

# Mosques under attack, and worship denied

2017

## **Another FIR registered against Ahmadi victims of Dulmial**

*Dulmial, District Chakwal, Punjab; March 24, 2017:* A violent mob had attacked the Ahmadiyya mosque here on December 12, 2016. Two persons, an Ahmadi and a non-Ahmadi died at the occasion. As a result, social peace of this locality got seriously disturbed. The police registered an FIR against both non-Ahmadis and Ahmadis and arrested men from both parties, in a strange display of impartiality.

The leaders of the riot demanded another FIR against Ahmadis for the death of one of their youth in the riot. The police did not entertain this demand. The mullas approached a court to have their FIR registered. The Sessions Court directed the police to register the FIR as demanded. The police appealed to the Lahore High Court against the decision. Subsequently the LHC also maintained the decision of the Sessions Court and ordered the police to register a separate FIR against Ahmadis.

As a result the police registered FIR Nr. 65 against 40 Ahmadis, in Police Station Choa Saydan Shah, District Chakwal under PPCs 302, 324, 337F(VI), 337F(III), 337A(I), 148 and 149 for the murder of Mr. Naeem Shafiq – a member of the rioting and attacking mob. He had come from a distant village to participate in the procession.

## **Arson attack on an Ahmadiyya mosque**

*Muridkay, District Sheikhpura; August 28, 2017:* The local Ahmadiyya mosque was set on fire by a deranged youth at about 3 a.m. on August 28, 2017. The fire was initiated by dousing a furniture item with gasoline. It was extinguished before it spread.

According to details, the local mulla contacted a youth, incited and bribed him to set fire to the Ahmadiyya mosque. Five thousand rupees were offered for this heinous act. As the damage was nominal, Ahmadis did not pursue the issue further.

## **Obstruction in construction of a community centre**

*Rabwah:* Ahmadis are in need of a place of worship in a local neighborhood called Kahkashan Colony. As the administration tends to withhold permission for such purpose, Ahmadis decided to apply instead for construction of a community centre. Permission was granted.

A mulla Usama Raheem, however, has opened a madrassah in Naseerabad, and is ever busy in making mischief against Ahmadis. He approached a court to issue a stay order against construction of the Ahmadiyya centre. The court issued a ‘stay’ order.

Ahmadis approached the court, showed the judge the authorization and the approved construction plan; so the court lifted the stay, and the construction continued.

The mulla again approached the DC, who then asked for a report from the SHO.

It is under such circumstances that the Ahmadiyya community has to carry on with its social, religious and community activities and functions. It is indeed a great hardship. The authorities do not tire of proclaiming that minorities enjoy all sorts of privileges and facilities in Pakistan, however the mulla is free to obstruct and deny these constitutional freedoms to the marginalized groups, and in this he is rarely snubbed by powers that be.

### **Worship denied to Ahmadis in Iqbal Town, Lahore**

***Iqbal Town:*** An Ahmadiyya mosque was built here in 1987; Ahmadis used it for worship and community gatherings.

Later, mullas raised hue and cry over this place of worship and, in league with authorities, had the worship discontinued at the location.

Over the years, Ahmadis started using the place for worship again. The mullas approached the police and demanded that Ahmadis stop worshipping there as per earlier decision. The police sent for Ahmadi elders and reiterated the ban on worship.

Ahmadis have discontinued worship at the site. They have no other place for worship in the neighborhood.

Former prime minister is on record to have asserted: “All citizens of Pakistan, all over, regardless of their faiths, avail equal rights. I am sincerely committed to the welfare and protection of rights of all minorities: Nawaz Sharif.” (*The daily Mashriq; Lahore, April 6, 2015*)

### **Repairs and upgrade of an old Ahmadiyya mosque blocked**

***Mandhiala Waraich, District Gujranwala; June 2017:*** Ahmadiyya local mosque is in a poor state and needed attention. Its roof got dilapidated and the users decided to change it after raising the walls by two feet. They had hardly placed the slabs after raising the walls when mullas came to know of it. The latter had the work stopped with the help of police.

Ahmadiyya delegation met the C.P.O. who asked them if they had obtained the prior permission. Ahmadis told him that permission was needed for new construction, not for re-construction of an old structure. The C.P.O. telephoned the local S.H.O and issued instructions. The SHO sent for the two parties as also the so-called Peace Committee from Gujranwala city. The opponents demanded dismantling of the new roof and threatened to take over the Ahmadiyya mosque. Ahmadis were forced into accepting their unjustified demand. Accordingly the new roof was dismantled and the old structure was maintained.

The roles of police and the Peace Committee are noteworthy.

### **Problems in construction of an Ahmadiyya centre**

***Dhor, District Nawabshah; June 2017:*** Ahmadis decided to build a community centre on a plot registered in the name of Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya. They got the construction plan

approved by the Sindh House Building Control Authority, and approached the DC to get NOC for the construction. When an official came to inspect the place, a local shop-keeper named Ghaffar came to know of the plan for building the Ahmadiyya centre. He agitated the issue. He led a rally against Ahmadis on June 9 and got all the shops closed in protest against the construction of the proposed centre. Ahmadis contacted the authorities, who intervened and decided to let the situation calm down before further action.

Thereafter, on a Friday, the mullas held a *Dharna* (sit-in) of approximately 50 protesters at this site. Ahmadis reported this to the police. The police assured Ahmadis of support and security.

Later the police sent a report to the DC on the issue with their observation that construction there could be a threat to the general peace and create a law and order situation.

Well, that put a stop to Ahmadis' plan of having a community centre. The administration provides them tea and sympathy, but does the mulla's bidding. The rights of the marginalized communities are readily sacrificed at the altar of 'law and order'. Are the police not required to maintain law and order when miscreants threaten the constitutional rights of others?

Also, can the authorities point to one occasion when they authorized Ahmadis to build for themselves a place for worship, in the last thirty years? Whither freedom of religion or belief for Ahmadis?

Whither the much trumpeted claims of equal rights for all communities!

### **Exertion and sweat required to build an Ahmadiyya community center in Pakistan - unbelievable**

*Gorgajj, District Larkana; May - July 2017:* There is a sizeable Ahmadiyya community in the village Gorgajj located in District Larkana, the home town of the well-known Bhutto family. Ahmadis there decided to build a small complex comprising a school, a mosque and a residence for the religious teacher. For this they had a plot of land. The mullas however had their eyes on that plot and they intended to occupy it. The construction had already started, but the mullas from the nearby town of Wara became active to stop it. They reported to the police, as a first step.

The police visited the site and talked to the local population. Having heard the general opinion, the police permitted Ahmadis to resume construction of the boundary wall, but not build any madrassa etc. At this occasion the visiting police inspector and the local chief (a non-Ahmadi) reproved the mullas for attempt to deny the Ahmadis their right to practice their faith.

A few days later, urged by the mullas, the building contractor stopped the work on the boundary wall. When approached by Ahmadis, he regretted his action and resumed the work.

Thereafter, a delegation of mullas from Wara called on the village chief of Gorgajj who put them to shame for their unworthy campaign. The mullas noted the chief's annoyance, went back and declared that Ahmadis in Gorgajj were not their concern.

A week later the mullas changed their mind and decided to become aggressive. They declared that they would hire a crane to demolish the boundary wall. On hearing this, the village chief sent them a message that the crane would be destroyed on trespassing.

On July 5, the mullas arrived in numbers. The situation became tense. The police were informed by the Ahmadis. They came, dispersed the crowd and arrested one of the miscreants. Later, the mullas got him released.

The next day, the mullas took out a procession in Wara and indulged in bad-mouthing the Ahmadis. They accused the village chief of conversion. They decided to proceed to Gorgaij and destroy the built-up portion of the complex. The police as well as the district ISI official were informed. The police arrived, so did a group of miscreants all set to undertake the demolition. The police threatened to open fire. The miscreants had to beat the retreat.

The mullas thereafter took a few days to approach the district leadership of JUI who expressed sympathy with their cause. At this the village chief invited the senior mulla at Wara to come personally to solve the issue; the chief did not invite people from Larkana to meddle with the local affairs.

Eventually, it was decided by mutual agreement that one Mr. Tharo Khan, chief of the Chandio tribe would decide the issue. However, on July 16 the mullas formally applied to the police to register a blasphemy case against 8 named Ahmadis for allegedly defiling the Quran. The penalty could have been life imprisonment to all. The police took down the names of these Ahmadis but withheld further action for the time being.

On July 18, Mr. Tharo Khan gave the following verdict:

- The boundary wall already built (8 feet high) will be dismantled to the height of 5 feet.
- A large entrance gate may be installed.
- No further construction is permitted. No school or mosque shall be built.

The police hurried to have the verdict signed by the Ahmadis.

True: Believe it or not!

### **Administration imposes uglification on an Ahmadiyya mosque**

*Chak 287, Pilasor, District Toba Tek Singh; December 7, 2017:* The local administration told Ahmadis to demolish the minarets of their mosque. When asked the reason, they said that they had received no complaint from the locals, but received the photos of minarets of the mosque from the provincial head office, hence demolish these forthwith. Eventually it was settled that the outer wall would be raised high enough to cover the minarets from being visible from outside.

### **Orders to demolish minarets and niche of still another Ahmadiyya mosque**

*Distt. Muzaffar Garh; December 2017:* The police came to the local Ahmadiyya mosque in 34R Chak and told Ahmadis to demolish the niche and minarets of the mosque. They were told that this mosque was built in 1960, before the promulgation of the anti-Ahmadiyya Ordinance XX in 1984. The SHO also came at the site, and the same stance was conveyed to him. He went away satisfied.

Mullas however persisted and put pressure on the DPO to demolish the minarets of the Ahmadiyya mosque. The DPO called the SHO and told him sternly to solve the issue. The SHO came again to the mosque, this time in an angry mood and told Ahmadis to demolish the minarets or face registration of a police case. Ahmadis told him that they would not demolish the minarets in any case. Later he told Ahmadis to meet the DPO. An Ahmadiyya delegation met the DPO and explained their stance. The DPO obtained a copy of the Ordinance XX, read it and told Ahmadis that they could not build minarets and niche. Ahmadis told him that they were forbidden to call their places of worship a '*Masjid*', but the Ordinance did not forbid Ahmadis to build minarets or niche. Moreover minarets are built not only in mosques but also in other buildings. They are merely a design. Ahmadis conveyed him firmly that if the administration wanted to demolish the minarets, the police would have to do so in uniform otherwise Ahmadis would not allow any other person to demolish them. The DPO understood and told Ahmadis to remain calm until the issue was settled.

**Seven years on, perpetrators of attack on Ahmadi worship places still at large:** A press report by Rana Tanveer (of the daily The Express Tribune, Lahore)

Published: May 29, 2017

LAHORE: Seven years have passed since two Ahmadi worship places were attacked in Lahore on May 28, 2010, but the masterminds and perpetrators of these attacks are still at large.

In January this year, an anti-terrorism court had sentenced an accused to death and his accomplice to life imprisonment for the attack on Ahmadi worship place in Model Town. Both the accused were overpowered by Ahmadis in the worship place and later handed over to the police. However, no one is arrested nor brought to the book for attacking or facilitating the attack at the other worship place in Garhi Shahu the same day. At least 72 worshipers were killed in Garhi Shahu while 22 died in the Model Town attack. In the following days, the death toll surged to 104 (sic). The Punjab Taliban claimed the responsibility for these attacks.

A survivor from Model Town, Amjad Ahmed, told The Express Tribune he has lost hopes for any justice as his community has already suffered a lot for handing over two attackers to police after overpowering them. He said they were pressurized by the police several times in the name of investigation. He said both the accused have been kept in custody for seven years but none of their handlers or facilitators were arrested.

Amjad said the twin attacks have made the lives of Ahmadis more difficult.

**A noteworthy comparison**

**May 2017:** A news item in the daily Dawn of May 31, 2017 has triggered a comparison between a modern secular state (the US) and an 'Islamic' republic (Pakistan):

It was reported from New Jersey, US that:

"A New Jersey town will pay an Islamic group \$3.25 million to settle a lawsuit over its denial of a permit to build a mosque, the Department of Justice announced Tuesday.

Under the settlement, the group will be allowed to build the mosque and the town agreed to limit the zoning restrictions placed on houses of worship.”

Compare the above with the situation of Ahmadiyya mosques in Pakistan. It is now decades that Ahmadis have not been granted permission to build for themselves a house of worship anywhere in Pakistan.

Other figures on this issue, since the promulgation of the anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance, are given below:

▪ Number of Ahmadiyya mosques demolished	27
▪ Number of Ahmadiyya mosques sealed by authorities	33
▪ Number of Ahmadiyya mosques set on fire or damaged	22
▪ Number of Ahmadiyya mosques forcibly occupied	17

It should be mentioned that in most of the above cases, authorities (administrative, police, municipal or judicial) played some role in commission of these abominations. They, of course, quote some reason or excuse to justify their actions.

Granted that the great religion Islam promotes peace, tolerance and interfaith respect, its followers should occasionally examine their conduct in the light of its teachings.

### **Update on major atrocities of 2016**

1. **CTD raid on Ahmadiyya offices on December 5, 2016.** The fake police case registered after the raid was not withdrawn; instead the authorities took it to an Anti-terrorism court. Mr. Sabah ul Zafar and Mr. Idrees Ahmad were denied release on bail. The ATC judge announced three years’ imprisonment for each of them. An appeal against the verdict lies with Lahore High Court.
2. **Mob attack on Ahmadiyya mosque in District Chakwal.** The mosque remains locked by the authorities. Ahmadis have no place for worship for over a year. On demand of the riot leadership, a separate police case was registered against Ahmadis, on orders of a judge. One Ahmadi is still in prison at the end of the year. Sixty rioters out of the 67 detained have been released on bail by courts. Plea for bail of Mr. Muhammad Ansar, Ahmadi awaits hearing at the Supreme Court.
3. **Ban on Ahmadiyya publications and periodicals.** The Punjab government issued numerous such notifications early last year. It did that on illegitimate recommendations of the Muttahida Ulama Board that were in stark violation of the Constitutional guarantees, and the international instruments signed by Pakistan. None of these notifications has been yet withdrawn.

### **Hostile propaganda in Bhakkar**

**Bhakkar; September 2017:** Ahmadis installed CCTV cameras and barbed wire on the outer wall of their local Ahmadiyya mosque on the directions of district authorities. At this the opponents of the Ahmadiyya community started a baseless propaganda against Ahmadis in the vernacular press. Ahmadis reported it to the authorities.

Authorities sent for the opponent party and advised them firmly to refrain from hateful activities. Although they have refrained from using the vernacular press as before, but in their meetings they exhort the public against Ahmadis.