

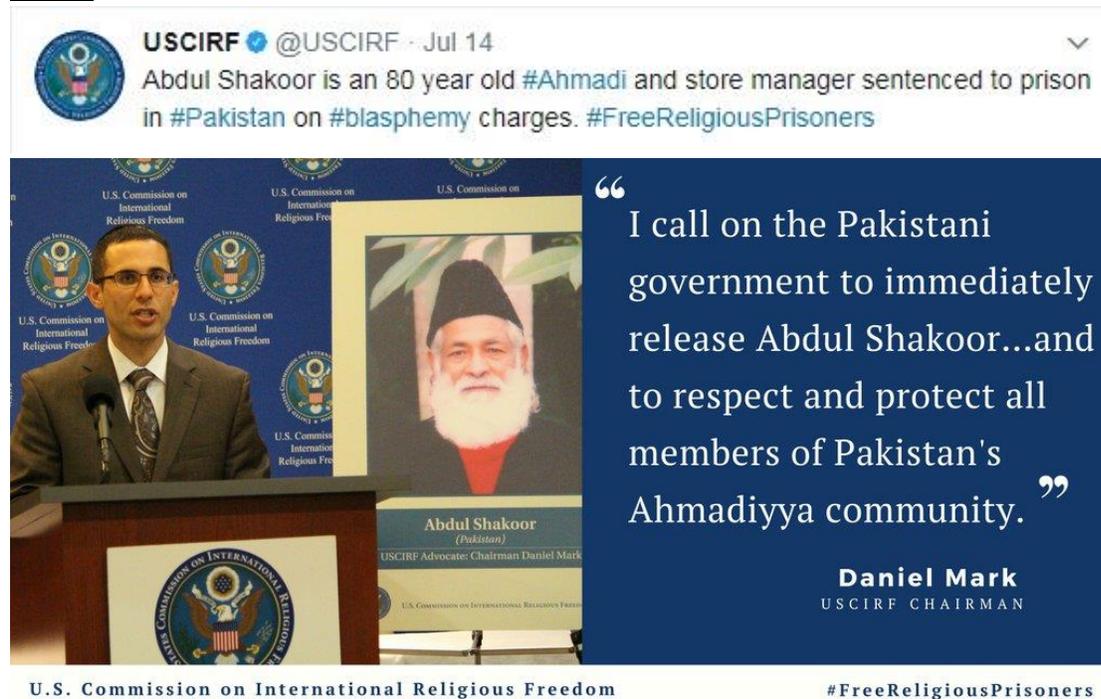
NGO's and Foreign reports

2017

Chairman Mark of USCIRF advocates release of Mr. Abdul Shakoor, Ahmadi prisoner of conscience

Twitter and USCIRF website, July 2017: Chairman Daniel Mark is advocating on behalf of Mr. Abdul Shakoor, Ahmadi book store-keeper of Rabwah and his Shia shop assistant, both suffering long imprisonment under Anti-terrorism clauses etc. He has done that as part of USCIRF's Religious Prisoners of Conscience Project which highlights individuals imprisoned for exercising their freedom of religion or belief, as well as the dedicated advocacy of USCIRF Commissioners working for their release. Chairman Mark adopted Mr. Abdul Shakoor as his Prisoner of Conscience. We reproduce below, his tweet and statement on USCIRF website:

Tweet



The image shows a screenshot of a tweet from USCIRF (@USCIRF) dated July 14. The tweet text reads: "Abdul Shakoor is an 80 year old #Ahmadi and store manager sentenced to prison in #Pakistan on #blasphemy charges. #FreeReligiousPrisoners". Below the tweet is a video frame showing Chairman Daniel Mark speaking at a podium. The podium features the USCIRF logo. A portrait of Abdul Shakoor is displayed on a screen behind him. To the right of the video frame, a quote is displayed: "I call on the Pakistani government to immediately release Abdul Shakoor...and to respect and protect all members of Pakistan's Ahmadiyya community." The quote is attributed to Daniel Mark, USCIRF Chairman. At the bottom of the video frame, the text "U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom" and "#FreeReligiousPrisoners" is visible.

<https://twitter.com/USCIRF/status/885977403637600256>

Statement available on video

My name is Daniel Mark and I am the Chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. I am speaking out today in support of Abdul Shakoor, a Pakistani optician and bookstore owner who is in his 80's. The Pakistani government unjustly has imprisoned him for propagating the Ahmadiyya faith. The Pakistani government should not only drop all charges and set Abdul Shakoor free but also respect and protect the basic rights of all members of Pakistan's Ahmadiyya community. On December 2, 2015, Punjab state counter-terrorism department raided Mr. Shakoor's bookstore and arrested him after he was accused of selling an Ahmadiyya commentary on the Quran among other publications.

He was charged with propagating the Ahmadiyya faith, a crime under the Pakistani penal code and storing up religious hatred and sectarianism, crimes under the 1997 Anti-terrorism Act. After a speedy trial in an anti-terrorism court he was sentenced on Jan 2, 2016 to five years' imprisonment under the penal code for blasphemy and three years under the Anti-terrorism Act (sic). His shop assistant Mazhar Abbas a Shia Muslim who is detained with him was sentenced to five years under the Anti-terrorism Act. The Pakistani government should immediately set him free too. Let's be clear Abdul Shakoor is not a terrorist. He was arrested, charged and imprisoned because he is an Ahmadi. His arrest, sentencing and detention are outrageous enough but so too are Pakistan's constitutional and penal code provisions that prevent Ahmadis from exercising their faith.

Equally egregious is the Pakistani government use of anti-terrorism laws as a pretext to deny Ahmadis their fundamental right to religious freedom. Pakistan's constitution declares Ahmadis to be non-Muslims and the penal code makes it criminal for Ahmadis to refer to themselves as Muslims, to preach, propagate or disseminate materials on their faith or to refer to their houses of worship as mosques. Moreover, in order to apply for a passport or national I.D. card or even vote, all Pakistani Muslims are required to sign in oath that the founder of the Ahmadiyya faith is an imposter prophet and that all Ahmadis are non-Muslims. In short, Ahmadis are required to denounce their faith in order to avail themselves of important several rights in Pakistan. Ahmadis also continue to be murdered in religiously-motivated attacks that take place with impunity. I call on the Pakistani government to immediately release Abdul Shakoor and ensure his safety, to release all other religious prisoners of conscience and to respect and protect all members of Pakistan's Ahmadiyya community.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=ZhSv_WtH7ps

UN demands on Pakistan, and Muttahida Khatme Nabuwat Movement's response

Lahore; August 7, 2017: The daily Insaaf published a story filed by its correspondent reporting the recent proceedings of a UN Human Rights Committee, its demands on Pakistan's religious and anti-Ahmadi laws, political mainstreaming of Ahmadis, and the reaction and comment of a Khatme Nabuwat leader on the UN Report. English translation of the Insaaf report is placed below:

Separate voters' list for Qadianis should be abolished: United Nations

Laws on Blasphemy, Qisas and Diyat should be repealed; homosexuality should be encouraged (sic).

Chenab Nagar (correspondent): Religious parties have rejected the findings of the United Nations Committee on Human Rights and its demand on Pakistan government to remove the Islamic laws from the Constitution. They have stated that these days no foreign power has the right to intervene in internal

political and religious affairs of Pakistan. The convener of the Liaison Committee of the Mottahida Khatme Nabuwwat Movement Pakistan, Abdul Latif Khalid Cheema, stated in his response that in the sessions of the HR Committee of the United Nations held on the 11th, 12th July and then on 25th and 26th July, Pakistan was discussed and the demands were made on the Pakistani government to encourage homosexuality, and repeal the laws on Blasphemy, Qisas and Diyat. He said that the 84-page report of the UN HR Committee is an indictment of Pakistani laws. The committee requires Pakistan to report within a year the progress of implementation on this report. The Committee has given a deadline that the above-mentioned clauses should be removed or revised from the Constitution of Pakistan by 20th July 2020. He further observed that the decline of the western civilization is so significant that it dictates homosexuality to Muslims. He said that the Committee has expressed most of its reservations on the issue of the Blasphemy law. The influence of the Qadiani lobby is obvious as the demand for doing away with separate voters' list for the Qadianis is repeatedly mentioned in their Report. While severely criticizing PPCs 295 and 298 of the constitution (sic) their immediate repeal is demanded, and if their repeal was not possible, changes should be made to them at the earliest to render them ineffective. In addition, the committee has suggested punishment for anyone who reports any painful incident of Blasphemy and for a complainant of such an FIR. According to him the HR Committee has demanded that the syllabi in educational institutes should be looked into afresh and all texts regarding religious beliefs and Islamic practices should be removed. Abdul Latif Khalid Cheema was of the view that the Muslims believe in preaching and cannot tolerate defiling the person of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) the mercy for all mankind. He urged the government to set aside the issue of Panama leaks, defend the Islamic law undisputed over 1400 years, and formally reject the report and recommendations of the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations. He urged all the leaders of different sects as also leaders of political parties to confront and resist these demands.

Clinical psychologist's report on an Ahmadi victim of persecution

Rabwah: An NGO undertook research in some cases of Ahmadi victims of persecution who were interviewed in the presence of a clinical psychologist. The latter subsequently rendered a professional report; here we reproduce for record description of one such case:

Case study

Ms. Ruby Tabbasum, a 33 year old lady, widow of martyred Mr. Qamar ul Zia and mother of three children (12 year old Huzaifa Ahmad, 9 year old Amtul Mateen Bisma and 5 year old Late Amtul Hadi) was referred to clinical psychologist by a general physician of Fazle Omar Hospital one year after trauma of her husband's brutal martyrdom (he was martyred on 1st March 2016). According to her, she had more than 40 visits in emergency department of Fazle Omar Hospital and Tahir Heart Institute, Rabwah with complaints of severe anxiety and high blood pressure right after the death of her husband.

She was assessed psychologically and was given a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and depression. She had developed symptoms like recurrent flashbacks of trauma a number of times during day, nightmares, inability to experience positive emotions, feeling of detachment from others, diminished interest in activities, concentration problems, disturbed memory, state of denial, psychosomatic complaints (aches and pain in body, stiffness in muscles, digestive problems) and insomnia. There was a

clinically significant distress in functioning. According to her, she had passed a satisfied, happy, and family-oriented life full of motivation and creativity. She had strong bonded family, never had any of financial problems as her husband never let them feel any of financial worries and provided them a warm, caring and full of life environment. After sudden and unexpected martyrdom of her husband she remained in state of denial and anger (main features of grief) for long. Her symptoms got more intensified 24 days after death of her 5-year old daughter, who witnessed death of her father and couldn't endure it, stated by her. Her relationship with family members also got disturbed. She received psychotherapy along with psychiatric medication which has become a part of her life now. She still has frequent episodes of flashbacks of trauma and anxiety associated with that trauma.

According to Ms. Ruby Tabbasum, her children have developed fear and low self-control after death of their father and younger sister. Her elder son is facing adjustment issues and learning difficulties after occurrence of trauma. She also has financial issues that have made her lead a compromising life. These conditions can be more psychologically unhealthy for her and her children.

Note: The case of Ms. Tabbasum could represent a type among victims in similar circumstances; we at the headquarters, however, know through experience that reactions and response to acts of persecution vary with different individuals. We have come across some others who bear up with tyranny and affliction with poise, balance, even *sangfroid*.

Religious freedom under attack in Pakistan: Secretary Tillerson

US report highlights attacks on Muslims by cow-protection groups in India

Washington: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson alleged on Wednesday that religious freedom was under attack in Pakistan, where more than two dozen people were on death row or serving a life imprisonment for blasphemy.

He said the Pakistan government had marginalized the Ahmadiyya Community and refused to recognize them as Muslims....

By Dawn correspondent in the daily Dawn of August 17, 2017

UNHCR's assessment of Ahmadi's' need of international refuge

UNHCR in one of its reports has come to the following conclusion:

" ...

In light of the foregoing, UNHCR considers that members of the Ahmadi community, including those targeted by militant groups or charged with criminal offences under the blasphemy or anti-Ahmadi provisions, are likely to be in need of international refugee protection on account of religion, ethnicity, (imputed) political opinion, and/or other relevant grounds, depending on the individual circumstances of the case."

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) January 2017 Pg 38, HCR/EG/PAK/17/01

