yet confident voice, "Ma'am, I am an Ahmadi and we do not commit such things." The session ended after a heated discussion on different sects in Islam, and I became different in everyone’s eyes. While I felt terrible at the time, today I feel grateful for not being kicked out of my college. Thank you Mrs. Rabia Shah, you were much too kind to not expel me, instead only arresting my friends against me. In today’s Pakistan, Mrs. Shah’s act is arguably moderate. Not moderate when compared to a civilized society, but moderate compared to the expulsion of 13 Ahmadi children from 2 schools of Hafizabad a few days ago.

The plight of Ahmadi students is not a new phenomenon in Pakistan. Ever since 1974, Ahmadi students have been victimized through boycott, expulsion, discrimination, denial of due credit, and torture. Across Pakistan, Ahmadi students and teachers both face faith-based persecution.

For example, during the ghastly summer of 1974, a number of Ahmadi students and teachers faced severe torture and persecution. In Multan, five Ahmadi students were ruthlessly beaten. A few days later, Professor Abbas bin Abdul Qadir was killed in Hyderabad. On September 7th 1974, the day when Ahmadi Muslims were declared Non-Muslim, five Ahmadi students were expelled from a Faisalabad university. Two students were forced to ride a donkey through city streets with their faces painted black. Later that month, Master Ziauddin Arshad, a teacher in Sargodha, was murdered for being an Ahmadi.

In March 1989, an Ahmadi student of Mansehra was fined and sentenced to one-year imprisonment. A few months later, an Ahmadi female teacher was arrested in Gujrat. In the early 1990’s, Lahore became popular for persecution of the Ahmadi students. In February 1994, 14 Ahmadi students were arrested in Rabwah. On Oct 9, 1994, Professor Naseem Babar of Department of Physics at Quaid Azam University was killed for being an Ahmadi. A few days ago, Rana Dilawar, an Ahmadi teacher, was killed at his school in Sheikhupura while teaching his students. Until the dawn of the 21st century, the persecution of Ahmadi students and teachers stemmed mainly from extremist groups. With exceptions noted, educational institutions generally abstained from discrimination. This, however, has changed in recent years.

In 2008, 23 Ahmadi students of Punjab Medical College, Faisalabad were expelled to appease the demands of Islami-Jamiat-e-Tulaba, a nationwide student organization in Pakistan. In 2009, 4 Ahmadi children under the age of 16 were arrested for alleged blasphemy shortly before they appeared for their Matriculation exams. National Textile University Faisalabad is also emerging as a hub of anti-Ahmadiyya activities in the region, forcing various enrolled Ahmadi female students to terminate their education for their own safety. Similarly reports of severe intolerance emerge regularly from the University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore, the Punjab University, and various Medical schools in Punjab.

As is, Pakistan’s Education system is abysmal. According to UNESCO, overall literacy in Pakistan is 49% and for girls it is only 36%. Despite this persecution, however, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is proud to maintain a 99% literacy rate. If Pakistani leadership has lost its civility, let it at least maintain some sanity. Why persecute the demographic that is leading the way in education?

Despite this persecution, Pakistani Ahmadis are still becoming doctors and serving all people, regardless of race or religion. They are becoming teachers, lawyers, and engineers. That they are all too often murdered is beside the point. Despite this persecution, Ahmadi students in Pakistan still have their tiny lamps of hope lit up in a place where “shadows of endless nights” are being given out.

About the author: Ayesha, an economics graduate, has worked in various Muslim communities in three different countries. Her expertise include Islam, women's rights, and religious minorities.