

# Denial of political rights

**2018**

## **General Elections 2018 – from Ahmadiyya perspective**

As the 2018 general elections approached, there was a continuous effort by most political parties to justify discrimination against the Ahmadiyya community to maintain or improve upon their vote bank. In this effort it became a norm with most politicians to assert their support to the blasphemy laws and the anti-Ahmadi laws. The only exception was Mr. Jibran Nasir, who refused to talk about religious affiliations during his campaign. In this process of reclaiming Islam, many politicians including PTI leader Mr. Imran Khan uttered unsympathetic statements against the Ahmadiyya community. This atmosphere, riled with opposing political stances, has seriously impacted the day to day lives of Ahmadis in Pakistan.

Some of the leading politicians' statements are mentioned below as example:

- “We are standing with Article 295-C and will defend it,” said the leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) at a gathering of Muslim leaders in Islamabad. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/09/imran-kahn-accused-over-defence-of-pakistan-blasphemy-laws>)
- Maulvi Khadim Rizvi of Tehrik Labbaik (TLYR) spoke at a Khatme Nabuwat conference and said: “The day Islam comes to power, there will be one decision regarding *Mirzais* (Ahmadis): Either recite the Kalima (become Muslim) or accept Death. There won't be anything else other than this. ...” (*On YouTube – translation*)
- PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif proudly stated, “None involved in (KN) affidavit change was given (party) ticket.” (*The daily Islam; Lahore, July 23, 2018*)
- It will be beneficial for interim ministers to not touch the issue of Khatm e Nabuwat: Fazal Ur Rehman (*The daily Din; Lahore, July 19, 2018*)
- Imran wants Zafar's report made public (*The daily The Express Tribune; Lahore, July 8, 2018*)
- Election campaign is being run through religious beliefs: Fawad Chaudhary (of PTI) (*The daily Jang; Lahore, July 3, 2018*)

Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan dissociated itself from the general elections. The spokesperson of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan issued a press release giving reasons. The daily *Abtak* published its advertisement version on July 17, 2018. English translation of the press release is given below:

## **Ahmadiyya Community disassociates from the General Elections 2018**

**A separate voters list prepared for the Ahmadis alone based on religious consideration is stark discrimination**

**Chenab Nagar (PR):** The Spokesperson of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan Mr. Saleem ud Din announced disassociation of the Community from the upcoming general elections set to take place in Pakistan on 25 July.

He said that although the elections are ostensibly being held under a joint electoral system, there is, however, a separate voters list for Ahmadis. The process for the registration of voters and the preparation of the voter-lists has been finalized by now. The forms issued for the registration of voters include the religion box and the related oath.

He expressed the view that under the current circumstances for Ahmadis to cast a vote, they first have to distance themselves from the Holy Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, and this is something to which no Ahmadi can agree.

Currently there is one voter list that includes all religious groups including Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Zoroastrians and Sikhs, whereas in the case of Ahmadis, a separate voter list has been prepared bearing the title 'Qadiani men/women'.

This discriminatory treatment on the basis of religion is a deliberate attempt to disenfranchise the Ahmadis of Pakistan from the electoral process to all intents and purposes denying them their right of vote. Such prejudicial behavior is an open violation of Pakistani Ahmadis as citizens of the state, and goes against the vision of the founding father of the country, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and contravenes both the constitution and the very essence of the joint electoral system.

The Spokesperson said that under these circumstances the Ahmadis consider participation in the elections against their faith. And if anyone contests these elections as an Ahmadi, he cannot and should not be seen as a representative of the Ahmadiyya community, nor will any Ahmadi accept him as such.

Therefore, in view of the prevailing circumstances, the Ahmadis of Pakistan will once again not participate in the Pakistani general elections. *(Ad published in the daily Abtak; Lahore, July 17, 2018)*

It should be made clear that the Elections (Amendment) Act, 2017 reintroduced General Musharraf's Chief Executive's Order No. 15 of 2002 Articles 7B and 7C regarding Ahmadis, thereby asserting *the status of Ahmadis etc to remain unchanged* and also *requiring a voter to sign the given affidavit of faith in the end of prophethood as and when required by the Revising Authority* (See Annex IX). The affidavit in vernacular requires such a voter to state: "Affidavit on oath: I affirm on oath that, I believe completely and unconditionally in the finality of the Prophethood of the Khataman Nabiyeen Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh), and that I am not a follower of any person who claims Prophethood after Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) on the basis of any interpretation of this word, neither I believe such a claimant to be a religious reformer or a prophet, nor do I belong to Qadiani or Lahori group or call myself Ahmedi." A similar declaration on oath is required from a Candidate who considers himself a Muslim.

EU Election Observation Mission stated in their Preliminary Statement that, "Ahmadis are still registered on a separate electoral roll, a clear disenfranchisement of the 167,500 Ahmadi voters in an environment of widespread sectarian violence. Pakistan is yet to fulfill its international obligations regarding

equality of electoral rights to all minority citizens.”(*EU Election Observation Mission Preliminary Statement Islamabad, 27 July 2018 Page 13*)

Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), a non-profit NGO issued a report declaring General Elections 2018 of Pakistan better than elections of 2013. According to the FAFEN report, despite complaints about vote counting process the elections were free, fair, transparent and accountable, in accordance with the requirements laid out in the Elections Act, 2017. (<https://dunyanews.tv/en/Pakistan/449847-General-Elections-2018-comparatively-better-2013-polls-FAFEN-repor>)

Some interesting facts about the general elections 2018:

- Religious groups jump into electoral fray in a big way. TLP fields over 150 candidates for NA across country. (*The daily Dawn; Lahore, July 5, 2018*)
- The JuD, a front for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group launched its political wing Milli Muslim League (MML) and contested the elections.
- Another extremist sectarian outfit Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), which was banned in Pakistan, has fielded dozens of candidates including one of its top leaders, Aurangzeb Farooqi, who is on Pakistan's terrorism watch list. (<https://www.thequint.com/news/world/pakistan-elections-extremists-election>)
- The Jamaat-i-Islami, that was routed in the July 25 elections, has expelled several (20) senior members of the district *Shura* (executive council) and terminated their basic membership for violating its constitution. (*The daily Dawn; Lahore, July 7, 2018*)

A few noteworthy election results in the Ahmadiyya context are as follows:

- Following important members of Mian Sharif family could not return to the National Assembly:  
Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Captain ® Safdar, Ishaque Dar
- Maulvi Fazlur Rahman (JUI) and Sirajul Haq (JI) failed to win seats in NA.
- Zaeem Qadri was badly beaten in the contest.
- Extremist TLP won only 2 seats in Sindh.
- A Hindu won National Assembly general seat and two won provincial seats in Sindh.
- Jibran Nasir who refused to indulge in religious polemics could not win.
- Maulvi Ilyas Chinioti comfortably won provincial seat from Chiniot.
- Zia ul Haq's son met defeat.
- Ch. Nisar lost the NA seat.
- Election Commission postponed NA election at Sh. Rasheed's constituency.

The 2018 general elections followed, for the first time in Pakistan's history, two elected civilian governments completing their full terms. The elections took place against a background of allegations of interference in the electoral process by the military-led establishment and the role of the judiciary as a political actor. Media outlets and journalists suffer from severe restrictions and curtailment on freedom of expression. (*EU Election Observation Mission Preliminary Statement Islamabad, 27 July 2018 Page 1*)

Some interesting statistics of the general elections 2018:

