

Mosques under attack, and worship denied

2018

Attack, gross desecration and severe damage to Ahmadiyya mosque and a venerated site in Sialkot, Punjab

The dreadful outrage was undertaken in Sialkot on 23/24 May night by a mob with active assistance of state functionaries. As a result an Ahmadiyya mosque was badly damaged and a revered historic residence destroyed.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, the founder of Ahmadiyya denomination had stayed in this house and worshiped in this adjacent mosque. As such this complex is of great religious sentiment to Ahmadis, as a number of traditions and reports are associated with it.

Ahmadis had undertaken repairs and renovation of this house with permission from local authorities. Mullas came to know of it, and found it a useful tool to precipitate a riot and threaten law and order. Some sections of the civil society, a few bigots from the lawyers community, some careerist officials and a few self-serving politicians supported the mulla and demanded immediate action against Ahmadis for ‘outraging the religious feelings of Muslims.’ A few days earlier, the collaborating district administration proceeded to forbid Ahmadis further work, and sealed the house.

This effort to soothe the miscreants did not succeed, so the municipal authorities decided to join them to do what they demanded.

On May 23, at about 22:45 some officials arrived at the site and told Ahmadis of their intention to demolish the 19th century house for being ‘unlawful’. Their choice of time to carry out this operation is noteworthy. Ahmadis asked them to show ‘authorization’ papers; they had none. The police also arrived in the meantime and they took the line that though legal written orders were not available, the demolition would nevertheless be undertaken ‘as law and order is threatened’. Soon a mob, 600-700, arrived and all these joined in to demolish the house. Thereafter the miscreants attacked the adjacent mosque and demolished its minarets, domes, doors, etc.



Ahmadis in the interest of communal peace, decided not to respond to violence and not deter the miscreants with force, instead they left it to the authorities to handle the situation, who then used no means at their disposal and made no effort to disperse the vicious attackers.

It is obvious that after sealing the house earlier, it was under official custody, and the authorities were responsible for its security while awaiting judicial verdict; however in gross violation of this trust, the authorities not only initiated its destruction but also encouraged an unruly mob to participate in the heinous act.

These people were there till 03:00. Some of them came back at 04:30 and indulged in further vandalizing. This time the officials did not join them, and acted as mute spectators.

This entire incident happened with the collusion and participation of the administration and the police.

The police earlier booked two Ahmadis, the local Emir and the president on fabricated charge of 'unlawful construction'. An FIR was belatedly registered over the attack but it has been sealed.

Ahmadis have made a writ petition to the Lahore High Court against the sealing and destruction of the house by the TMA and the Police.

Ahmadis all over the world are very grieved and feel greatly hurt over this sacrilege.

Approximately ten days before this attack, at the demand of anti-Ahmadi elements, the district administration stopped Ahmadis repair and renovation of the historic house.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, the holy founder of the Ahmadiyya denomination, had stayed at this house on his visit to Sialkot. The house was still there, but its rundown structure needed repairs and renovation. The community undertook to restore it to its original form.

The mullas come to know of it, and as usual raised hue and cry. They alleged that a museum was under construction. The vernacular press gave boost to the propaganda. The mullas further alleged that the place would be used as a mosque. Ahmadis assured the administration that that was not the intention. The issue was agitated by opponents on the social media. A group of lawyers came out in support of bigotry and sectarian animosity.

In the run up to the riot, Mulla Khadim Hussain, the *Khatib* of the Lukabad Mosque harangued his followers on the issue and agitated them intensely to prepare them for action. He uttered very bad names for the holy founder of Ahmadiyyat and called him “the greatest enemy of humankind”, “an enemy of Islam”, abominable (*Beyghairat*), shameless (*Behaya*), of bad character (*Bad Kirdar*), disgraceful (*Bezamir*). He called his residence a filthy place (*Ghaliz Jagah*), a bad location (*Ghatya Jagah*), abode of rogues (*Bad mashi ka adda*). He bad-mouthed his fellow Muslims too who had sold the property to Ahmadis, calling the former as despicable (*Kameeney*), shameless (*Behaya*), low (*Ghatya*), traitors (*Ghadar*), abominable (*Beyghairat*) Muslims. He did not spare even their mothers, and said, “Their mothers’ character was corrupt.” All this garbage is available on videos. He told the authorities to undertake the demolition of the structure, otherwise “we ourselves will do that.” He took the official informers in confidence and told them to convey all that to the authorities. “We are law-abiding people, we’ll not take law in our own hands; I give you eight days to do that (demolition), after that we ourselves will take the law (... ..),” he asked his audience to complete the sentence; and they did. “We’ll set the property on fire; I myself will do that,” the cleric thundered.



Municipal functionaries at desecration site

In this open hateful speech, the mulla repeatedly violated sections 153-A, 295-A, 298 of the Penal Code, for which he could be arrested and imprisoned for 5 years; but he was sure that the co-operative administration would not even require him to explain.

The mullas succeeded as they always do in the context of Ahmadis. The administration intervened and stopped the work. The daily *Ausaf* of May 13 splashed the headline triumphantly: “The birth place (*sic*) of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani sealed on order of Deputy Commissioner.”

The official sealing of the house did not calm down the mullas, because their object was heightened agitation and unrest, and assertion of their political clout. So they precipitated a riot.

The atrocity was so vicious and senseless that the news soon got viral on social media. Videos of vandalism and its perpetrators became available. According to Reuters, a social media video shows a crowd cheering a local cleric (Hamid Raza) who claims to have ransacked the mosque. “I want to thank the Sialkot administration, the DPO, the DC, the TMA from the bottom of my heart,” said the cleric from the majority *Sunni* community.

www.reuters.com.world/news May 24, 2018

Mulla Hamid Raza is an activist of Imran Khan’s PTI and can be seen close to the party chief



in photos on the Internet. In a video at the destruction site he is seen leading the demolition gang. After the outrage he delivered a hateful speech and threatened the administration that if they registered a criminal police case against any one of the activists, he will turn the whole city into ashes. In his address he named *Jamaat Ahle Sunnat*, *Sunni Tehrik*, TLYR, *Al-Ghalibun*, *Jamia Al-Alim*, ATI etc. as collaborators. These are all essentially *Sunni* groups.

Although after two days, the PTI distanced itself from this criminal attack, through a statement, it is to be seen if and what action it takes against the villain who led the charge.

The print media and the electronic media in Pakistan mostly kept the news of this attack confidential but most who matter came to know of this atrocity. The news spread abroad and there was a fairly strong general condemnation both in Pakistan and abroad. Bilawal Bhutto of PPP condemned the attack in plain words. Senator Qurat-ul-Ain Murree of PPP took up the issue in the Senate where it was passed to a human rights committee for follow-up. Intellectuals and op-ed writers Marvi Sarmad, Bina Sarwar, Jibran Nasir, Iram Azeem, Yassar Latif Hamadani, and many others came out in support of religious freedom. The daily Dawn reported the attack and made editorial comment.

The incident received its due condemnation from foreign HR and Freedom of Faith activists and organizations. There was a statement of strong condemnation from USCIRF. Mr Knox Thames of US State Department also expressed sympathy for the victimized community. A number of British MPs denounced the attack. In addition the Ahmadiyya persecution was debated at length in the British House of Commons where MP Siobhain McDonagh led the debate, and Sialkot received due mention. Forum for Religious Freedom – Europe took note and issued a statement of concern. The High Commissioner of Canada in Islamabad issued the following statement:

“I am concerned at reports that a group of people damaged an Ahmadi place of worship in Sialkot last night. I trust that the relevant authorities will fully investigate these reports. All women and men have the right to freedom of religion or belief, including the right to worship in peace and security.”

Perry Calderwood, High Commissioner of Canada

Inside Pakistan, the mulla unabashedly owned up the sacrilege and gloated over his ‘great achievement’. He was seen on videos and social media doing that. Mulla Ashraf Jalali, a leader of TLYR expressed great satisfaction over the success of the riot and gave credit by name to Hafiz Hamid Raza, Hafiz Saghir Hussain Naqshbandi, Shoaib Dar and Hafiz Hasan Raza. Others who played a leading role in the attack were named as Aamar Dar, Chaudhri Akhlaq and Tahir Hundli by sources. Hafiz Raza gave due credit to the district authorities, the DC and the DPO: “You have accomplished a great task (*Azeem kam*); bravo also to the team of the local Chairman (of the Council).”

The rulers from the PML-N chose to hold their peace and issued no statements. They were not guilty of hypocrisy. They had no sympathy for the victims, nor did they show any.

Ms. Irum Azeem, an MPA of Sindh Assembly complained that she lobbied to move a resolution of condemnation of the attack, but not a single legislator supported the idea.

As for the vernacular media, it made no mention of the incident as if it was not news worthy. The TV channels found it prudent to keep quiet. NEO TV channel raised the issue with a team of commentators, but they took the line that as they were not aware of the facts of the case, they were not in a position to comment. How meticulous and above board!

Humsab, an HR website was more frank and forthright to state: "The administration has refused to take the blame, and by destroying peaceful citizens' property through submission to the Mulla it calls the monstrous action 'legal'. It is posing as if it only demolished an illegal construction."

www.humsab.com/pak/13305/newsdesk-118

The Daily Times posted an appropriate headline on May 24, 2018: "Mob led by PTI leader rains down misery on Ahmadi community, desecrates worship site in Sialkot."

Following media houses also entered reports on this event: Reuters; channelnewsasia; BBC; VOA; Youtube; Times of India; Alaraby.co.uk; Pakistan Today; The Hindu; Anap.dw.com; and others.

The Sialkot administration mentioned above, in fact, means Mr Farrukh Naveed the Deputy Commissioner and Mr Asad Sarfraz Khan the District Police Officer. They, of course, followed the policy guidelines issued from Lahore by the then chief minister, Mr Shahbaz Sharif of PML-N.

The bureaucratic machine in the Punjab seems to be well lubricated and functioning as tasked. Thus it was only three days after this outrage that the local Assistant Commissioner Mr Shahid Abbas was awarded Commendation Certificate and a Rs 100,000 reward by the Chief Minister. Believe it or not!

In this Islamic Republic of the Pure, following has been achieved since the promulgation of the anti-Ahmadi Ordinance XX:

Number of Ahmadiyya mosques demolished	28
Number of Ahmadiyya mosques sealed by authorities	37
Number of Ahmadiyya mosques set on fire or damaged	24
Number of Ahmadiyya mosques forcibly occupied	17
Number of Ahmadiyya mosques construction of which was barred by the authorities	58

After this successful attack in Sialkot the mulla threatened further such attacks on Ahmadiyya places of worship.

Mob attack on Ahmadis and Ahmadiyya mosque in District Faisalabad

Ghaseetpura, District Faisalabad, Punjab; August 23, 2018: Ahmadiyya head office issued the following press release on August 24:

Press Release

An Ahmadi place of worship in Ghaseetpura Faisalabad attacked by a mob on the basis of a minor personal dispute

After physically attacking the place of worship the assailants set it on fire. 5 Ahmadis injured during gun fire. This attack is highly condemnable and the authorities need to take swift action against the perpetrators.

Chenab Nagar (PR) On 23 August 2018, an Ahmadi place of worship in Ghaseetpura, Faisalabad was attacked on the basis of a minor personal dispute between two parties, by a mob of 300-400 people. A number of the attackers were armed. The assault began at the time of the *Maghreb* prayer when armed men began firing at the place of worship. Five people were injured by gun shots.

According to details, extremist elements in the town took advantage of a minor personal dispute to whip up enmity against the local Ahmadi population and gathered together a mob which went on to attack the place of worship by pelting stones and firing at it. The Ahmadis inside the building managed to get out and escape with their lives. The mob then vandalized the main prayer hall before setting fire to the things that were in the place of worship. An Ahmadi home situated next to the place of worship also suffered some damage.

The spokesperson of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan condemned this attack in the strongest possible terms. He said that attacks against Ahmadi places of worship were now becoming far too regular an occurrence. In May of this year an Ahmadi place of worship in Sialkot was attacked and yet nothing has been done to bring the perpetrators of the assault to justice. Rarely is action taken against those who commit crimes against Ahmadis and this has resulted in a climate of impunity. The spokesperson also said that after the attack in Ghaseetpura the assailants took to social media to make false and hateful accusations against the local Ahmadis that means that the situation continues to be volatile and further attacks against the community are possible. He called on the authorities to take full and requisite measures to bring things under control and take swift action against the perpetrators of the attack. End

Additional information and subsequent developments in this case are summarized below:

- In the circumstances leading to this event, social media displayed videos showing clerics of Tehrik Labbaik (TLP) agitating the people against Ahmadis. The agitating mullas were not held accountable by the authorities.
- Mulla Ilyas Chinioti (a PML-N MPA) visited Ghaseetpura to assure support to the perpetrators of the attack on the Ahmadiyya mosque. Thereafter he called on the DIG Police of Faisalabad and informed him of the excesses against Muslims in the police case (sic). This mulla unabashedly supported rioters who attacked others' places of worship.
- When Ms. Sheerin Mazari the Federal Minister of Human Rights and the Federal Minister of Information were informed of the happenings at Ghaseetpura, they took notice and sought reports. However Minister Fawad Chaudhry described the incident as mere personal dispute between two groups, as a case of law and order, and with no religious dimension. Many in the print and social media asked him that if that was so, what is the explanation for a mob to assemble and attack a place of worship and indulge in arson.
- The daily Dawn of August 27 published a wholesome report on how fake social media posts spurred violence in Ghaseetpura. Some of these claimed that seven Muslims had been killed by Ahmadis' firing. In fact not a single person from both sides died of firing or physical attack.
- A few from the vernacular press played up false propaganda as before. For example they printed: 1) Ahmadis themselves set their worship place on fire to pose as victims. 2) AIG Abu-Bakar Khuda Bux's appointment as the Enquiry Officer has upset the Muslims greatly. 3) No Qadiani property has suffered any damage. 4) Qadianis reacted because they had been denied permission to build a new mosque. Etc.

The leading Urdu language daily 'Jang' published the news of this very painful event in a one-column bit on page 15.

- Ahmadis mentioned hereafter were injured as a result of rioters' action: 1) Mr. Mubeen Ahmad was wounded by an axe. 2) Mr Tahir Alam was shot and hit in the leg. 3) Mr Shaukat Qamar

was hit in the right arm. 4-6) Mr Sarfraz, Mr. Muhammad Waqas, and Mr Qaisar Daud also received fire arms wounds. Of these six injured, four Ahmadis were put under arrest while admitted in hospital.

- The police registered a criminal case against the Ahmadi defenders as well as the attacking mob. Thirteen Ahmadis, namely Messers Rashid Ahmad, Shakeel Ahmad, Shaheen, Mubeen Ahmad, Talha, Bilal s/o Jamil, Bilal s/o Ejaz, Zain, Sarfraz Ahmad, Tahir Ahmad, Aamar, Waqas and Shaukat Qamar were named in FIR Nr. 278/18 dated 24 August 2018 under PPC 295-A, 7 ATA, 324, 436, 427, 148, 149 at P.S. Balochni, District Faisalabad. Six of these accused were arrested, four were hospitalized with injuries inflicted by attackers.
- The authorities arranged a recociliation between the two parties. According to the truce, both sides would promote peace and desist from provocative action. Ahmadis themselves had to bear the cost of repairs to the damage done to their mosque by the rioters.

Another Ahmadiyya mosque sealed by authorities

Deryan Wala, Narowal; May 28, 2018: The authorities sealed an Ahmadiyya mosque on May 28, 2018 on demand of some mischief mongers, without talking to Ahmadis. This has a background.

Mr Nizam ud Din was one of the first among residents of Deryan Wala to join Ahmadiyyat. He had built a mosque on his land and bore all the expenses. He was the guardian and caretaker of the mosque. After his death, an Ahmadi lady Ms. Ghulab Bibi donated her 4-acre land to this mosque for its expenses. This continues to-date.

All the children of Mr Nizam ud Din are Ahmadi except one son. This defector made some attempts in the past to take over the mosque and its annexed land but did not succeed.

The other day, two neighbouring families of the mosque requested the Ahmadi caretaker of the mosque for its keys to offer their prayers. He gave them keys in courtesy.

Next morning, when Ahmadis came to the mosque for prayer they saw some non-Ahmadi assembled there for congregational prayers. This was over-stepping the courtesy. Ahmadis carefully handled the situation, and non-Ahmadi left the mosque after their prayer. However, a little later a heavy police contingent arrived at the mosque and sealed it without asking any questions. The two parties were told to report to the district police office. Obviously the entire event was a product of conspiracy in league with the police.

The opponents enjoy full support of mulla Khadim Hussain Rizvi of Faizabad sit-in notoriety.

The grabbers are apparently more interested in the 4-acre agricultural annexed land than the small mosque itself.

Another Ahmadiyya mosque locked by police unlawfully

Goth Qamaruddin, District Noshehro Firoz (Sindh); September/October 2018: The local mulla Saeed Chandio targeted the village Ahmadiyya mosque and succeeded in getting it locked unlawfully by the police.

Mulla Chandio had been agitating the local population against Ahmadis for weeks in his Friday sermons. The situation was getting sensitive so Ahmadis met a senior police officer at the district level

and made a written complaint. The officer directed the DSP who in turn told the SHO to investigate and report.

The mulla came to know of this and he agitated the issue still further on Facebook. He met mullas of other denominations and sought help. He also approached the Bar Association and obtained assurance of support from lawyers.

The mulla's activism scared the local police into compliance. The SHO was seen accompanied by the mulla's father when the former visited the mosque and its approaches.

The SHO was informed by Ahmadis that the mosque is an old construction and was built before the anti-Ahmadi ordinance was promulgated. In any case, the mosque had been wrongfully locked from outside, but an internal entry was available to enter the mosque for worship.

The police were informed that Mulla Chandio is in fact interested in the mosque's plot as property. He is a distant relative of an Ahmadi elder and is keen on taking over this plot, although neither per law nor per Sharia he is entitled to it.

The police were, however, unduly concerned with unrest over the issue. They locked the interior entry to the mosque as well. On what authority and on whose orders, Ahmadis do not know.

It is relevant to mention that the Constitution and the law do not forbid Ahmadis to have minarets on their places of worship.

It appears that the authorities govern this ungovernable state on the writ of the mulla, and not of the Constitution and law.

An Ahmadiyya mosque escapes desecration

Ghoghiat, District Sargodha; March 10, 2018: Mullas have been busy in mechanizations against Ahmadis in Ghoghiat, Sargodha in the recent past. A conspiracy came to light. Mullas had made a plan to demolish the niche and minarets of the Ahmadiyya mosque built in 1905. Ahmadis informed the DPO in writing, as this posed a serious threat to the sanctity and security of their mosque.

On March 3, 2018 Qari Khalil-ur-Rehman and Muhammad Saqib Jalali (*Markazi Ameer Tahafuze Islam*) uploaded provocative ads with anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments on the Facebook. This caused the local administration concern over sectarian peace. The police took steps to ensure security to the worship place.

On March 4, the SHO sent for both the parties. The SHO told the mullas that he could not let them demolish the niche and minarets. If they wanted to demolish them, they should apply to a court and get a decision. In that case the police will help them in demolishing the niche and minarets of the Ahmadiyya mosque.

Ahmadis have been living in this village for over a century, and in the past there were no communal problems. The new environment is a consequence of faulty state policies in the field of religion.

Attempt against another Ahmadiyya mosque

Uwrah, District Sialkot; June 2018: Subsequent to a successful attack on an Ahmadiyya mosque in Sialkot, some mullas of village Uwrah got encouraged and started planning demolition of the local Ahmadiyya mosque. This mosque was built almost 70 years ago.

It should be mentioned that Pakistan law does not forbid Ahmadis construction of minarets, or niche in their place of worship.

Ahmadis, having come to know of the evil intentions of the bigots informed the district authorities and the local police. As a result the inspector of the police post sent for the reps of the two communities. Four Ahmadis went for the meeting, while the mullas came along with approximately 70 men who acted rowdy. The inspector had a word with four men of each party. The mullas took the line that they were angry as Ahmadis had named some of them in their complaint. Ahmadis said that they had named none. The inspector told Ahmadi delegation to give in writing that they named nobody. Ahmadis did that.

A few days later the area revenue clerk (Patwari) visited the village, as rep of the Assistant Commissioner, and sent for a non-Ahmadi applicant and accompanied by a few Ahmadis, visited the mosque. He remarked that the mosque was old and no repair work was going on (as alleged). In reply to his question, Ahmadis told him that the mosque was built prior to the Partition. The clerk took a photo of the participants of the talk, obtained their signatures and departed.

Some days later, the SHO sent for the two parties. He heard both the sides and remarked that neither the police, nor Ahmadis, nor the opponents will demolish the minarets. "I shall personally visit the site," he said.

On May 22, a number of miscreants assembled in the vicinity of the mosque. The police were informed and the SHO came over. He took one man each of the two parties and went inside. He remarked that it was an old mosque and he would inform the Deputy Commissioner accordingly.

Note: After the attack on Ahmadi properties in Sialkot and at the onset of elections campaign, anti-Ahmadi campaign picked up and Ahmadis were confronted with higher level of threats, harassment and agitation.

Take-over attempt against another Ahmadiyya mosque

Qiyam Pur Saddey, District Narowal: A non-Ahmadi sent applications to the DC and DPO Narowal to order handing over the local Ahmadiyya place of worship to Muslims.

According to him the mosque was built prior to the Partition. It was jointly used by the two communities. Later, with the passage of time, Qadianis took its possession. These people threaten us Muslims. They are supported and funded by foreign elements. The mosque should be recovered from Qadianis. Muslims' rights should be protected and a criminal case be registered against Ahmadis. Otherwise there shall be a law and order situation that may end up in bloodshed, they threatened.

The police and administration took up this case, heard both the sides and the issue seemed settled.

However, later with the election campaign in full swing, and a change in senior police and administration officials, the miscreants raised this issue once again, took out a procession and threatened takeover of the Ahmadiyya mosque.

Mullas demand change in the design of Ahmadiyya worship places

Sargodha; September 28, 2018: Excerpt of a news report from daily Jang of September 28, 2018 is reproduced to place on record still another vulgar demand of mullas of the Khatme Nabuwat faction, aimed at restricting Ahmadis' freedom of religion:

“Designs of Qadianis’ worship places should be changed: Khatme Nabuwat Conference

A mischief is underway to amend the Blasphemy law. There shall be terrible consequences.

Sargodha (correspondent)... “So long as Qadianis are not removed from key posts, terrorism will continue in the country, as officials at key posts are using Ahmadiyya funds in anti-Pakistan conspiracies.” This was stated by (long list of ulama)... At this occasion a number of resolutions were moved that Qadianis should be removed from key posts and the design of their worship places should be changed.”

Another Ahmadiyya mosque at risk

Johar Town, Lahore; October 2018: Opponents of the Ahmadiyya community are always on the lookout for an excuse to hurt them. Mosques are their favourite targets. Mullas are active to close down Ahmadiyya prayer centre in Johar Town, Lahore. Ahmadis have been praying there for years but now some locals led by mullas have started making complaints against this prayer centre. Approximately two dozen locals signed an application against Ahmadis accusing them of doing unlawful activities in their prayer centre built illegally. They sent their application to the Lahore High Court and the Deputy Commissioner. The application to Lahore High Court was sent by Ihsanul Haq who is an activist of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, an organization banned for its terrorist activities. LHC sent the application to the DC for follow up.

The issue ended up with police. The SHO of the local police station came to the site one evening and acted hostile. He accused the Ahmadis of creating problems through worship and assembly for prayers.

Thereafter a mob of approximately 100 men came to the site and agitated against Ahmadis' worship centre.

If the state provides no protection to Ahmadis' place of worship they will lose still another mosque to the activism of bigots and extremists.