

# Freedom of religion and worship

2017

## **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*)

## **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!

### **Ahmadis forbidden in the Punjab to publish their prime and foremost scripture**

**Lahore:** The government of Punjab took steps in 2011 to make sure that Ahmadis were not allowed to publish the Holy Quran and its translations; however it is now that the provincial authorities are actively investigating if any violations of 2011 law have taken place. This investigation is being conducted on instigation of Mulla Hassan Muaviya, younger brother of the well-known Maulvi Tahir Ashrafi, a full time anti-Ahmadiyya activist and a religious thug. The Punjab law on this subject deserves a comment.

Prior to year 2011, the publication of the Holy Quran was done under the provincial Act of 1973. This facilitated Ahmadis to publish their translations and *Tafseer* (commentaries) of the Holy Quran. In 2011, the Punjab government was moved by the mulla to enact a revised law on this issue, whose main object was to deny Ahmadis their lawful right to publish their holy book and its translation etc. Accordingly, The Punjab Holy Quran (Printing and Recording) Act 2011 was promulgated. Mian Shahbaz Sharif was the chief minister.

The new law contained little new to add to the 1973 law to ensure error-free printing of the Holy Quran; however it included *Section 7* which was Ahmadi-specific, without naming Ahmadis. It provided:

**"Translation or interpretation of the Holy Quran contrary to belief of Muslims** – where, in a copy or record of the Holy Quran, or in any extract thereof published in a text book, a prayer book, a religious treatise or any other book, an Ayah is translated, interpreted or commented upon by a non-Muslim contrary to the belief of Muslims, the author, the printer or publisher, or the person who prepared the record, whether or not registered under this Act, shall, unless he proves that such translation, interpretation or commentary occurred only owing to a printing or mechanical error, be liable to punishment provided for in section 9."

This provision is highly vague and open to question as there is no authority to precisely state the 'belief of Muslims' and what is 'contrary' to it. The primary two sects of Islam differ with each other even on the text of the basic creed, the *Kalima*. Anyway, the object of the law was to stop Ahmadis, and that was achieved.

This law also provides for the government to constitute a Quran Board. It would be very surprising if any such board would act differently than the infamous provincial Muttahida Ulama

Board that recommended and got all the (86) books written by the founder of the Ahmadiyya community banned last year.

Sub section 5 (7) of this Act provides: “No record of the Holy Quran which injures its sanctity, in any form, shall be prepared”. The phrase ‘in any form’ gives unlimited power to any narrow-minded member of the Board to insist that the mere fact of an Ahmadi translating the Holy Quran ‘injures its sanctity’. This is not mere conjecture; most mullas insist that an Ahmadi using Islamic greetings of *Salaam* (peace) injures its sanctity. Magistrates are known to have awarded imprisonment sentences to Ahmadis for wishing *Salaam* to ‘Muslims’.

Section 3 now requires a publisher to have him registered on prescribed terms and conditions promulgated by the government. As such, it is no longer possible for Ahmadis to become registered as publishers of the Holy Quran.

The 2011 Act provides that its violation entails ‘imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine of not less than twenty thousand rupees, or with both.’

Understandably, Ahmadis can no longer publish the Holy Quran, its translations and its commentary. They and their future generations have no option but to read in Urdu the non-Ahmadiyya versions of controversial issues like Jihad, etc. The list can be long depending on the specific ‘belief of Muslims’.

As a result of this law, no print copy of the Holy Quran and its translation by an Ahmadi is available in any office of the Ahmadiyya headquarters in Rabwah, nor in the town’s main library. Incredible!

This law is an obvious violation of both the national and the international laws on religious freedom. Article 20 of the Pakistan Constitution and Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are relevant.

### **Ahmadis’ ‘freedom of religion’ under attack. Attackers presume official support**

*Various locations in the Punjab; August/September 2017:* Mullas of the Khatme Nabuwwat (KN: End of Prophethood) factions chose the blessed occasion of Eid ul Azha to indulge in vile efforts to deny freedom of religious practice, a fundamental right to Ahmadis in Pakistan. They declared their commitment to debar Ahmadis from offering sacrificial rites.

Their campaign was particularly paradoxical and ironic at the turn of August/September as the clerics in Pakistan were at that time furious and protesting over the maltreatment of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, but like these Buddhist monks these Islamist bigots felt no qualms about denying fundamental rights to a marginalized section in their own midst.

In their unworthy campaign they solicited police help at the highest level in the provincial capital. Mulla Muhammad Hassan, the general secretary of the Tahaffuz Khatme Nabuwwat Forum wrote a letter on August 24 to the Inspector General Police (Punjab) to deny Ahmadi the Ibrahimaic *Sunnat* of *Qurbani* (Sacrifice). In his demand, he referred shamelessly to the law PPC 298-C in his support; in fact, this law makes no mention that ‘Qadianis are forbidden the use of

'*Shaair e Islam*' as asserted by the mullas. This mulla gave his address as: Barlas Building, 13 Fan Road, Lahore; Phone Nr: 0324-3131200.

Without waiting for official response, this mulla and his bunch proceeded to implement their plan. They issued a pamphlet urging people, "Safeguarding the Pakistan Constitution is responsibility of us all." It instructed them, "If you see any Qadiani undertaking *Qurbani*, report to the nearest police station." For help in registration of the criminal case they were advised to contact the following mullas: "M K Shirazi in Lahore; Sikandar Hayat in Islamabad; Qazi Rahim in Chenab Nagar; Imran Yusuf in Gujranwala, Mr. Naqvi in Sialkot; Umar Farooq in Pasroor; Imran Ass in Narowal; Muhammad Ali in Sheikhpura; S. Izhar Shah in Naushera Virkan and M. Amir in Jhelum." Co-producer of this pamphlet was the Khatme Nabuwwat Youth Force.

If the authorities are looking for some leading religious bullies who need disciplining under the NAP, the above listed are volunteer candidates.

Khatme Nabuwwat mullas are not short of funds. They use all means to justify their share from the purse of violent Islamism. They put up banners here and there to the same end. One such banner, whose photo is held with us, carries the following message (translation from vernacular):

**"It is our foremost duty to show regard for the Constitution of Pakistan."**

**According to Pakistan law (PPC) 298-C Qadianis cannot practice Qurbani a Shaair Islam. Report the violator to police.**

**From: Muhammad Gulzar, President Tahaffuz Khatme Nabuwwat Forum Pakistan. #03234254454** (Note: The denial of this right is falsely attributed to PPC 298-C.)

This effort of the sectarian extremists did not go entirely waste. There were incidents at some places where the police was coerced to intervene and make *Qurbani* problematic for Ahmadis. For instance:

- In Adrahma, District Sargodha, mullas reported to the police that Qadianis were undertaking *Qurbani*. The police moved and contacted the local Ahmadi chief. He was asked to give in writing that the *Qurbani* will not be undertaken in the open but in a covered area.
- Mulla Irfan informed the police in Daska, District Sialkot that Ahmadis mentioned in the list provided were likely to undertake *Qurbani*. The police contacted the concerned Ahmadis and advised them to be discrete in performing the rite.
- Mr. Manzoor Ahmad, an Ahmadi in Lahore was in the process of performing *Qurbani*, when the police SHO arrived, along with his party. A mulla accompanied them. The mulla protested over the *Qurbani*. The SHO told him that he should rather be happy that this family had become a Muslim. To this, the mulla had no answer. However the police took note of the I.D. card numbers of Mr. Ahmad and his brother and took away to the police station the second goat that was the next to be scarified. At the police station, another mulla and his followers were present to push their shameful demand. The policemen handled them with tact.

On the third day, the police handed back the goat to its owner. Very nice of them.

- In Rabwah, Mulla Rahim is the resident bully and operative. He contacted the police to disallow Ahmadis the *Qurbani* rite. Ahmadis therefore had to exercise care and discretion in handling the *Qurbani* and collection of hides. Nevertheless, the mulla telephoned 15 to protest. The police told Ahmadis to be more low-key. Ahmadis complied.
- **In Qiampur Virkan, District Gujranwala, the police did not permit Ahmadis undertake any Qurbani.**

In any other country where the majority practiced Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism or Judaism, their religious leaders would be happy to know that ‘others’ had taken up their teachings and practices, but in Pakistan, mulla is queer and bizarre that he runs to the police station to report that an Ahmadi had practiced Islam; even more atypical is the police response who get moving to placate the bigots.

### **Ahmadis denied constitutional protection – for reasons**

**Lahore; October 18, 2017:** Rana Sanaullah, the law minister in the Punjab gave a strange and unlawful reason to deny constitutional rights to Ahmadis in the Punjab. The daily Dawn reported the following in its issue of October 18, 2017 (extract):

#### **Rana Sana tells PA his remarks were misconstrued**

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Law Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan on Tuesday told the Punjab Assembly that his remarks in a television talk show were misconstrued and he had actually said that the Constitution provides full religious freedom to all the minorities in Pakistan, but this could not be given to Ahmadis as they do not consider themselves a minority.

This is bizarre. First you deny in law a group their religious freedom to self-identify, then you deny them the Constitutional rights and religious freedom because they protest the wrong done to them initially. Illogical logic!

In another statement quoted in the press, he said, “Ahmadis, are more dangerous to the Islamic faith, than any other non-Muslim minority,” (*The daily Din; Lahore, October 10, 2017*), What a statement from a provincial minister, holding Law portfolio!

### **Harassment of a ‘convert’**

**Okhali Mohla, District Khushab:** Mr. Muhammad Zaman of this village joined the Ahmadiyya Jamaat in 2015. He, however, kept the joining confidential. Later, his father, Abdullah came to suspect that, and he sent for the local mulla.

The mulla talked to Mr. Zaman and slapped him couple of times during the interview. He also carried out a search of Zaman’s room; there he found nothing of his interest. The mulla told Zaman to present himself before Maulvi Zafar ul Haq in Bandial the next day for inquiry, or face consequences.

Bandial is a centre of anti-Ahmadi activists who enjoy support of local lords. Zaman informed the president of the Ahmadi community Chak 2 TDA who visited him in Okhali

Mohla. Under the circumstances, Zaman decided to flee from his village. This agitated his opponents further and they initiated a search for him.

On advice of mullas, Zaman's father had an ad published in a local newspaper wherein he declared depriving Zaman of all inheritance. He also announced a complete boycott with Zaman on account of his 'apostasy'.

Zaman has apparently decided to stay away from his village.

### **Restrictions in Azad Kashmir**

*Tatta Pani, District Kotli:* Anti-Ahmadiyya laws are not entirely operative in AJK, however the mullas and politicians keep on hankering desperately to follow Pakistan model.

There is an Ahmadiyya mosque in Tatta Pani. Islamic creed is written in the mosque and routine call for prayers is made. Some miscreants approached the police to step in.

Ahmadis had to stop the call to prayers. The police were happy with that, and filed an 'all is well' report.

### **Uninterrupted persecution**

*Chak 2 TDA, District Khushab; September - October, 2017:* This village is no longer safe for Ahmadi residents. Khatme Nabuwwat activists are free to continue with their hateful campaign against Ahmadis. They employ fresh means to add fuel to the sectarian fire they have lit.

On September 1, the day before Eid-ul-Azha members of the Khatme Nabuwwat organization called an open meeting in 2 TDA and made hateful speeches against Ahmadiyya community. After this rally a garlanded bull was paraded in front of Ahmadis' houses along with beat of drum thus instigating response that Ahmadis desisted.

In the evening Ahmadis came to know of the opponents' decision to take action against Ahmadis who would undertake sacrificial rites on the day of Eid festival. Khatme Nabuwwat activists distributed hateful leaflets at the occasion.

Therefore Ahmadis took special precautions, shifted their sacrificial cattle from their houses to their farms during dark hours and slaughtered them in tight security.

The opponents, however, slaughtered their cattle in front of the Ahmadiyya mosque, and raised slogans against Ahmadis on the Eid day.

Hateful anti-Ahmadiyya campaign continued in 2 TDA. On October 12, Ahmadis got information that some miscreants intended to harass Ahmadis in the area. They immediately informed the authorities, and met the DPO and told him of the prevailing situation. The DPO instructed the DSP and SHO for appropriate action.

On October 13, opponents gathered almost 150 men from surrounding villages, and invited two clerics as well. One mulla came from Sialkot and the other from Quaidabad. They made hateful speeches against Ahmadis and raised slogans. Ahmadis called the police. SHO himself arrived at the scene with his team and remained there to ensure peace.

### **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*