Op-eds

2017

**Op-ed:**  
**A murder in Nankana**

Though that unbearable tragedy had led to the formation of NAP – which included some measures in the direction that Nawaz Sharif has now indicated – the overall situation on the ground in the context of sectarian animosities and extremism has not changed. This is so despite the success achieved in military operations against terrorists.

The contradictions we have to contend with were evident when Nawaz Sharif asked the clerics to provide a counter-narrative to defeat the terrorists. It is reported that during the prime minister’s speech in Jamia Naeemia, slogans were raised in favour of Mumtaz Qadri, the executed murderer of Salman Taseer.

The Nankana murder must be seen in the perspective of the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community. It has a long history and its narration would explain some of the salient features of what has gone wrong in our evolution as a nation.

A sad aspect of how our society is wounded by the hatred against communities or individuals in the name of religion is that major political parties and leaders have no time to think about these issues. They remain passionately engrossed in their partisan squabbles.

Ghazi Salahuddin in *The News International*, April 02, 2017

**Op-ed:**  
**Pakistan, Land of the Intolerant**

Karachi: Pakistan – This country has a poor record of protecting its religious minorities, but we outdo ourselves when it comes to Ahmadis. Members of the sect insist on calling themselves Muslims, and we mainstream Muslims insist on treating them like the worst kind of heretics.


**Op-ed:**  
**Terminology in journalism**

An item in the press appearing some days ago under the headline ‘Ahmadi professor found murdered’, drew attention to the challenges of news coverage, especially news related to crime.

Such a report could have been given quite a few other headings. For instance, the heading could have been ‘A woman found murdered’. The common reaction in our male-dominated society might have been ‘poor thing’. But it would not be comparable to the shock if the victim had been a man.

The heading could also be, ‘A professor found murdered’. In this case, the response might have included a tinge of regret over the loss to students and the problem caused to the teaching institution.

A shrug of the shoulders would perhaps have been the response to the news of an Ahmadi professor being murdered, because the death of an Ahmadi might be perceived as no loss. One might have even blamed the Ahmadis for disturbing a peaceful order by being targeted every now and then. …

IA Rehman in *the Dawn*, May 11, 2017

**Op-ed:**  
**The vigilante menace**

Many people suspect that the zealots are commanded by someone in authority.

…
Until recently the vigilante groups had concentrated on persecuting the members of the Ahmadi community and the Hazaras of Quetta. Professional Ahmadi-baiters soon entered the field. At one time, a majority of complaints against Ahmadis in Sindh were filed by a single preacher in a town near Hyderabad. The offences varied from writing ‘Bismillah’ in a private letter to preaching the Ahmadi faith. These complaints ended when the complainant was promoted and posted in a bigger city.

In Punjab too, several professionals won distinction for targeting Ahmadis who were merely delivering their monthly paper, duly registered, to subscribers, or who had made the mistake of buying a goat in the days preceding Eidul Azha. The latter were accused of planning to offer a sacrifice on Eid. In one case, the police not only hauled up an Ahmadi for slaughtering a lamb, but also used the mutton recovered from his house as case property. One of the biggest feats of the anti-Ahmadi vigilante group was frightening the chief election commissioner in 2002 into registering the Ahmadis on a separate list while other voters were being put on a single electoral roll regardless of their belief. …

The government has traditionally hesitated from proceeding against vigilante groups because they use a religious cover. There is nothing religious about their objectives or their conduct. The whole thing is political. One proof of this is their aversion to any scholarly debate on their heresy and forcing of ulama who disagree with them into exile or retirement at home. What the government must realize is that the visible targets of vigilante action are pawns in a game in which the real target is the state and the system that it swears by. While the vigilante brigade is a threat to individual victims, it is a menace to the state. The harm it could do is incalculable.

The daily Dawn; Lahore, February 2, 2017

Op-ed: Between dictators and democrats, Pakistan’s Ahmadis continue to suffer

…The sequence of events is quite predictable from now onward. The murderer (of Advocate Lateef, Ahmadi) will gain cult following in Punjab. Judges will hesitate to pass the maximum sentence for his crime. The victim and his community will be slandered and abused in the media to gain the maximum benefit for this criminal and his facilitators, the clerics.

The main outfit behind most anti-Ahmadi violence in Pakistan is the Aalami Majlis Tahaffuze Khatme Nabuwwat (AMTKN). Various AMTKN publications reveal how much this organization and its various allies are historically involved in the so-called Afghan ‘jihad’. Their current focus, in addition to their bread and butter anti-Ahmadi propaganda, is targeting of the secular thought leaders in Pakistan.

Soon after her first election in 1988, Benazir Bhutto visited the Saudi king, assuring him of her allegiance to the Kingdom. A daughter of a Shia mother from Iran, Benazir had to establish her credibility as a legitimate leader of a majority Sunni state. She continued with the Zia doctrine of pro-jihad policy in exchange for Saudi economic support.

Just like Malik Saleem, Benazir was also assassinated by a religious fanatic. Her political career now defined not only by her appeasement of the clergy, but by also by her unfortunate demise by the very forces she helped nurture during her rule.

It is common knowledge that not all Saudi money was coming through proper channels. A lot of it was donated directly to various religious outfits to train the Mujahideen and promote Wahhabi Puritanism in Pakistan. Along with a host of other anti-Shia organizations, AMTKN has been a beneficiary of this funding. Clerics associated with
AMTKN travel all over Pakistan and even overseas to mobilize their followers against the Ahmadis. In dozens of mob attacks in recent years, AMTKN affiliated clerics have taken active criminal activities against the community.

Sundayguardianlive.com/opinion/9080-between

Op-ed: **Jinnah, Rohingyas and Pakistan**

… Of course it is heartening to see Pakistanis taking a stand on the issue. Injustice anywhere must be condemned. However, Pakistan too has many skeletons in its closet. Perhaps not as blatantly as Myanmar but certainly as effectively, the Pakistani state has progressively since 1974 disenfranchised its hapless Ahmadi community. The difference here of course is that Ahmadis have not resorted to any agitation but if they were to agitate, I am sure, they would be subjected to nothing less than a genocide by Pakistan’s extremely radicalized Muslim majority. Instead Ahmadis are being dispatched in Pakistan through slow burn and churn. Persecuted by unfair laws such as the anti-Ahmadi Ordinance XX of 1984, a significantly large part of their population lives in exile today, just like Rohingyas. Almost every other month, some Ahmadi or the other is killed by religious fanatics who are just as bloodthirsty as the Buddhist monks in Myanmar.

Of course Ahmadis are not the only community suffering in Pakistan. …

Yasser Latif Hamdani in Daily Times; September 11, 2017

Op-ed: **Captain Safdar’s demagoguery**

It would be far too easy to dismiss Captain Safdar’s rant about Ahmadis as simply insensitive, boorish and ignorant. For the latter knew what he was doing: he was wooing his powerful religious constituency with the poisonous flattery of the demagogue. Bluntly put, he was trying his best to achieve personal and political goals by pandering to the forces of bigotry, hatred and extremism. All of which malign the name of the country, society and Islam. The Qur’an censures religious hypocrites thus: “Among the people there is he whose discourse on the life of the world pleases you, and he calls on God as witness to what is in his heart, yet he is an unyielding and antagonistic adversary. When he turns and leaves, he walks about corrupting the earth, destroying crops and livestock — God loves not corruption (Q2:204–205).”

Since the 1970s, Pakistan has been blighted by violence, mostly perpetrated by Sunni extremist groups against the Shia minority. However, the latter is not the only sect being targeted by such forces in Pakistan. Ahmadis, Hindus, Christians and even Bareli Sunnis are all on the receiving end of this Sunni brutality; which simply adds to the image (and reality) of Pakistan as a hotbed of extremist violence. Religion has been weaponised in the service of majoritarian political objectives; while ordinary people are marked for extermination based on their sectarian affiliations or sympathies. Within this context, Captain Safdar’s comments, which serve to further inflame communal divisions, deserve nothing less than the very strongest condemnation. Ultimately, the best way out of the extremist morass that the country finds itself stuck in — rests in a secular government guaranteeing equal rights for religious minorities.

The Daily Times, October 15, 2017

Op-ed: **Chader, etc. (a comment on the Islamabad sit-in)**

This is not merely a rally, or a show off; neither is it a drama – there is a need to put an end to this mischief (Ahmadiyyat) forever. Claimants to the love of Mustafa (Muhammad
PBUH) do not care for their lives. This is a gathering of lovers of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). These lovers do not care for their lives. It is only those who are crazy after the Prophet that sit out in the open in such intense cold.

_Bushra Rahman in the daily 92 News; Faisalabad, November 22, 2017_

**Op-ed: Will the ‘drama’ be played again**

…These days it is being demanded all over that every grade 22 officer be told to sign the Khatme Nabuwwat affidavit. (But) why should the public servants of Grade 1-21 be exempted? On what basis?...

The Khatme Nabuwwat affidavit should not be mandatory for only Grade 22 officials but it should be so from Grade 1 onward. It is violation of not only the Constitution of Pakistan but also of Sharia to exempt grade 1 to 21 officials from signing the Khatme Nabuwwat affidavit.

_SM Ali in the daily Islam of December 17, 2017_

**Op-ed: A complicit state**

A historical overview of the country where religious groups of one hue or the other have played their role in collusion with the state to turn it into the hybrid-theocracy of today.

The recent agreement enforced upon the political government is nothing but a small reminder that Pakistan has turned into a hybrid-theocracy where sharia law is gradually being applied indirectly. What, perhaps, stands between this situation and a complete morphing into a sharia-governed state is the difference of opinion between the right wing leadership from varied sects. Despite being aligned with permanent institutions of the state, the Ahl-Hadith, Deobandi and now Bareli leadership have competing perception of sharia and its implementation. Thus, no matter how much the liberal voices may echo the plight of Ahmadis or even Shiias in the country, the conditions for these groups are not about to change. …

Now, it does not matter anymore if sharia is formally applied or not. Between Khadim Rizvi and Orya Maqbul Jan, the state is theirs to claim.

_Ayesha Siddiq in [http://tns.thenews.com.pk/complicit-state/#.WiNs6tKWbct](http://tns.thenews.com.pk/complicit-state/#.WiNs6tKWbct)_

**Op-ed: Dangerous games, dangerous implications**

The Deobandi/Salafi/Wahabi/Ahle Hadith militants have been attacking shrines and terming Sufis/Bareli as poly-theists. On the other hand, the Bareli and caretakers of shrines, who – as opposed to the early Sufis – do not believe in the ‘unity of existence between the creator and the created’, consider Deobandis and Salafis as blasphemers who do not consider the primacy of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) in reaching out to Allah. Both sides apostatize one another. A single spark or clash or attack can ignite a prairie fire of sectarian warfare among the two larger strands within the Sunnis.

The current political crisis in Pakistan has the potential to degenerate into anarchy and an internecine sectarian conflict. The communalization of politics will devastate non-religious mainstream political parties and leave little space for democratic discourse and constitutional polity. The state and its institutions as well as mainstream non-religious political parties must consider this communal scenario before they move ahead with the next phase of their petty power games. It’s time to call the bluff of communalists before it all gets out of control of everybody. Let the mainstream parties agree on not in any way flirting with sectarian outfits and let the government and the state end its patronage of religious extremism.

_Imtiaz Alam in thenews.com.pk/print/255727-dangerous-games-dangerous-implicatons_