Op-eds

2018

Op-ed: Mirzai the biggest enemy
As the world watches the drama unfold in Jerusalem, al-Aqsa mosque is once again the centre of our attention. Israel’s right-wing government plans to demolish the mosque in the next stage of takeover of the holy city. Even the thought of it is painful; how agonizing it will be seeing the holy edifice being torn down? I wonder how the local Muslims living in Jerusalem will deal with the loss. My question to all the thaikaidars of Islam in Pakistan is, what will you do when ultra-right Jews replace al-Aqsa with a Synagogue.

Recently, I woke up to the news of an Ahmadi place of worship being demolished by religious fanatics in Sialkot.

How painfully helpless would one feel when one cannot even defend oneself? When one’s so-called “protectors” are complicit in the crime being committed, and especially when someone is not in position to put up a defense because that someone belongs to a minority in Pakistan. Apparently, the police of Sialkot was watching it all happen and didn’t move a muscle.

Unfortunately, our current system promotes the radical elements who are out in the open, no longer lurking in the shadows. It was less than a week back that I interacted with an FIA official, and was left speechless. From disrespectful comments to derogatory slurs, his words were punctuated by incomprehensible hate. It will not surprise me at all if he was found amongst the hooligans that demolished the Ahmadi place of worship in Sialkot. This is supposedly an educated man, sworn to uphold the law and protect all Pakistanis regardless of their ethnicity and creed.

Hassan Khan Niazi on June 6, 2018 in dailytimes.com.pk/249452/mirzai

Op-ed: Jewish supporters of Nazism
Recently the Government of Pakistan under Herr Imran Khan through NADRA added a fresh new oath to the Computerised National Identity Card forms to ensure that no Ahmadi would ever register as a citizen in this country. Till now Ahmadis had been able to register as citizens of Ahmadi faith simply by refusing to sign the oath required for officially sanctioned Muslims. Now they are required to sign an affidavit saying that they consider themselves Non-Muslim as well.

This is a fresh new violation of Article 20 of the Constitution because the core belief of Ahmadi faith is that they consider themselves Muslims. While the state for the purposes of law and constitution considers them Non-Muslim, the state cannot force them to consider themselves non-Muslim. This is a violation of not just the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom but is a violation of all norms of decency and humanity. To think that the move comes days after … Imran Khan promised to teach Prime Minister Modi how to treat minorities well.

Yasser Latif Hamdani in Daily Times, December 31st 2018

Op-ed: Ahmadies in Pakistan’s electoral paradigm
A true democracy empowers citizens and creates the undeviating association among the ruled and ruler by representing the majority rule. But it also defies and binds the majority not to devastate the minority or tiny communities in a socio-political environment. Majority rule sometimes materializes as a gigantic deficiency of democracy and increases the agonies of minority groups.

... 

This manipulative situation of Ahmadis violates the Article 21 of the UN Human Rights Charter 1948. Articles 21 provides the safeguard to the process of genuinely free and fair environment to elect the representatives under ‘free voting procedures’. Furthermore, this matter is in contradiction to the spirit of justice and articles 3, 4, 36 and 37 of the Constitution of 1973.

_Busharat Elahi Jamil in the Daily Times, July 13th 2018_

**Op-ed: Jinnah’s Pakistan is finally dead**

Even though Nehru himself had admirably countered Allama Iqbal’s abuse against Ahmadis through his writings, Ahrars were nevertheless cultivated by the Congress leadership against the Muslim League, chiefly because Muslim League was led by a Shia, an Anglicised Shia at that who was more British than the British in his lifestyle. Ahrars sought to break the unity of the Muslim League in two ways. In Lucknow, they started the Madh-e-Sahaba movement against Shias of that city. In Punjab, they raised the slogan of Khatm-e-Nabuwwat against the Ahmadi members of the Muslim League.

Punjab Muslim League, under influence of reactionaries like Allama Iqbal, was ready to fold but at this moment Jinnah intervened and declared that Ahmadis would be treated as any other sect of Muslims with the same rights and would be welcome in the Muslim League. As Dr Ayesha Jalal writes in her book “Self and Sovereignty”, Jinnah was not ready to allow a theological dispute to come in the way of Ahmadis’ right to self-identify. …

It is Pakistan’s obligation under the ICCPR to ensure that every citizen of Pakistan is given the right to vote and the placement of Ahmadis on a separate list disenfranchised that community and singled them out for discrimination. …

Now they are contesting elections as a political party on this single issue. Taliban Khan has now reignited the Khatm-e-Nabuwwat issue. This was a door that should not have been opened again, given that we have been burnt repeatedly. …

The Islamabad High Court’s decision on the Ahmadi issue delivered by Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui is the opening salvo of what our country has now become. Frankly, his 172 page judgment reads a lot like Mein Kampf. The contributions of Ahmadis to the creation of Pakistan, and to the Kashmir issue for example are omitted. Instead, it is falsely stated that Ahmadis plan on taking over large tracts of territory in Pakistan to form a state within a state and that they are Zionists. Based on Iqbal’s reactionary and bigoted correspondence with Nehru, Ahmadis are declared enemies of both religion and country – ironic since when Iqbal was writing the country he meant was India. It is also recommended by the “learned” judge that Ahmadis should not be allowed to use the word “Ahmadis” as their name because it is too Islamic. Justice Siddiqui wants them to have Qadiani or Mirzai as their surname. Welcome to the 4th Reich. Welcome to Naya Pakistan.

Truth be told, 1971 had ended Jinnah’s Pakistan geographically. 1974 was the deathblow to whatever residuary parts of Jinnah’s ideas were still left. Then onwards it was Bhutto’s and Zia’s Pakistan but Jinnah’s ideas were on a ventilator. Messrs Imran Khan, Shaikh Rasheed and Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui have managed to destroy the ventilator.

_Yasser Latif Hamdani in the Daily Times, July 9, 2018_

**Editorial: Faisalabad Mosque Attack**
Imran has been criticized consistently, and rightly so, for lacking the courage to speak up against the religious intolerance in his political journey he has made so far. The inability to speak up against the religious fanaticism – that has morphed in Frankenstein’s monster – will bite Imran and his government back in the days ahead.

In the otherwise positive speech that Imran Khan as Prime Minister (PM) of Pakistan delivered, there was no mention of how Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) would eradicate the menace of terrorism and intolerance that was plaguing the society. While Imran talked about equality of citizens before the law and supremacy of law in the Naya Pakistan, it is the time for his government to set a solid precedent by acting against those who perpetrated the heinous crime.

The Nation; August 25, 2018

Op-ed: The elephant in the room

...The hate and propaganda against Ahmadis has become so commanding that it is shaping itself as a new force, parallel to the writ of the state. The Faizabad sit-in was just a start. Even the people in the highest echelons of power were found appeasing these elements, by either ensuring them of their support, or by convening ‘Meelad’ conferences at their homes. ...

In the current climate, there is only the courageous Muhammad Jibran Nasir, a political candidate who has shown an unprecedented resolve to fight against the religious bigotry and hate directed at the Ahmadis. He and his supporters were threatened, manhandled and silenced just for talking positively about the community, yet they persevered undeterred. ...

Our political elite must learn this lesson as well and realise that ignoring the immense persecution directed at the Ahmadis will only cultivate hate within the different communities of Pakistan, which could then be exploited by nefarious forces out to destabilize the country. The fight is not just for the Ahmadis anymore, it is for the very survival of our society.

Obaidullah Khan in the Daily Times; Lahore, July 26, 2018

Op-ed: Imran Khan’s religious politics

Now, will Imran Khan employ even religion in campaign against Nawaz (Sharif)? If one analyses the tragedies imposed on Pakistan through religion in politics, one would feel depressed for years. The use of religion in politics converted sectarianism into political disaster. The nation stands divided. Extremism was introduced in politics. A culture of intolerance came into being that stopped people offering prayers jointly. Thus the prophecy of Hazrat Usman became true that he brought forth prior to his martyrdom. To seek guidance from religion and to use religion to promote political interest are two different things. ...

With this approach he (Imran Khan) has raised the banner of End of Prophethood, as also (his) provincial government in KPK has provided financial aid to gain Maulana Samiul Haq’s support. My research shows that 300 million rupees were set aside in 2016-17 budget for (madrassa) Darul Aloom Haqqania. It is now learnt that additional 277 million will be provided to this madrassah. We’ve heard the news that every Imam of a mosque will be paid ten thousand rupees per month. The question is for what services they will be paid this amount. ... This money is being doled from chief minister’s discretionary fund. This worries me.

National political parties spare the people the leadership of people like Khadim Rizvi who exploit their religious sensitivities in issues like end of prophethood. If these parties indulge in the same business, what will the people do?

Khurshid Nadeem in the daily Dunya; Faisalabad, February 2, 2018

Op-ed: Religious politics of Imran Khan
Like other political parties in the country, Tehrik Insaf’s leader Imran Khan has learnt the formula that in order to wade in Pak politics and to befool the voters, it is essential to use the religious tool.

Sajjad Ali in the daily Mashriq, March 3, 2018

Editorial: Attack on Ahsan Iqbal
The assassination attempt on Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday in his home constituency at Narowal during a corner meeting provides a bleak assessment of the country today and certainly does not augur well for the coming election. …

Others who are complicit in creating the conditions for such groups to thrive – and, consequently, for such attacks as the one on Ahsan Iqbal – most definitely include the political parties who demagogued on the Khatm-e-Nabuwwat issue to score points against the government. These parties know how inflaming religious passions can endanger lives – and yet they persisted. False accusations of blasphemy have soared in recent years, with often lethal consequences for those who are accused. From Salman Taseer to Mashal Khan, we know how baseless blasphemy accusations can be lethal. Ahsan Iqbal was lucky to survive on Sunday but, if we keep following our current trajectory, the next person may not be as lucky. A line in the sand needs to be drawn. No longer should groups or parties that encourage and spread hate speech be allowed to dictate the terms of debate. Any political parties that hop on their bandwagon should also be shunned. Such groups and parties have blood on their hands and cannot be treated as legitimate in any way.

The News International, May 8, 2018

Op-ed: The deafening sound of silence
…The PPP has joined the sinister silence that we see everywhere else. Though to its credit it didn’t sign the Senate resolution pointing out that Atif Mian was Ahmadi – a fact that is completely irrelevant to his appointment under the constitution.

Shockingly, the ANP – a party that still calls itself secular – did sign the resolution as did the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and almost every other mainstream group. There is then simply no one left to stage visible protests against Pakistan’s continuous rightward slide or the discrimination against groups within the country.

Unfortunately, those who could do so have been demolished over the past decades while political parties that should be taking a stand apparently lack the spine to even issue a statement. We haven’t heard from Bilawal Bhutto, Asfandyar Wali or any other major leader from any political group in this regard.

In such a situation, the Right has an open path to the victory stand. It is currently joyfully making its way down it.

Kamila Hayat in The News International, September 13, 2018

Op-ed: Was the Quaid-i-Azam not aware of this?
(Translation)… We are interesting citizens of an interesting country. We have not been able to counter the evils of adulteration, fake medicines, lies, hypocrisy, bribery, erraticism, corruption etc; our 25 million children are out of school, also there is no town in the country where clean drinking water is available. But do note the priorities of interesting citizens of our interesting country. They are pursuing Atif Mian with a club in hand, and are not ready to avail gratis the advice of this world renowned economist. What do we want, after all? If we do not accept any non-Muslim in this country and are not prepared to tolerate them, we should announce it once for all. We should expel all non-
Muslims from here so that the issue is resolved for all times to come. If we cannot do this, we’ll have to make a few big decisions. We’ll have to accord ‘private’ status to religion. We’ll have to give equal status to all its citizens regardless of their creed, colour, race and tribe. …

Javed Chaudhary in the daily Express, September 6, 2018

Op-ed: A never ending ordeal
…Christians and Ahmadies have been displaced within Pakistan and other have had to either flee the country or seek asylum elsewhere due to the lack of protections and the constant threat of blasphemy laws pending over them. …

Despite decades of activism by civil society organizations, journalists and legislators to amend the blasphemy laws to protect the right to freedom of religion and expression for all, Pakistan authorities seem reluctant to bring laws in line with international law and have preferred to stay in the past. In the meantime, the list of victims who fall prey to blasphemy allegations keeps growing.

Rabia Mehmood in The News of October 16, 2018

Op-ed: The bigots of politics
…Among all the members of mainstream political parties who have expressed bigoted views about the faith of political opponents or religious minorities. Nawaz Sharif’s son-in-law, Captain Saif, tops the list. From paying homage to Mumtaz Qadri’s bravery and extolling the virtues of vigilantism against alleged blasphemers to venting outrage against Ahmadis in parliament, he has never shied from flaunting his bigoted views.…


Op-ed: The West’s role in fixing the Rohingya crisis
There is something rotten in Myanmar. About 700,000 Rohingyas a Muslim minority have fled the nation’s coastal state of Rakhine to Bangladesh, in order to escape the military. At least 6,700 Rohingyas were killed in one month alone.

Bill Richardson in the weekly Time of March 19, 2018

Oped: Of Quaid’s Pakistan
… This episode (of Atif Mian) was a moment of shame for the sitting government which was not able to come good on its commitment to having the best brains involved in formulating national policies in a non-discriminatory manner. Worse still, they allowed a third rate, abusive bigot to define the state policy. …

With this failure of the government, the ones who are quick to be judgmental have yet again pronounced the death of the Quaid’s Pakistan. But this is not the first time that the Quaid’s Pakistan has died. His Pakistan had first died when the Objectives Resolution was adopted by the constituent assembly in 1949. This was the same assembly whose floors had earlier resonated with the policy statement of the Quaid when he had termed one’s religion or faith as having nothing to do with matters of the state.

Quaid’s Pakistan also died when Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto sowed the seeds of further discrimination among people by declaring the Ahmadies non-Muslim, thus unleashing the hydra of bigotry from its confines.

Having forfeited its responsibility in a stark and brazen manner to put the country on the right course — more so when it has consistently advocated justice for all — the incumbent government has provided further space to the obscurantist forces to impose their writ on the state. In the process, the much-hyped prospect of reform has met an enormous setback and it may not be easy to recover from its consequences — this even if the
government were to make a genuine and concerted effort which, at this juncture, appears to be a pipedream.

*Raoof Hasan of Regional Peace Institute in the Daily Times of September 18, 2018*