

The New Zealand shooting hits very close to home for Ahmadis in Pakistan. Why?

Ruling elites in Christchurch (NZ) and Lahore (Pakistan)—a candid comparison

3rd Week March 2019: There was a major terrorist attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand by a white supremacist at the time of Friday prayers on March 15, 2019. Fifty one persons were killed and numerous injured. A similar attack was mounted on Ahmadi worshipers assembled for Friday prayers, in two mosques in Lahore on 28 May 2010. Eighty-six Ahmadis were killed and scores injured.

Apart from the basic similarities of the two attacks and their consequences, there are other numerous relevant reports, reactions, comments etc from different sections of the two societies, whose comparative study would be constructive. An enlightened analysis could be meaningful, particularly for the well-wishers of Pakistan.

Media and other authentic reports placed on record the following:

Christchurch

- New Zealand in a daze after mosque attacks

Gunman live-streams shootings that left 49 (*later 51*) dead. Calls it ‘one of the darkest days at New Zealand’.

- The police arrested the killer.
- PM Ardern stated that the killer “had extremist views that have absolutely no place in New Zealand, and, in fact, no place in the world”.
- PM Ardern met the relatives of victims, hugged them and kissed the victims’ children. At the occasion she wore a *hijab* to express solidarity and love for the victims. She spoke with compassion. She declared that the government :
 - will cover funeral costs.
 - provide financial support for those who will suffer income loss due to the terror attack.
 - do so regardless of immigration status and citizenship.
- Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Khalifa tul Masih V said, (extract): “On behalf of the Ahmadiyya Community worldwide, I express my deepest sympathies and condolences



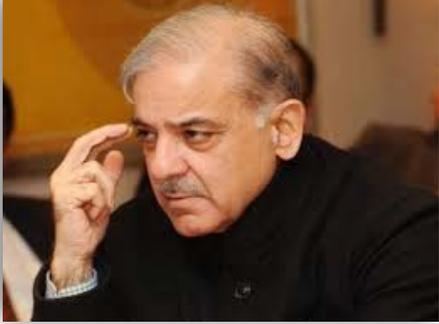
to all those affected by the barbaric terrorist attack that has taken place in Christchurch. ... Our heartfelt prayers are with the victims of these attacks and all those who have been affected. May the perpetrators of this evil act be promptly brought to justice."

- NZ authorities arranged *Azaan* (call for Islamic prayers) for Friday prayers to be aired on state TV and Radio.
- PM undertook to revise NZ gun laws.
- A group from New Zealand tribe Haka performed display and sang heart-touching song to honour the victims at a service.
- A major newspaper published the attack story with a full-page cover photo of the attacker calling him MONSTER in bold letters.
- Non-Muslim fellow citizens of New Zealand left flower bouquets at the site with messages like: "This is not New Zealand".
- A white man stood outside a mosque in Manchester with placard: "You are my friends. I will keep watch while you pray".
- PM Imran Khan of Pakistan tweeted: "Shocked and strongly condemned the Christchurch terrorist attacks on mosques. This reaffirms what we have always maintained that terrorism does not have a religion." He saluted bravery of mosque attack victims. Pakistan national flag was half-masted on March 18.
- Fawad Chaudhary, Pakistan Fed Minister of Information tweeted: "Dialogue amongst Civilizations is only way forward; rise of hate mongers on the World Stage is making World unsafe."

Lahore

- The terrorist attack on Ahmadis was made on May 28, 2010 simultaneously in two major Ahmadiyya mosques in Garhi Shahu and Model Town of Lahore. 86 worshippers were killed, as also a Christian worker. One hundred and twenty were injured. There were two or three attackers at Model Town, while a larger contingent attacked the Garhi Shahu mosque. The attackers used hand grenades and sprayed bullets. Some of them shouted the slogan: *Khatme Nabuwwat Zinda Baad* (Long live – End of Prophethood)
- Initially TV people arrived at the scene of the ongoing massacre. The police arrived thereafter. The Elite Force were there; however they took no action while the terrorists carried on their bloodshed. Eventually, it was after over two hours, when

all was over, the police entered the Garhi Shahu mosque. On entry, they went up to the roof and fired absurdly a spray of bullets in the air as a show of victory. At Model Town, Ahmadis themselves overpowered two attackers and handed them over to the police. This was first time ever that terrorists in action were overpowered.

- After the massacre neither the President nor the Prime Minister found it necessary to make sympathy call on Ahmadis. Mr. Shahbaz Sharif the Chief Minister, in whose capital this gruesome atrocity had been committed, stayed away deliberately from the victims. He did not offer condolences for the dead, nor visited the injured in hospital, nor did he visit the sites.
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- Mr. Salman Taseer, the Governor (from PPP) extended courtesy to make the sympathy call at Garhi Shahu mosque while the Interior Minister Rehman Malik (PPP) visited the injured in hospital. The former was later killed in a terrorist attack over the Aasia Bibi case.
 - The National Assembly urged by its women members did condemn the killing of Ahmadis in a resolution; but the Senate could not muster enough political courage or moral response to do the same.
 - The Chief Justice of Lahore High Court took no *suo motu* notice of the massacre, although a month later when a terrorist attack occurred at Data Darbar in the city, that resulted in half the number of casualties, he visited Darbar and sent for the CPO to explain the lapse in security.
 - When the funerals of the massacred Ahmadis took place, no politician, no official showed up.
 - Hate banners against Ahmadis remained in place even after the tragedy and the authorities took no action to remove them lest the extremists mind it.
 - A captured terrorist, who got injured in the incident, was delivered to a state hospital for treatment by the police, without informing the hospital staff that he was the terrorist. Later at night, one of the Ahmadis admitted in the same facility noticed his presence and freedom, and he told the hospital staff of the monster's status. It was then that he was isolated as a prisoner. The next night, his handlers

mounted a murderous attack on the hospital to either get him released or kill him. In the attempt, a number of official staff got killed

- The Punjab government appointed a high level inquiry team to investigate the incident. The team, thereafter were told to stay put, as hardly any one appeared before it, and Ahmadis were not called to testify. Eventually there was, of course, no inquiry report.
- As for the mulla, he felt no shame whatsoever over the monstrous bloodshed. Ibtisam Ilahi Zaheer, a leading Wahabist mulla still termed Ahmadis *Wajib ul Qatl* (must be killed) as per his version of Shariah. Another, Munawwar Hasan, the Amir of Jamaat Islami shamelessly warned that another major Khatme Nabuwwat (anti-Ahmadiyya) movement could be launched on the same lines as 1953. (That movement, in addition to a lot of bloodshed, brought Lahore to standstill and the imposition of first ever martial law in Pakistan.)
- Ms Farzana Bari of HRCP was however pragmatic; she aired the view that the state of Pakistan was primarily responsible for the Lahore tragedy, as the country's laws and constitutional amendment provided incentive to undertake violence against Ahmadis.
- The print media was generally sympathetic—even the vernacular press. The English press forcefully condemned the extremists and highlighted the state's incompetence to provide protection to Ahmadis. The electronic media, the TV channels, their anchors, reporters conducted themselves almost disgracefully. While reporting the incident 'live', most of the reporters seemed to be confused whether to call the Ahmadiyya mosque a 'Masjid', and what name to give to Ahmadis' Friday prayers as these prayers are essentially the same as with other denominations. PTV reported the police intervention to be very successful and the arrangements in hospitals excellent, although some state hospitals refused to receive the dead bodies and the injured due 'lack of space'. A TV reporter referred to the Ahmadi martyrs as *Halaak* (perished) but for the dead terrorist, he used the term *Jan Bahaq* (one who delivers his soul to God). An Ahmadi leader held a press conference at the site after the tragedy; it was well attended but was hardly put on air, as the management feared to displease the mulla. Mr. Lucman, an anchor person of some rank, for his own reasons, stressed in a program that Ahmadis were not simple infidels but are *Murtad* (apostates) whose penalty according to Shariah is nothing short of death. The program was repeated twice the next day. No advice from Pemra!

- The Ahmadiyya Khalifa tul Masih V in his speech took a lenient view of the young terrorists who were misled to act like robots, and he called their sponsors and handlers the main culprits. He urged government leaders to undo the constitutional and legal provisions against Ahmadis.
- The Federal Interior Minister disclosed that the province (Punjab) had been informed before hand of the terrorist threat to the Ahmadiyya community.
- A year later, Lt Gen Pasha, the DG ISI testified before the OBL Commission: "... In Lahore the police protected those who attacked the Qadianis last year, and even directed them to the hospital where the wounded were being treated. The provincial government had been informed of the situation but it took no heed of the advice and information provided by the ISI. No guards were assigned to the hospital as venal political influence intervened everywhere." (Al-Jazeera)
- There was no shortage of good advice to the political leadership of Pakistan. The Friday Times wrote an op-ed on this issue under the title: **A weak state without conscience**. Declan Wash of The Guardian minced no words: "This past week, though I am silent, the massacre of 94 (sic) members of the minority Ahmadi community on May 28 has exposed something ugly at the heart of Pakistan, in its laws, its rulers, its society."

Conclusion

The state took no worthwhile long-term action to redress what was wrong in this field. No relief whatsoever was provided to the Ahmadi community and it remained gagged as before. It could not reassert in public that it also believes in *Khatme Nabuwwat*. The politico-religious lobby continued in its ways, and the state and society submerged deeper in the marshes of extremism and terrorism. As a result there occurred:

- Terrorist attack on Data Darbar, a month later
- Mr. Salman Taseer, Governor of Punjab was murdered by his guard.
- Two month later, Federal Minister Shahbaz Bhatti was killed.
- 85 Christians were killed in attack on Peshawar church in 2013.
- 134 children massacred in Army Public School in 2014.
- Pakistan reportedly spent \$118bn in war on terrorism till 2016; 3000 policemen were killed.

- TLP mullas imposed disgraceful surrender on spineless PML (N) government after *Dharna* (sit in) at Faizabad in November 2017.
- In October 2018, a mulla Pir Afzal Qadri declared three Supreme Court judges to be *Wajib ul Qatl* (must be killed) and urged ‘Muslim’ generals to rebel against their Army Chief.
- Jaish-e-Muhammad owned up terrorist attack at Pulwama. India-Pakistan disastrous war narrowly avoided.



In short, Pakistani state, if not for the sake of its Ahmadi citizens, in its larger interest should immediately take firm action against religious bigots, extremists and terrorists before they deliver their terminal blow to this *Mumlikat Khuda Daad* Pakistan (God-given country).