a shop assistant arrested under terrorism law. Books, magazines, money in till, business stamp etc. confiscated. Expeditious trial held in Anti-terrorism court and harsh punishments awarded.

Rabwah; December 2, 2015: Officials of Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) accompanied by a contingent of the Elite Force raided Shakoor Bhai's book shop, arrested Mr. Abdul Shakoor *aka* Shakoor Bhai and Mr. Mazhar Abbas shop assistant, a Shia, and drove them off to an unknown location. They took away some books and magazines, the cash and some prize bonds. They photographed the interior and the exterior of the book depot extensively. They paid for some periodicals, obtained a voucher, had it stamped and took away the stamp with them. It seems they never came across a softer, milder and a more peaceful terror suspect. They wasted the time and expense of the accompanying Elite Force.

A month later, an ATC judge, Raja Pervez Akhtar, after a speedy trial, sentenced Mr. Abdul Shakoor to 5 years' imprisonment under 9/11-W ATA and 3 years under the anti-Ahmadiyya law PPC 298-C, and Rs 600,000 fine.

The books they took away included translated copies of the Holy Quran, a short commentary written by Khalifa tul Masih II of the Quran, Tazkarah tul Mehdi (Biography of the Founder of Ahmadiyyat), a special edition of the daily Alfazl, the monthly Misbah (Ahmadi women's magazine) etc.

Most of the above material was banned by a sweeping order of the Punjab Government issued in August 2015. The order was issued on dictation of the Mutahiddah Ulama Board; any serious inquiry would show that it was malafide and a serious violation of Ahmadis' basic and essential freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution.

This raid and arrests made by CTD was definitely counter to the basic declared policy objective of the creation of this department and the intent of the National Action Plan. Ahmadis will be happy if a high-level judicial commission (or committee) could examine the contents of the confiscated copies of the daily Alfazl and the monthly Misbah and dig deep to locate even a single entry in support of terrorism. And how Ahmadiyya translations of the Holy Quran could be 'fit for banning', by the Ulama Board, while these mullas and their peers and elders have been blaming Ahmadis for more than a century of 'abrogation of Jihad'. Banning translations of the Quran to Ahmadis would be somewhat like banning the Bible to Jehova's Witnesses in Europe or North America. Absurd – absolutely.

Here, one is reminded of the anti-Terrorism laws promulgated in 1990s. These laws were frequently used thereafter to prosecute Ahmadis who for the past 30 years are the most terrorized community in Pakistan.

Mr. Shakoor is a senior citizen – a septuagenarian. He is an optician in addition to being a book-seller. He is one of the most decent shop-keepers in the bazaar, so he is very popular even among his non-Ahmadi clients. Villagers from the suburbs of Rabwah make it a point to come to him for their glasses at low price, even free if a customer is poor or asks for a pair. His shop-assistant, arrested with him, is a non-Ahmadi. Surely, if Mr. Shakoor, an Ahmadi, was selling books that were provocative or highly objectionable to 'Muslims' Mr. Abbas would not be assisting him with sale of these books.

The case Investigation Officer behaved as if he had hit a bonanza. His endeavor was to broaden the easy investigation to implicate many others e.g. the authors etc. – some of them are dead since long.

Pakistani state claims to be involved in its ‘war on terror’. This raid involved the personnel of CTD, the Elite Force, the police personnel and required the time and effort of state prosecutors and magistrates and judges for weeks, even months - all this to hurt Shakoor Bhai, an innocent elder who would not consider harming a lamb; he himself being one.

If the provincial and federal authorities are really serious about war on terror and over implementation of the National Action Plan, they will have to face harder adversaries than harmless Shakoor Bhai who earns his bread peacefully and honestly in the open bazaar of Rabwah.

The above is not opinion of a hurt partisan; the daily Mashriq, Lahore reported the opinion of Supreme Court judges in the following headlines, on July 4, 2015:

There is hardly any progress in implementation of the National Action Plan (*Takay ka bhi kam nahin ho rahaa*): Supreme Court

National Action Plan was a trick played upon people. It has become a joke: Justice Khawaja NAP required a stop to funds for terrorists, but (such) NGOs are still being funded locally and from abroad. If you are unable to implement the NAP, accept that it was a paper exercise.

Provincial governments are in the same league in incompetence and incapability (*ghair mustaidi*): Justice Azmat Saeed

Now that the sentences have been announced by the Anti-Terrorism Court (the shop assistant was also sentenced 5 years’ imprisonment) it is for consideration that the two most harmless individuals have been put behind bars for years, while the government finds no case against mulla Abdul Aziz of the Lal Masjid, even to book him. The Supreme Court is perhaps right that the War on Terror is a joke and a trick played upon people.

It should be reasserted for the benefit of the concerned authorities that Jamaat Ahmadiyya, despite the maltreatment it received from the state and the society in Pakistan, has not undertaken even a single act that could be called terrorist, in the last four decades.

Painful judicial handling of a police-case of an Ahmadi pressman

Lahore: Mr. Tahir Mahdi Imtiaz, printer of the Ahmadiyya monthly Ansarullah, was arrested by the police on March 30, 2015 in a Lahore court premises where he had gone to seek confirmation of bail in another case. He is ‘printer’ of various other publications as well.

Mr. Imtiaz was wrongfully implicated in a fabricated case registered with Millat Town police under the blasphemy clause PPC 295-A and the anti-Ahmadiyya 298-C on behest of mullas, more than a year ago.

It should be mentioned that the case against Mr. Imtiaz is pure fabrication, registered on private complaint of a mulla, with reference to a monthly that contained no objectionable text, still the judge refused to accept the bail of the accused. Also noteworthy is the fact that the state prosecutor objected to the bail, although the Supreme Court is on record to have directed: “The state should provide security to minorities, otherwise....” *The daily Nawa-i-Waqt; Lahore, February 9, 2013*

The prosecution has not pointed in any court any content of the related Ansarullah issue that is blasphemous. Still the judges, who should have released the innocent pressman on first hearing, or later on appeal, have not granted him even release on bail. An abridged chronology of this case is given below; the progress of events would be of interest to any human rights activist:

March 30, 2015	Mr. Imtiaz was detained by the police; remanded for three days.
After the remand	Sent to prison in judicial custody
April 8, 2015	Judge heard for 5 days his plea for bail and rejected it.

April 22, 2015	Sessions court rejected the plea for bail.
May 28, 2015	A Lahore High Court (LHC) judge expressed inability to proceed with the case and referred it to the Chief Justice.
June 16, 2015	LHC shifted the hearing to June 18.
June 22, 2015	The next hearing date was shifted to July 6.
July 13, 2015	Case heard by LHC judge. Declared verbally the acceptance of bail. Later, when presented the decision for signing, he did not sign, and declared that he'll hear the case further on July 15.
July 15, 2015	The said judge decided to refer the case to the Chief Justice with recommendation that a 2-member bench should hear the plea for bail. The chief justice Manzur Ahmad Malik appointed Justice Mazhar Iqbal Sindhu and Justice Shahram Sarwar Chaudhry on the division bench to hear the plea.
August 6, 2015	The said bench rejected the plea for bail, added Anti-terrorism clause 8-W ATA to the case and sent it to an anti-terrorism court.
December 08, 2015	Two-member bench of Supreme Court did not grant Mr. Imtiaz's plea for bail.
December 31, 2015	Mr. Tahir Mahdi Imtiaz, the printer of the Ahmadiyya daily and periodicals continues to suffer behind bars without having been found guilty of any crime.

This is what Ahmadis often face in the judicial domain in Pakistan. They are implicated in false cases on religious grounds and find it extremely difficult even to get release on bail for the duration of the trial. Even pressmen do not get any relief, although the state is committed to grant the basic 'freedom of expression'.

Some impartial NGO or eminent journalist should look into this case in depth and place on record a fair opinion on current role of the state and society in handling an Ahmadi's court case.

The above is important in view of the State's apparent commitment to the ongoing National Action Plan, the Supreme Court's landmark judgment announced on June 19, 2014 and various claims of politicians in power that 'The Quaid's vision to safeguard minorities' rights are being pursued'.

Malafide severe harassment of rural Ahmadis by officials

Following three incidents happened earlier this year, but their reports did not reach the right quarters to receive a mention in the monthly reports. However, these deserve a place on record as examples of misuse by lower officials of a well-intentioned higher directive, to further persecute the Ahmadis.

The Government of Punjab issued a Security of Vulnerable Establishments Ordinance 2015 and the local police issued orders to Ahmadiyya mosques as well to comply with its requirements. That was good; but any village community in Pakistan would need time to arrange funds and to undertake purchases and install devices like CCTV cameras, provide a four-wall boundary, construct obstacles, make trenches etc. The police, however, cared little, followed up their notices immediately and booked the caretakers or community leaders for non-compliance. This was 'very poor governance'. Compliance with such directives cannot be undertaken as if by pressing a button. These incidents remind one of 1990's when the government promulgated the Anti-terrorism Act, but started booking Ahmadis under clauses like PPC 295-A which facilitate trial and punishment in an Anti-terrorism court.

Reports were received from the following three locations:

1. **Chak No. 427-TDA, District Layya:** The police issued orders to Ahmadis to complete the boundary four-walls of their mosque on 26 April 2015, and required this to be done by the next day, the 27th April. The police sent for Mr. Bashir Ahmad, who was then booked and arrested.
2. **Chak No. 170-TDA, District Layya:** A somewhat similar incident happened here. The police made a surprise raid at the personal property where Mr. Tariq and his family offered prayers. Mr. Tariq had received no notice regarding any security improvements. At the time of the police raid, Mr. Tariq was away. The police booked him, anyway.

The above mode of harassing a citizen by police is nothing but tyranny, and deserves to be condemned without reservations. It is most unbecoming for a democratic state.

Mr. Tariq had to rush to a court to seek bail to avoid arrest by the heedless ruthless police. Imagine his stress.

The court granted him bail.

3. **Joia, Goth Ahmadiyya, District Khushab:** A notice was sent to Mr. Munawwar Din on March 28, 2015 to implement 9 measures to improve security in the village mosque. Four days later Mr. Din was booked by the police on 2 April 2015, for failure to comply.

Almost unbelievable!

Hate Crime: Man held for degrading Ahmadis gets bail – promptly

Lahore; 9-14 December, 2015: A hateful poster was put up and was noticed on December 9; it conveyed the message in Urdu: **Qadiani (dogs) not allowed entry here**. This happened in Hafeez Centre in Gulberg. Raza Rumi, a renowned journalist and his friends reported it on social media and protested. A large number supported this campaign against the outrage, and the authorities were moved into action to handle what was called shameless act of hate.

It is learnt that the authorities removed the poster, in the face of ‘no support’ from the market’s shop-keepers. As the hateful poster blatantly violated the NAP, a DIG police ordered the arrest of the shop-keeper, Abid Hashmi and an assistant Noman. Taking into account the gravity of the sectarian offence, a judicial magistrate sent the accused to prison on two weeks’ judicial remand. An FIR was registered against them under section PPC 295-A and MPO-16.

The traders, thereafter, in a show of solidarity with their colleague, gathered outside the Centre holding placards and chanting slogans against the arrest of the accused. They blocked the traffic in the Boulevard for about an hour. The authorities were quick to get intimidated and decided to step back.

Noman was released without recording his arrest. Hashmi was taken to the Model Town courts complex where some traders and activists of a Khatme Nabuwwat organization assembled to raise slogans. An A&S judge released the accused on bail. He had remained behind bars for approximately one day only.

That tells a great deal about the staying power of the Punjab government when confronted with a barefaced act of religious extremism against Ahmadis.

The spineless and hasty retreat of the government in the face of bigots disappointed a large number of citizens who were initially delighted to see authorities taking a stand against ‘pious’ goons. There were many op-eds and comments in the English press. One such comment by Musharraf Zaidi in the daily The News of December 16, 2015 mourned the hopeless situation:

“So now we have this Hafeez Center thing. What did we expect? Born and raised on a diet of tumours, tumours of stupidity beyond redemption, and tumours of self-righteousness to the point of being suicidal (literally). Were we expecting little brown baby Justin Trudeaus to come out of the bag of tricks we’ve turned in the name of our republic, our freedom, and our faith?”

A conference and rally by the infamous Ahrar in Rabwah, the Ahmadiyya centre

Rabwah; December 24, 2015: Majlis Ahrar Islam took out a big rally in Rabwah at the occasion of the birthday of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and also held a Khatme Nabuwwat conference. This was no occasion to hold such a conference; numerous such conferences had been held here earlier this year including those in the preceding months of October and September. These Ahrar activities, as foreseen proved to be highly provocative and disturbing to the local population that is 95% Ahmadi.

Ahrar have come back to life in the recent past after a long interval of hibernation after their culpable role in the 1953 anti-Ahmadi riots in the Punjab. A high-level judicial inquiry gave the verdict at that occasion: **“The conduct of the Ahrar calls for the strongest comment and is especially reprehensible. We can use no milder words for the reason that they debased a religious issue by pressing it into service for a temporal purpose and exploited religious susceptibilities and sentiments of the people for their personal ends.”** p.259 of the *Munir Inquiry report*

Ahmadiyya central office wrote a letter well in advance to all the concerned authorities to not permit this rally. Ahrar do not take out a procession at this occasion anywhere else in Pakistan, authorities were told. Ahrar were still granted their request by the official quarters, although they had to employ a large contingent of police to ensure peace and order.

A publicity campaign was undertaken in the vernacular press to promote this conference: **“Khatme Nabuwwat Conference will expose the Qadianis. They will be invited again to Islam at a rally on conclusion of the conference,”** said Abdul Latif Khalid Cheema, the Nazim Ala (*The daily Dunya, December 20, 2015*).

Mulla Kafil Bukhari, the Deputy Amir of Ahrar wrote an article in the ultra right-wing daily Islam for this occasion on December 24, 2015. It was abusive and concoctive; “At the end of last century (sic) the Christian British rulers, in order to create disunity and disorder in the Ummah, selected a cursed fellow (*Maloon*), Mirza Qadiani, to accomplish their designs,” he wrote.

The crowd in the rally numbered 2500-3000 men. The conference was held prior to taking out the procession. The procession stopped in front of the Aiwan Mahmud in the city center where various mullas again addressed the participants and used foul language against Ahmadis and their elders. At this occasion the clerics harangued the crowd preaching extremism, for instance:

- Qadianis are apostates and destined for hell: Hamza
- Qadianis should mend their ways (*Insan ban jain*) otherwise we shall undertake a campaign that will wipe them off from the face of the earth: Hamza
- Boycott all Qadiani products and have no dealings with them: Syed Bukhari
- Qadianis are agents of the U.S; the UK; Germany and Israel; the entire funding of Qadianis is undertaken by Jews: Mulla Mujahid ul Hussaini

The public relations department of the Ahrar issued press release etc. which were given ample space by the Urdu press. Following extracts are reproduced from what was reported by the daily Khabrain and Islam on December 25, 2015:

Participants:

Apart from the Ahrar leaders those who attended included Freed A Piracha (JI), JUI's Abdul Khaliq Hazarivi, Mufti Muhammad of Jamia Imdadia, leaders of AMTKN and IKNM etc.

Spotlights

- Demands of Tehrik Khatme Nabuwwat were displayed on decorative banners hung in various locations in Chenab Nagar (Rabwah) and Chiniot.
- Participants arrived in convoys; they were wearing 'red shirts' and white shalwar (trousers). The 'Red Shirts' took out an unprecedented rally (*faqid ul misal*).
- When Qadianis were invited to Islam, signs of helplessness and desolation were visible on their faces.
- A book-stall was set up outside the venue of the conference; religious books, especially those on End of Prophethood were made available there.

Statements

- Sympathy for the (plight of) Qadianis is poison for Pakistan.
- Liberal, secular and Qadiani lobbies that are subservient to the international Satan and the regional enemies should be strictly monitored.
- The Saudi Pact is supported by the U.S. It raises a number of questions.
- Dr Farid Piracha (of JI) said that Pakistan was based on Islam; there is no room for secularism here. Etc.

Resolutions

- Pakistan's participation in Saudi-led group is not acceptable.
- The government of Pakistan should neutralize American and European efforts to tighten the noose around Pakistan, in the name of ISIS.
- We condemn American demand to close down Deobandi madrassas.
- End of Prophethood should be made part of school syllabus.
- Qadianis posted in foreign missions should be thrown out.
- Shariah penalty for apostasy (death!) should be imposed.
- The blasphemy laws have effectively become non-operative; as such blasphemers are free to blaspheme; no blasphemer has met his legal end.
- Islam and End of Prophethood clauses of the constitution and law are under attack; the authorities should courageously and effectively defend these.

It was learnt that the police arrested the convener of another rally who had organized that one without permission. He was released thereafter.

It was mentioned in the press that Sheikh Abdul Wahid in UK and Syed Munir Ahmad Bukhari are supervising the activities of Ahrar Khatme Nabuwwat missions in those countries.

Lahore incidents

Lahore; November/December 2015: Chaudhry Abdul Ali, an Ahmadi experienced two hostile incidents recently. On November 30, 2015, some unknown person threw damaged plastic sheet prints of Quranic verses in the backyard of his house. Thereafter a person came to his house and introduced himself as Tahir, a property dealer. He asked if Mr. Abdul Ali wanted to sell this property. This was strange, as Mr. Abdul Ali had not hinted to anyone to sell his property.

In another incident somebody pasted a 2013 calendar on the outer wall of his house on December 04, 2015. The calendar had Quranic verses, pictures of the Prophet's mosque, Holy Ka'aba and Holy Prophet's turban printed on it.

Mr. Abdul Ali is apprehensive and is exercising caution.

Khatme Nabuwwat (Training) Course: This course was advertised in the ultra-right wing daily Islam, scheduled for 24, 25, 26 December at Jame Masjid Begam Khan & Madrassah Rahmatulil Aalameen, 63-C Abu Bakr Siddique Colony, Band road, Lahore. One, Maulana Abdul Naeem of AMTKN sponsored it. It was announced that Maulanas Abdul Qayyum Niazi, Naemuddin Mahmudul Hasan and Aziz ur Rahman Sani would be there.



Rally Khatme Nabuwwat: This rally was also advertised in the daily Islam on 20 December 2015, for 12 Rabiul Awwal at 1 p.m. in Gulshan Umar Colony, Green Town, Lahore. One, Pir Waliullah Shah Bokhari sponsored it representing World Pasban Khatme Nabuwwat and Provincial PML-N's Ulama and Mashaikh Wing. The main promoter was named in the ad as Allama M. Mumtaz Awaan as the Quaid of World Pasban Khatme Nabuwwat and convener Tehrik Namus Risalat. This betrays the politico-religious interlink of this sectarian activity.

Shalimar Town, Lahore; November 14, 2015: Aalami Majlis Tahaffuz Khatme Nabuwwat (AMTKN) organized a Khatme Nabuwwat Inam Ghar (prize camp) here. Maulvis Allah Wasaya and Aziz ur Rahman Sani participated in it. Prizes were distributed among the students of schools, colleges and madrassahs with reference to a sectarian Khatme Nabuwwat course. Approximately 200 participants were present in this program which lasted for three hours. Police were also present at the occasion. Such events were held in the past as well in Lahore. These result in greater intolerance among youth towards Ahmadis, as slander and hatred is an essential part of such courses.

Update of case against attackers in Gujranwala riot

Gujranwala: It would be recalled that an anti-Ahmadi riot was precipitated last year in Gujranwala on July 27, 2014 by extremist elements, on the accusation that an Ahmadi youth allegedly defiled the picture of Holy Ka'aba on Facebook. In this riot three Ahmadi females, including a 7-month old infant were killed in arson attack. Ahmadi homes and properties were looted and gutted by mob in police presence. All the Ahmadi residents of the neighborhood had to flee from homes for safety, and remained dislocated for months. None of the criminals who committed grave crimes or initiated the riots were arrested initially even though some of them were named in the FIR. The Ahmadi youth who was falsely accused of blasphemy was arrested and was not granted bail despite the fact that investigation did not find him guilty.

The Ahmadi youth suffered prosecution for over a year from the prison. Eventually he was acquitted of the false charge.

The mullas, led by Zahid-ur-Rashidi of Gujranwala and others of Khatme Nabuwwat factions formed a Joint Committee to defend the attackers, created a Legal Committee and met the authorities to pressurize them to act in favour of the criminals involved in the riots. They had success, and no serious action was taken by the administration for months – till the religious terrorists attacked the APS in Peshawar, and there was a consensus to move against extremists under the policy outlined in National Action Plan.

The authorities eventually did become active to apply law to the criminals involved in the riot; however, the hidden psych of Ahmadis being 'they' and the Muslims being 'ours' betrays itself in the cutting edge actions, for example:

- From the big mob comprising hundreds, only 8 men were named. The police let three of these off the hook by declaring them innocent.
- Thirty-four of the accused, who were eventually named after a police inquiry, are free on bail. Mulla Zahid Qadri who incited the mob on megaphone was arrested in September 2015, but is now free on bail.
- Samiullah, one of the accused had become an absconder; he was arrested on December 10.
- None of the leading religious bigots who unabashedly and publicly decided to stand in solidarity with killers and arsonists has been detained by the police for investigation.

Plight of an Ahmadi

Chaman Abad, District Rawalpindi; December 2015: Mr. Mureed Hussain joined the Ahmadiyya Jamaat in 2000. Since then he is facing severe opposition from his family. Once they tortured him badly. This time his in-laws informed his office superiors that Mureed Hussain had become a Qadiani so he should be interrogated. The administration asked Mr. Hussain to submit an affidavit, which he refused. They also asked him about his religious beliefs. The administration told him to restrain from going anywhere except his home and office. They also searched Mr. Hussain's room and took possession of his correspondences with the Jamaat.

Ahmadi family faces hostile neighborhood

Chak No. 7 GB, District Nankana; December 10, 2015: Mr. Ijaz Ahmad Khan's family is the only Ahmadi family in this village. He is facing severe opposition from the opponents of the Ahmadiyya community. On December 10, 2015, the activists of Khatme Nabuwwat movement held a gathering here. Mulla Muhammad Irfan Barq was invited on this occasion. He used filthy language against the Ahmadiyya community and issued fatwa that killing Ahmadis entitles a person to reward from God. "They are *murtads* (apostates) and *murtads* are worthy of death," he stated. A question-answer session was held at the end of the gathering. Mulla Barq badmouthed Ahmadis in this session too. After this conference, the villagers have completely boycotted Mr. Khan. They abuse him in the village streets.

The opponents are also inciting miscreants of the village to undertake an attack on his house and to inflict loss of life. It is a very difficult situation for Mr. Khan and his family.

Anti-Ahmadiyya conference in District Hafizabad

Kot Shah Aalam, District Hafizabad; November 24, 2015: Opponents of the Ahmadiyya community organized a Khatme Nabuwwat conference here. Approximately 250 men participated in it who came from surrounding villages as well. Six Ahmadi families live here; they informed the authorities in advance about the conference. Therefore four policemen were present on the occasion. The mullas badmouthed the community, nevertheless.

A conference in Gujranwala

Gujranwala; November 22, 2015: Ulama of the Sunni sect held a conference here in which numerous mullas participated. Professor Dr Ashraf Jalali, Pir Zulqarnain, Hamid Raza, Pir Syed Zaheer ul Haq, Allama Ghulam Abbas, Dr Habib ur Rahman Rizvi and Khadim Hussain Rizwan addressed the participants. They paid tribute to Mumtaz Qadri, the assassin of Governor Taseer. Pir Afzal Qadri addressed the gathering on telephone and said, "Mumtaz Qadri has not killed any human but an infidel. He did a great job. We demand from the government to set Mumtaz Qadri free immediately, otherwise we will organize a long march. The government is coward. The court's decision is wrong; we reject this decision."

The conference lasted till 12:30 am.

HRCP alarmed by Pak opposition to UN resolution for rights defenders

Lahore, December 1, 2015: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed its alarm and serious dismay over Pakistan voting last week against a United Nations General Assembly resolution that called for recognizing the role of human rights defenders (HRDs) and the need for their protection.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Commission said: “HRCP welcomes the passing of the UN General Assembly resolution, titled ‘Recognizing the role of human rights defenders and the need for their protection’, by 117 votes on November 25. It is unfortunate that the resolution had to be put to vote this year and could not be adopted by consensus as had been the norm in the past.

“At the same time, HRCP must express alarm and great disappointment that Pakistan chose to be one of the 14 nations that voted against the resolution.

“It is ominous that all 14 countries opposing the resolution are from the Afro-Asian region, as is the predominant majority of the 40 states that abstained from voting. The HRDs in the region work in such perilous circumstances that the hope was for the states to be more enthusiastic about protecting them and facilitating their work. It seems that the rights defenders are going to have a rough time in Asia and Africa in the coming days.

“While regretting Pakistan’s decision to oppose the resolution, the civil society is entitled to ask what rights defenders have done to deserve this step-motherly treatment. It is unfortunate that the government wishes to see civil society as an adversary. The civil society cannot, and must not, surrender its role as a watchdog for people’s rights because that constitutes an entitlement, by virtue of citizens’ social contract with the state, and not as a concession.

“HRCP also stresses people’s right to know through an explanation in parliament the reason why the government chose to deny the need for protection for HRDs, who include, besides human rights groups, journalists, lawyers, political and social activists.”

Zohra Yusuf
Chairperson

USCIRF condemns attack on Ahmadis in Pakistan

Washington: The USCIRF issued the following for IMMEDIATE RELEASE on November 30, 2015:



WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous attack on an Ahmadi Muslim factory and mosque on November 21 and 22 in the Jhelum district located in the Punjab province.

“USCIRF strongly condemns this attack against the Ahmadi Muslim community and is saddened by reports that people are fleeing their homes in fear for their lives,” said USCIRF Chairman Robert P. George. *“While the Pakistani government reportedly has dispatched the army to restore peace and detained more than 40 suspects, the government needs to do much more to stem the climate of impunity that pervades Pakistan. To these ends and as a first step, the government should provide protection to the Ahmadi community and denounce language clerics use that incites hatred and violence.”*

The attacks on the factory and mosque reportedly occurred when an Ahmadi factory worker was accused of desecrating the Qur'an, an act that under Pakistani law is considered blasphemous and punishable by death (sic). A mob of several hundred people reportedly destroyed the factory by setting it ablaze. Additional reports indicate that inflammatory speech by religious clerics incited the additional violence that led to the mosque attack.

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<http://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/press-releases/pakistan-uscirf-condemns-attack-ahmadis>

Ahmadis behind bars

1. A baseless case was registered against four Ahmadis, Messrs. Khalil Ahmad, Ghulam Ahmad, Ihsan Ahmad and Mubashir Ahmad of Bhoiwal, District Sheikhpura under PPCs 295-A, 337-2 and 427 on May 13, 2014 in police station Sharaqpur. Mr. Khalil Ahmad was then murdered by a madrassah student, while in police custody on May 16, 2014. The remaining three accused were arrested on July 18, 2014. They are in prison. Their bails were cancelled.
2. A fabricated case was registered against Mr. Tahir Mahdi Imtiaz, printer of the Ahmadiyya monthly Ansarullah, in Millat Town police station Lahore on April 16, 2014. He was arrested by the police on March 30, 2015 under the blasphemy clause PPC 295-A and anti-Ahmadiyya law PPC 298-C. A high court judge announced his bail but refused to sign the decision later. Thereafter a 2-member bench of LHC refused him bail. He remains in prison. His plea was heard by a two-member bench of the Supreme Court that withheld grant of the bail.
3. Mr. Qasim Majoka was wrongfully implicated in a religion-based police case under PPC 295-C and 298-C along with other two Ahmadis. The police removed the deadly PPC 295-C in initial investigation and sent the case to the court. On February 10, 2014 the court sentenced Mr. Muhammad Qasim Majoka to two years' imprisonment under the anti-Ahmadi law and fined him thirty thousand rupees. He was arrested from the court room. Later he was released on bail on February 15, 2014. On October 22, 2015 a higher court heard the case and upheld the sentence of Mr. Majoka. The police arrested him and sent him to jail.
4. Mr. Qamar Ahmad was charged under PPC 295-B for alleged desecration of the Holy Quran in Jhelum, and was arrested on November 20, 2015. Bigots attacked the factory and Ahmadis' houses after his arrest and set them on fire after looting the valuables.
5. Officials of Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) accompanied by a contingent of the Elite Force raided Shakoor Bhai's book shop, arrested Mr. Abdul Shakoor *aka* Shakoor Bhai and Mr. Mazhar Abbas shop assistant on December 2, 2015. A speedy trial in an Anti-terrorism court dispensed 5 years' imprisonment to each of the two accused, while Mr. Shakoor Bhai was sentenced in addition to three years' imprisonment under the anti-Ahmadiyya law.

From the media

(Ahmadi) Proprietor of book depot and his shop assistant sentenced to (a total of) 13 years' imprisonment; Rs. 2,50,000 fine

The daily Jang; Lahore, January 3, 2016

Publisher of Ahmadiyya daily denied bail (by SC)

The daily The Express Tribune; Lahore, December 9, 2015

Islamic state claims attack on Ahmadi mosque – Bangladesh

The daily The Nation; Lahore, December 27, 2015

FIA decides to register case against 15 migrants sent back from Greece

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 5, 2015

Chenab Nagar streets and roads appear to be in ruins

The daily Pakistan; Lahore, December 9, 2015

All provinces should include End of Prophethood in school syllabi: Haji Abdul Ghafoor

The daily Pakistan; Lahore, December 15, 2015

Reopening of the Blasphemy laws will amount to playing with fire and blood: Maulana Abdul Hafeez Makki

The daily Ausaf; Lahore, December 17, 2015

**Sectarian terror revisits Parachinar
25 killed, 62 wounded in market blast**

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 14, 2015

Maududi's books banned in Saudi Arabia, after Bangladesh

The decision is part of Saudi drive against literature that promotes terrorism: sources

The daily Mashriq; Lahore, December 18, 2015

Clerics (Mullas Sheerani and Ashrafi) came to blows at CII meeting

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 30, 2015

Tashfeen Malik (of San Bernardino massacre) was a student at the Al-Huda: lady teacher's claim

The daily Mashriq; Lahore, December 8, 2015

26 die as suicide bomber hits Nadra office in Mardan

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 30, 2015

Jamaat Dawa not among the list of banned organizations

The daily Mashriq; Lahore, December 19, 2015

Anti-Ahmadi vitriol: protest against trader's arrest

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 15, 2015

300 seminaries receiving funds from abroad

Govt admits little knowledge of money channels

The daily The Express Tribune; Lahore, December 17, 2015

There is no case against Maulana Abdul Aziz (of Red Mosque in Islamabad); how to arrest him? Madrasahs are with us in fighting terrorism: Federal Interior Minister

The daily Mashriq; Lahore, December 19, 2015

France: Anti-Islam drive on; 7 more mosques shut down

The daily Nawa-i-Waqt; Lahore, December 5, 2015

Donald Trump calls for keeping Muslims out of US

White House immediately reacted saying Mr. Trump's proposal was contrary to American values.

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 9, 2015

Saudi blogger's wife pleads for free speech (in European Parliament). (Badawi was sentenced to 1000 lashes and 10 years in prison for allegedly insulting Islam.)

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 17, 2015

Saudi reformist writer jailed for four years

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 22, 2015

Saudi Arabia and Iran lead in funding madrassahs in Pakistan: Federal Minister of State

The daily Mashriq; Lahore, December 30, 2015

Gambia president declares country an Islamic republic

The daily The News; Lahore, December 13, 2015

US for closure of 600 madrassas in Pakistan

The daily The News; Lahore, December 20, 2015

UKIM shocked over extremism links claim

The UK government reviews into the Muslim Brotherhood found that the group had operated through a number of front charities and organizations, including Jamaat Islami Pakistan and Bangladesh and their affiliated organizations in the UK.

The daily The Express Tribune; Lahore, December 22, 2015

S. Arabia forms 34-state Islamic military alliance

The daily The News; Lahore, December 16, 2015

California firing: The woman of the attacking couple hailed from Pakistan

The daily Express; Faisalabad, December 4, 2015

Petition to ban Trump from UK tops 230,000 signatures

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 10, 2015

Civil society members 'arrested' for protesting at Lal Masjid

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 17, 2015

Three-year-old boy booked in plaza occupation case (in Islamabad)

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 25, 2015

Shop owner held for putting up 'hate notice'

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 14, 2015

Malala Yousufzai rated second most popular woman in Gallop survey in the U.S.

The daily Mashriq; Lahore, December 30, 2015

200 nations adopt pact to fight climate change

The daily Dawn; Lahore, December 13, 2015

Op-ed: The Ahmadi question

In other words, Ahmadis are actually paying for their efforts in the Pakistan movement and for their extraordinary services to the country, symbolized by the likes of Dr Abdus Salam, MM Ahmad and Atif Mian, who changed the perception of Pakistan on the international front. However, back home, they are treated like outcasts because the right wing refuses to give space to anyone and has hijacked religion. They see the success of Ahmadis as a direct threat to their monopoly on the political narrative.

Hence, what is happening at Hafeez Centre is nothing new. It demonstrates the continuation of sporadic agitation against the Ahmadis — a community that is still somehow managing to remain afloat, perhaps because most of its members have quietly left the country that they helped establish. Those that are still in Pakistan live in constant fear. Given that one can get arrested for reciting holy scriptures if one is an Ahmadi, but can roam freely for killing minorities if belonging to a banned organization, goes to show the nation's moral compass. Under the National Action Plan, the state is supposed to define what sort of ideology it wants to promote in the country. As long as murderers and terrorists can roam freely and innocent minorities are stigmatized, we are unconsciously promoting chances of the likes of the Islamic State to emerge right here in Pakistan and it won't be long before extremist groups in the country will pledge their allegiance to groups that want to topple the state and establish a caliphate in Pakistan.

It is the people of Pakistan who need to decide whether their country is under threat from a community that has served Pakistan in the areas of politics, development and science or from groups that conduct hate rallies against everyone they see as threats to their monopoly on religion. The sooner we realize who the country and our religion is really under threat from, the better we'll be able to save society from total collapse.

Hussain Nadim in The Express Tribune, December 19, 2015

Article: No country for Ahmadis

I have heard people talk about how important it is to hate those who are from my background. I have had teachers lecture about the importance of prejudice towards Ahmadis. I have heard TV anchors and politicians applauded for their prejudice towards Ahmadis. I always thought I was unlucky to be born in a religious sect that is so persecuted, but the unlucky ones are

really those who did not know better than to hate someone over these differences. The incidents of shootings and bombings that are often seen as isolated incidents are a result of hatred that is commonplace. It is never simply about a few extremists.

Farah Anjum (a Pak-Canadian Ahmadi) in The Friday Times of December 11, 2015

Op-ed: One year of evading the hard questions

How do you contemplate APS Peshawar? The enormity and horror of a systematic slaughter of children? How do you frame a set of parameters to allow you to process such horror, such sickness, such terror?

You don't. Yet it happened. And it may upset some Pakistanis to read this, but it should not have shocked or surprised us.

Once hospitals, supermarkets, universities, banks, mosques and churches and 'places of worship' were fair game, why wouldn't schools be? Before Peshawar APS, there were dozens of precursors. Dozens. Once humans have been dehumanised to dehumanise other humans, man, woman, child... a church, a mosque, a school... what grand distinction is left to make?

...

So now we have this Hafeez Center thing. What did we expect? Born and raised on a diet of tumours, tumours of stupidity beyond redemption, and tumours of self-righteousness to the point of being suicidal (literally). Were we expecting little brown baby Justin Trudeau to come out of the bag of tricks we've turned in the name of our republic, our freedom, and our faith?

...

When we see the large crowds celebrating Mumtaz Qadri and defending the Hafeez Center bigotry, maybe one question worth asking is whether we can ever really kill em all? Maybe more importantly, we should be asking, who is 'them'? And, scarier still, who are 'we'?

Do we know? Do we want to know?

One year after the APS Peshawar attack, we still haven't asked these hard questions, and we insist on doing the easy things – the killing, the songs, the warming-of-the-cockles of the heart. We owe those children and their grieving families better.

Mosharraf Zaidi in The News; December 16, 2015

Op-ed: Is Jinnah really our founding father?

In a few days the nation will once again pretend to pay homage to Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah on his birthday, which falls on Christmas Day. There will be a change of guard at his mausoleum. Politicians and functionaries of the state will go lay floral wreaths on his grave. It happens every year. Every year it reeks of hypocrisy. Pakistan of today is the precise opposite of what Jinnah stood for and what Jinnah wanted for it on almost every count.

Any honest student of Jinnah's politics from 1906 to 1948 will tell you that there is no greater anti-Jinnah document, completely and totally in contradiction to what Jinnah stood for, than the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973. It is not that hard to determine the truth behind this claim I make here. ...It also shows that Jinnah's famous August 11 speech was not a one-off 'aberration' but was a restatement of a lifelong commitment to human rights and freedom.

When measured up to Jinnah's speeches and statements in the Indian central legislature as well as Pakistan's constituent assembly, the 1973 Constitution appears to be fundamentally bad. By barring the offices of president and prime minister of the republic to

non-Muslim Pakistanis, it creates precisely those bars that Jinnah had warned against. Such a situation was unacceptable to Jinnah in 1947 but it is even more inconceivable and out of place in the 21st century. What if such a provision disqualified Muslims in the US? We condemn hatemongers like Ben Carson and Donald Trump but do we have it in ourselves to condemn this institutionalised bigotry in our own Constitution?

...

I have just scraped the tip of the iceberg. To detail every instance of where Pakistan has acted against Jinnah's ideas would require an entire book. Why then do we insist on inflicting on him the epithet of "founding father of Pakistan"? The Pakistan he founded ceased to exist the day the majority of Pakistan walked out and formed Bangladesh. This new Pakistan's founding fathers are Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Maulana Maududi, Mufti Mahmood and General Ziaul Haq. This motley crew has forever damned Pakistan to hell. Of course, there is no doubt in my mind that after Pakistan has been humiliated enough internationally for its morally untenable practices, it will have to revert to the sort of state Jinnah wanted but that is still far off in the future. Perhaps some of us will live long enough to see that day.

Yasser Latif Hamdani in The Daily Times of December 21, 2015

Op-ed: The potential power of social media

There are, however, some matters on which there should be no room for diversity. One of these is the fundamental belief that all citizens are equal. They are not Shias, Christians, Ahmadis, Sunnis or Kalash, but Pakistani citizens who deserve precisely the same rights and liberties. This is what our law says. The fact that it has been twisted is a tragedy.

The question is how to undo the damage caused in this manner and rebuild ourselves as a society that does not go about pushing people out of shops or demanding that they label themselves. When we do this, we are acting just as Donald Trump is doing in the US or as the Nazis did under the Third Reich. This needs to be recognised.

We cannot throw stones at others when we ourselves are guilty of so much wrong. One wrong was at least partially corrected by the Punjab government action a few days ago. The action of course created debate, and this too is positive in some ways. What it did not really do was alter perception. To achieve that will require a long, hard battle with many weapons employed to prod and push society till it resumes something that resembles a normal place in which to live.

Kamila Hayat in The News; December 17, 2015

Editorial: CII brawl

...

However, if it were only this single incident involving the CII, perhaps it could be overlooked. Unfortunately, many of the issues the body has chosen to put on its agenda over the past few years are deeply troubling. Apparently, one of the factors behind the brawl was the presence on the agenda of the issue of the status of Ahmadis in relation to Islam, and whether the current members of the community are to be termed murtad (apostates) or not. As it is, Ahmadis in Pakistan live in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation and for the CII to even discuss this is akin to playing with fire. Also on the recent meeting's agenda were items related to defining which sects fall within the ambit of Islam, as well as the imposition of jizya (poll tax). In the past, the council has taken a stance endorsing child marriage. Clearly, the CII has a penchant for indulging in explosive debate rather than giving progressive solutions to the country's many faith-related problems. These examples of retrogressive thinking justify calls for its disbandment. There is much the council can discuss, including burning issues such as sectarianism, terrorism and rising extremism — problems that have torn the country apart, yet that have not been discussed in a critical and constructive manner by the clergy. The CII has chosen to raise divisive issues and weigh in with regressive views

at a time when moderation and a pluralistic ethos are required in society. Moreover, if its members cannot behave in a civilised manner, it is all the more reason to wrap up the CII.

Published in the Dawn, December 31, 2015

Op-ed: Lessons from Jhelum

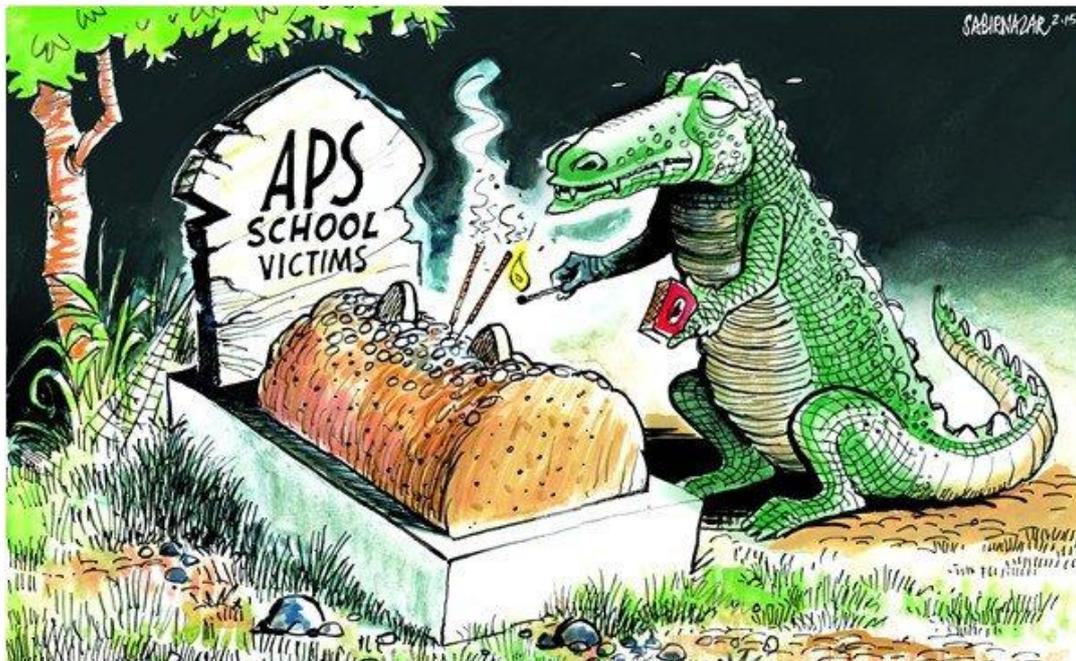
...Ironically, those people who were furious on the alleged burning of the Quran wanted to burn to death innocent humans.

...In most cases police investigation and prosecution are defective due to which the conviction rate is low; for example, the courts have freed all the accused in the massacre of Christians in Gojra in 2009.

Hardly a year passes by without a major incident of arson and murder against members of religious minorities – Kot Radha Kishan near Kasur (2014), Larkana (2014), Joseph Colony, Lahore (2013), Gujranwala 2011, Gojra 2009 etc. These killers enjoy virtual immunity from law.

Adnan Adil in The News; December 11, 2015

Cartoon:



The weekly The Friday Times; December 18, 2015