

Prisoners of Conscience

2019

Ahmadi arrested on atypical fake excuse, never thought of in the past

Joharabad, District Khushab; May 21, 2019: Mr. Zafar Abbas Joiya, Ahmadi received a call from the police station telling him to appear before the SHO because a complaint had been lodged against him. Mr. Joiya and the president of the local Ahmadiyya community went to the police station in the evening. SHO said to Mr. Joiya, “A complaint has been received in the police station against you and your brother Mr. Javed Akhtar Joiya settled in Australia, that you have fixed a decorative plate of “*MashAllah*” (What God has willed) on your newly built house, whilst the law doesn’t allow this to you. Remove that plate and deposit it in the police station.” The president of the local Ahmadiyya community responded, “We are not the ones who remove the name of Allah; we’ll neither remove it nor allow any non-official do so; if police do that in uniform, it’s up to them.”

It should be mentioned that *MashAllah* is not one of the Islamic epithets forbidden to Ahmadi specifically mentioned in the law.

The SHO then arrested Mr. Joiya under PPC 298-C, an Ahmadi-specific law. An arrest on this fabricated excuse is the first ever; it brings little credit to the PTI regime that took over last year, and claims to be more liberal and more committed to the core values of democracy and freedom.

The officials concerned in whose jurisdiction, this first ever overindulgence took place are SHO Mr. Amjad Jalal; DPO Rana Shoaib; DC Khushab Mr. Arshad Manzur Buzdar; and the CM of Punjab Mr. Usman Buzdar of PTI.

Ahmadiyya mosque partially demolished and Ahmadi arrested

Chak 161 Murad, District Bahawalpur; October 25, 2019: An Ahmadi mosque was partially destroyed in chak 161 Murad, District Bahawalpur on October 25, 2019 under the supervision of police and officials. The incident was captured by Mr. Vishal Ahmad (an Ahmadi) on his mobile phone. The police arrested Mr. Ahmad and seized his phone. Another Ahmadi, Mr. Muhammad Mustafa, an official of the Ahmadiyya Community was also arrested. These two were charged under PPC 186/506. Surely, photography in the open is not an offence. Next day they were released on bail.

Octogenarian Abdul Shakoor released from prison after 3 years and 3 months, punished on false accusation of terrorism

Lahore; March 2019: Lahore High Court bench comprising Justices M Qasim Khan and A. Javed Gharal adjudged that Mr. Abdul Shakoor the book-seller and his Shia shop assistant’s sentences be considered ‘as undergone’ and they should be released. They were set free on March 18 on completion of formalities.

Both were arrested on December 2, 2015 by the Elite Force and charged under terrorism sections while Mr. Shakoor was charged in addition under PPC 298-C an anti-Ahmadiyya law. They were given a speedy trial in a Special Court and sentenced to (5+3) years and 5 years respectively, maximum penalties under the imposed clauses.

Pleas were moved with LHC for revision and bail, however it took the Court over three years to give a verdict. The honourable judges did not acquit the accused, but released them deciding that the remaining imprisonment be considered 'as undergone'. It was indeed thoughtful and obliging on their part.

A layman's fair overview of the case would show that the two were not guilty of any terrorism whatsoever in the first instance, and their long imprisonment was highly inappropriate. Following points highlight the circumstances of the arrest, trial and sentence of this case of historic importance:

- The books that were confiscated in the first raid and were mentioned in the FIR were not of the banned category. The notification for their banning was not issued till much later – on January 20, 2016.
- The CTD inspector, in his personal capacity, presented an advocate (Mulla) Ghulam Mustafa in the court who told the court that it was his mission and practice to oppose the 'Qadianis' in all cases whenever possible. Mustafa is an activist of the Khatme Nabuwat Movement that openly propagates 'death for Qadianis'.
- If the terrorism clause was applied for selling 'anti-Islam hate material', it is strange that a Muslim was actively involved in the sales activity as shop assistant. In fact issue of selling hate material was not raised in the trial by the prosecution. "Then why were the anti-terrorism clauses applied and why was the trial held in an Anti-terrorism court", one should ask.
- Ahmadiyya religious books preach peace and harmony, anyway. Non-Ahmadi mullas have accused Ahmadis of being anti-Jihad, for the last 125 years.
- The CTD personnel were in league with mullas like Hassan Muawiyah and Ghulam Mustafa. It does no credit to CTD to be in league with such sectarian extremists. This was against the state policy professed in National Action Plan.
- Imposition of maximum penalty on the octogenarian Ahmadi who had never been in a police station or court for any crime except under discriminatory anti-Ahmadi laws or religion-based clauses. He is known to be pious, helpful, light-hearted and customer-friendly in his business. His sentence was religious rather than lawful.

It should be added that the extremist mullas succeeded entirely in obtaining active support of state institutions, in that anti-terror laws were invoked to terrorize a gentle old Ahmadi. Consequently the accused suffered special harsh treatment and uncommon restrictions imposed on terrorists. His imprisonment was solitary, in addition. He is a hernia patient, but under the circumstances, he dared not offer himself for an operation.

Although a number of VIPs and prestigious organizations pleaded with Pakistani authorities to intervene on behalf of the good old fellow and the innocent Shia, it is surprising, unbecoming and unbelievable that the state took over three years to attend to this case of obvious merit and police misadventure.

Ahmadis behind bars

The status of Ahmadis detainees on the last day of year 2019 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 Sheikhupura under PPCs 295-A, 337-2 and 427 on May 13, 2014 in Police Station Sharaqpur. Two days later Mr. Khalil Ahmad was murdered by a madrassah student, while in police custody, on May 16, 2014. 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 was then made to the Lahore High Court. The Court has not found time to hear them for two years. These three Ahmadis are in prison for over 5 years.
2. Mr. Saeed Ahmad Waraich was charged on a false complaint of blasphemy under PPC 295-C with FIR Nr. 645 in Tandlianwala police station, District Faisalabad on January 20, 2018. He was arrested a day earlier. He is under trial.
3. Mr. Waqar Ahmad student of Jamia Ahmadiyya, Syed Mubashir Ahmad Ayaz principal of Jamia Ahmadiyya and Mr. Muhammad Azhar Mangla lecturer in Jamia Ahmadiyya were booked for sharing Quranic material on social media under cyber crimes law on 12th November 2019, with FIR No 152/2019 of Police Station FIA Cyber Crime Wing, Lahore under anti-Ahmadiyya law PPC 298-C, blasphemy laws 295-B and 295-A, PECA-11 and PPCs 120-B, 109 and 34. Mr. Waqar Ahmad was arrested and investigation is underway.

Uproar in social media over Mr. Abdul Shakoor's call on the US President

July 2019: Mr. Abdul Shakoor, Ahmadi octogenarian former-prisoner, victim of Anti-terrorism department's *faux pas* was among the delegation from the US Ministerial 2019 on Freedom of Religion or Belief, who called on the President of the United State during the event. At that occasion Mr. Shakoor mentioned to the President very briefly his personal experience of suffering and religious persecution. The video of the event was released by the U.S. The anti-Ahmadi elements in Pakistan did not like at all their mention at the occasion and raised a storm on social media against not only Mr. Shakoor but against the Jamaat Ahmadiyya and its leadership. This was unfair and unwarranted; we mention below briefly our reasons for this assessment:

- Mr. Abdul Shakoor was not the only victim present at the occasion; survivors from among Rohingyas, Newzealand Christchurch attack, Uyghurs etc from 24 countries were also present. The aim of the Ministerial was, *inter alia*: religious freedom and inter-religion harmony.
- Mr. Shakoor is neither an office-holder in the Jamaat, nor did he attend the conference as a representative of the community. He was invited by the conference organizers in his private capacity.
- Mr. Shakoor stated there nothing that was unconstitutional, unlawful or untrue. He mentioned only what happened to his own person. It was all true. He stated his religious status as defined in the Constitution. He sought no help from Mr. Trump. He said that Ahmadis are peace-loving community, and they depend only on Allah. What is wrong with that, one may ask.

Ahmadiyya Director of Public Affairs, Mr. Saleemuddin explained all this in his interview on MTA. He, thereafter, urged the authorities to take steps to put a stop to the on-going provocative and incendiary propaganda on social media wherein Ahmadis were *inter alia* declared *Wajib ul Qatl*. It is strange that Ahmadi-bashers should get agitated over a small exposure by a victim of their enormities while they themselves unabashedly cry incessantly in public telling the government to 'do more' in the

on-going anti-Ahmadiyya drive. Last year, the vernacular press published more than 2400 anti-Ahmadi news items and 300 op-eds. If religious persecution is incriminating and shameful, why not stop it?

Opponents of the Ahmadiyya community, rather than feeling ashamed of their treatment of the victimized community, decided to add fuel to the fire of hatred, and made this call a great anti-Pakistan and anti-Islam issue.