

Prisoners of conscience

2018

Another fabricated police case against an Ahmadi

Pasrur, District Sialkot; July 21, 2018: Mr. Almas Ayub Butt an Ahmadi was charged under PPC 298-B&C with FIR Nr. 230 at police station Pasrur on July 21, 2018. The police arrested Mr. Butt and shifted him to the Sadr police station.

The case was registered under the complaint of divisional president of Muslim Students Federation Gujranwala on false charge of preaching.

Bail granted – eventually

Lahore; March 29, 2018: Mr. Amjad Iqbal Salooni and Mr. Ikram Ilahi, Ahmadi's accused in a religion-based case were released on bail after more than a year in prison. They still have to face the trial. The long delay in granting bail in this case of highly doubtful validity deserves a mention on record.

On March 13, 2017 these two gentlemen of Lahore allegedly violated anti-Ahmadiyya law by defending the Ahmadiyya position to some non-Ahmadis. A mulla Hasan Muaviya, a younger brother of Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, the well-known cleric close to the official circles in Islamabad, is a full time anti-Ahmadi activist; he made sure that the police registered a case against these two Ahmadis, although the former were reluctant to do that. In fact, Muaviya obtained the help of a court to get the FIR registered.

The police registered the case not only under a clause of the anti-Ahmadiyya law, PPC 298-C, but also under a blasphemy law PPC 295-A that could be tried in an anti-terrorism court, and is punishable with 10-year imprisonment.

The accused were arrested, and the case ended up in an anti-terrorism court. The ATA judge gave the opinion that anti-terrorism clauses were not applicable in the case and it should be taken to a normal court.

In the meantime, the accused applied to the Lahore High Court for release on bail. On July 11, LHC sent the case back to a magistrate for routine handling. The magistrate sent the case to the civil judge. After a few court appearances the civil judge sent the case to the Additional Sessions Judge. The ASJ Mr. Khizr Hayat Minhas heard the case on 19 August 2017, and refused the plea for bail in the first hearing.

The accused applied to the High Court for release on bail; it had to wait in a long line of cases, for its hearing.

On March 26, 2018, Mr. Justice Anwar ul Haq of LHC ordered the accused's release on bail. So, it was after more than a year that these two gentlemen joined their family, having committed the 'crime' of telling some people that Ahmadis are not 'the worst enemies of Islam and Pakistan' as alleged

frequently in the vernacular media. The guilt of this tyranny can be shared by the Punjab government, the mulla and the lower judiciary.

Other Ahmadis in prison for years

Apart from Ahmadis who were arrested this year mentioned in above stories, four Ahmadis are languishing in prison on unjust grounds. A brief description of their situation is given below:

1. A contrived case was registered against four Ahmadis, Mr. Khalil Ahmad, Ghulam Ahmad, Ihsan Ahmad and Mubashir Ahmad of Bhoiwal, District Sheikhpura under PPCs 295-A, 337-2 and 427 on May 13, 2014 in Police Station Sharaqpur. Two days later on May 16, 2014 Mr. Khalil Ahmad was murdered by a madrassah student, while in police custody. The remaining three accused were arrested on July 18, 2014. A year later the deadly clause PPC 295-C was added to their charge-sheet at the suggestion of a high court judge. A sessions judge sentenced them to death on October 11, 2017. Appeal against this decision has been made to the Lahore High Court. The Court has not found time to hear them in over a year.
2. Officials of Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) accompanied by a contingent of the Elite Force raided Shakoor Bhai's book shop, arrested him and Mr. Mazhar Abbas the shop assistant, a Shia, on December 2, 2015. A speedy trial in an Anti-terrorism Court dispensed 5 years' imprisonment to each of the two accused, while octogenarian Mr. Shakoor was sentenced in addition to three years' imprisonment under the anti-Ahmadiyya law. He appealed against the verdict and has sought release on bail from the Lahore High Court which has not spared time for nearly three years to hear his plea.