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Executive Summary

In this month's newsletter we lead on the disenfranchisement of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan who due to legislation, are prevented from participating in the forthcoming elections without having to renounce their faith.

We also report on further violent attacks against Ahmadi Muslims, State attacks on Ahmadi Muslim publications, misuse of blasphemy and anti-Ahmadiyya laws and the kidnapping of a 15 year old Ahmadi Muslim boy, all of which occurred in Pakistan.

A report concerning a major arson attack on the Ahmadiyya Muslim annual convention site in Bangladesh has also been included in this month's newsletter.

This month's newsletter concludes with updated statistics and references to articles on elections in Pakistan, religious extremism in Bangladesh and the Human Rights Watch Annual Report 2013 which specifically refers to Ahmadi Muslims at page 349.

The International Press Desk can be contacted through the contact details included on the last page.

EDITORIAL

Democracy is a system of government in which the supreme power of a State is vested in its citizens. That takes effect through a system of representation which usually involves periodically held, free elections. Pakistan claims to be a democracy but many commentators question whether it is truly representative of its people. With elections in Pakistan fast approaching, many are asking, how can Pakistan's elections be free and fair if all of Pakistan's Ahmadi Muslims are denied the right to vote without first having to renounce their faith?

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's exclusion from the election process has been in place since 1985 when the right-wing dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq passed legislation which divided citizens' voting rights depending on their religion. That law has manifested itself in the electoral processes administered by Pakistan's Election Commission. In August 2011, the present government began preparing for the forthcoming elections by issuing forms to be signed by all potential voters. In order for Ahmadi Muslims to vote, they must once again sign a declaration which requires them to renounce their faith. Because no Ahmadi Muslim is prepared to renounce their faith, their political voice has been effectively silenced for almost 30 years.

The principle of restricting the entitlement to vote based on a voter's religion has two obvious consequences. First, the State makes decisions about the faith choices of its citizens. This constitutes a grave detraction from the principle of democracy and each person's internationally protected inalienable human rights; they are not matters for a political party to decide upon. Second, and rather unpleasantly,

disenfranchising Ahmadi Muslim voters brings huge political benefits. Pakistan's Parliament is made up of the National Assembly and the Senate. There are 342 seats in the National Assembly; non-Muslims can vote in just 10. There are 104 seats in the Senate. Of these, Non-Muslims hold four seats, one for each province. These seats were filled for the first time in March 2012.

With just 3.1% of Parliament's representation made up of non-Muslims, it becomes quickly apparent that non-Muslims do not have any real ability to influence the governance that affects their everyday lives. More pernicious is that classifying honest, highly (and centrally) organised Ahmadi Muslims as non-Muslim (thereby putting them out of the political picture) is politically advantageous to some politicians in a country where the government in recent years has not been able to secure an outright majority and requires coalitions to govern.

If democracy in Pakistan is about free, fair and representative elections, it is clear that the effective deprivation of voting rights for Ahmadi Muslims places a serious and palpable fracture in Pakistan's democracy.

Pakistan is placed at an international disadvantage too. Such human rights violations contravene Article 25 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which protects citizens' right to vote. The ICCPR expressly prevents distinctions being made on the grounds of religion. Pakistan has signed and agreed to abide by the ICCPR and by putting in place legislation which effectively prevents Ahmadi Muslims from voting, Pakistan acts in direct contravention of international

law. This disenfranchisement has been repeatedly criticised by major international organisations including the UN Human Rights Council, the European Union, the State Department of USA, the Parliamentary Human Rights Groups of UK, Sweden, Holland, Belgium, Germany, France and the Asian Human Rights Commission. Each have repeatedly drawn attention to Pakistan's failure to implement and enforce freedom of religion for Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan.

As we go to press, the Supreme Court of Pakistan is considering a case filed in 2007, which challenges the principle of separate electoral lists for Ahmadi Muslims. We hope that the Supreme Court and whichever government is elected ensures the reinstatement of fundamental human rights for Ahmadi Muslims and all citizens of Pakistan in relation to the right to vote, freedom of religion and all other civil and political rights.

Finally, democracy is as much about transparency as it is about the right to vote. If Pakistan wishes to build a public climate of tolerance, respect and security as well as institutions which hold the State to account, elections are not enough. The Government also needs to repeal all laws which add fuel to the fire of sectarianism by marginalising Ahmadi Muslims and minorities in Pakistan. Whichever parties form the next government, the repealing of discriminatory legislation against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and religious minorities in Pakistan must be high on the agenda sending out a clear and transparent message to all in Pakistan; that religious apartheid in Pakistan is no longer welcome.

VIOLENT ATTACKS

ANTI AHMADIYYA EXTREMISTS IN BANGLADESH DESTROY CONVENTION SITE.

Gazipur District, Bangladesh: Thousands of anti-Ahmadiyya extremists stormed a large stadium in Gazipur District, Bangladesh that had been hired to celebrate the true peaceful teachings of Islam and the 100-year centenary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Bangladesh. The event was the 89th Annual Convention in Bangladesh and was expected to attract more than 10,000 attendees including 200 overseas guests. Armed with gun powder and other ignitable materials, the extremists caused tens of millions in local currency worth of damage by setting the entire venue and its contents alight. Just three days before the attack, the Jamaat Islami group had begun to incite the masses into participating in this hate crime.

Bangladesh's Government has made efforts to tackle extremism but much more needs to be done both to counter it and protect the minorities that are affected by it. Any hesitation in doing so is to the detriment of the nation.

AHMADI MUSLIM VOTERS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST: SUPREME COURT TO CONSIDER.

Islamabad: Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Justice Gulzar Ahmed and Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed of the Supreme Court of Pakistan are to decide on the legality of an amendment to the election rules decreed by General Pervez Musharraf in 2002, which declared 'non-Muslim' any Ahmadi Muslim who, if his faith was challenged, refused to sign a declaration renouncing his faith in order to vote.

In addition, the Supreme Court must also have regard to Pakistan's obligations under international law and in particular, obligations pursuant to article 25 of the ICCPR which prohibits Pakistan from restricting the right to vote on the basis of religion.



“Ahmadis are one such group which is denied their right to vote; they cannot register as a voter in Pakistan. It is a most shameful and horrifying fact that all Muslims in Pakistan in order to get their I.D cards which are essential for registering as a voter, have to make a mandatory declaration pronouncing the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community as an imposter and a liar. No civil society in the modern times can tolerate such arrogance of a country towards its own nationals.”

Asian Human Rights Commission. | October 2012

ANTI AHMADIYYA LAWS USED TO TARGET AHMADI MUSLIM PUBLICATIONS

For almost five decades, Ahmadi Muslim publications have been the subject of intense scrutiny by government authorities in Pakistan. Despite the peaceful nature of their content, they remain under continued threat of prohibition, including in relation to the Al Fazal newspaper, a 98 year old internal publication which remains censored. A number of other Ahmadi Muslim publications have been banned with copies of publications confiscated. All words relating to Islam are the subject of a blanket ban. This month Ahmadi Muslim printing presses have been targeted by the authorities placing Ahmadi Muslims at risk of lengthy prison terms.

FOUR AHMADI MUSLIMS FACE LIFE IN PRISON

Lahore: 20 officers from the Punjab Police raided the Black Arrows printing press, owned by an Ahmadi Muslim. Police seized a van and books including copies of a monthly Ahmadi Muslims children's magazine and books on homeopathic medicine. Four Ahmadi Muslims, including the owner were arrested on the grounds that the seized literature was blasphemous. The literature did not contravene any of Pakistan's laws either in practice or spirit. No evidence has been submitted which suggests that the publications were indeed blasphemous.

Lahore: Mr Atif Ahmad has also been arrested pursuant to anti-Ahmadiyya Legislation section 298 B/C PPC, for handling a carton of Ahmadiyya Muslim publications.

KIDNAPPINGS

The kidnapping of Ahmadi Muslims by anti-Ahmadiyya extremists has increased both in frequency and ferocity across Pakistan in recent years. A number of prominent Ahmadi Muslims have been kidnapped including Mr Maqsood Ahmad who was subsequently murdered. Ahmadi Muslim doctors have also been targeted. This month we report on the kidnapping of a fifteen year old Ahmadi Muslim boy because his father is a prominent Ahmadi Muslim.

Peshawar: Fifteen year old Mufad Ahmad was kidnapped near his house in Hayat Abad by anti-Ahmadiyya extremists. His father, Mr. Murad Ahmad is head of his local Ahmadiyya Muslim Community chapter. Mufad had been the subject of previous unsuccessful attempted kidnappings. No arrests have been made.

INCITEMENT TO COMMIT MURDER

ANTI-AHMADIYYA EXTREMISTS NAME AHMADIS THEY WANT KILLED

The widespread distribution of hate literature by anti-Ahmadiyya extremists continues unabated. Recent examples include advertisements in national newspapers calling for national boycotts of Ahmadi Muslims, labeling Ahmadi Muslims as "Wajibul Qatal" (liable to be killed) and anti-Ahmadi narratives in the educational curriculum. The publication of the names of 77 Ahmadi Muslims which incite murder is the latest example of the continued social acceptability of religious apartheid in Pakistan against Ahmadi Muslims.

Sargodha: Anti-Ahmadiyya extremists published and distributed a two-page pamphlet which listed the names and addresses of 77 Ahmadi Muslim businesses and professionals including doctors, lawyers, government officials and industrial premises owned by Ahmadi Muslims. The pamphlet calls for the killing of Ahmadi Muslims and was signed by the offending anti-Ahmadiyya extremists group. Despite this instance (and hundreds of others) being in clear violation of section 153-A of the Pakistan Penal Code which prohibits acts which cause "enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities"; State authorities have failed to prevent such continued abuses or make any arrests.

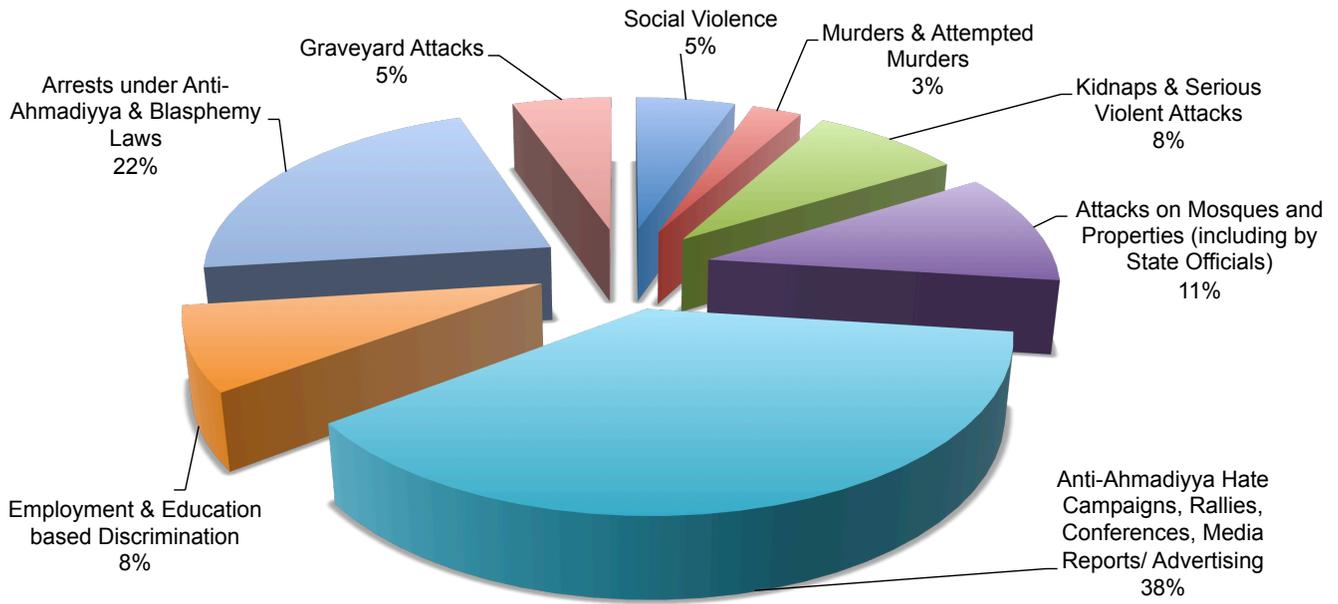
Rabwah: Anti-Ahmadiyya extremists continue to hold anti-Ahmadiyya rallies near Rabwah, Pakistan; Ahmadi Muslims represent 95% of the population of the town. Despite appeals to State authorities to restrict those gatherings which are intended to incite religious hatred and violence, State authorities continue to grant permission to anti-Ahmadiyya extremists that wish to engage in such incitement.



An Ahmadi Muslim convention site was set ablaze by anti Ahmadi extremists in Bangladesh on Wednesday 6 February 2013 signalling a disturbing re-emergence of religious extremism that is drawing Bangladesh into the same sectarian terrorism that has crippled Pakistan.

Anti-Ahmadiyya Attacks: 01/01/2011 - 28/02/2013

(Formal Incident Reports only)



Incitement to religious hatred (2011)

Breaches of Article 20 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:

01.01.2011 - 31.12.2011

(Formal Incident Reports only)

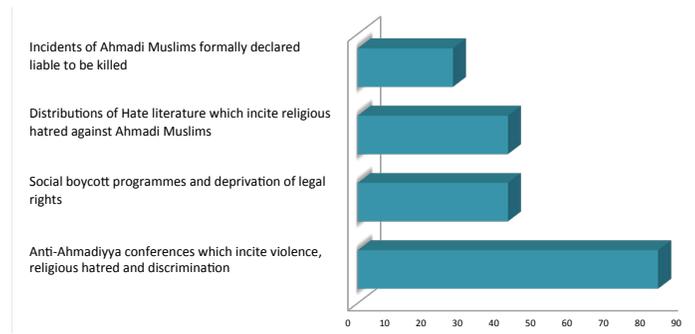


Incitement to religious hatred (2012)

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01.01.2012 - 31.12.2012

(Formal Incident Reports only)



NEWS REPORTS

Human Rights Watch World Report 2013, p349

Members of the Ahmadi religious community continued to be a major target for blasphemy prosecutions and subjected to specific anti-Ahmadi laws across Pakistan. They faced increasing social discrimination as militant groups used provisions of the law to prevent Ahmadis from “posing as Muslims,” forced the demolition of Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, barred Ahmadis from using their mosques in Rawalpindi, and vandalized Ahmadi graves across Punjab province. In most instances, Punjab provincial officials supported militants’ demands instead of protecting Ahmadis and their mosques and graveyards.

Full report can be found at:

https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/wr2013_web.pdf

The Myth of ‘Free and Fair’ Elections in Pakistan

To restore free and fair voting rights for Ahmadi Muslims, Pakistan’s political leaders must demonstrate not only political will but also moral courage to confront anti-Ahmadi zealots—a difficult but necessary undertaking in an increasingly volatile sectarian climate. Indeed, all Pakistanis suffer when Ahmadi Muslims cannot freely participate in the political process. With the simple stroke of a pen, President Zardari can repeal Musharraf’s presidential decree and remove the irrelevant declaration of faith from voter registration forms, and millions of Ahmadi Muslims can vote alongside all other Pakistanis, as self-identified Muslims, without paralysis or restriction.

Full article can be found at:

<http://journal.georgetown.edu/2013/03/14/the-myth-of-free-and-fair-elections-in-pakistan-by-amjad-mahmood-khan/>

Are Religious Extremists Turning Bangladesh into Another Violent and Sectarian Ridden Pakistan?

The Bangladeshi Government has made efforts to tackle extremism which has resulted in a number of arrests (though not in relation to any attack by religious extremists on the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community). It is also true that the Government as a whole is not against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community or religious freedom. But the steady creep in unpunished and unhindered violence by extremists against religious minorities, and that such extremism is now also infecting the State apparatus means that Bangladesh now finds itself at an important crossroads.

Full article can be found at:

<http://ahmadiyyatimes.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/pakistanization-of-bangladesh.html?m=1>

ABOUT THE AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Founded in 1889 by its founder Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (peace be upon him) who claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi awaited by all major religions, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is now established in 202 countries with tens of millions of adherents worldwide. Its motto is “*Love for All, Hatred for None*”

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the largest organised Muslim Community in the world and is led by a system of spiritual Successorship known as Khilafat. Its current Khalifa is the Fifth Successor to the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him); his name is His Holiness, Mirza Masroor Ahmad. His title is Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V.

Ahmadi Muslims believe the Promised Messiah, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian to be a non-law bearing Prophet who came in servitude of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). They also believe that violent Jihad is prohibited. As a result of its beliefs, members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at are severely persecuted by radical groups in some, mostly Muslim countries, often with the support of government. In Pakistan, specific legislation (Ordinance XX, s298 Pakistan Penal Code) has been passed which criminalises the practice of Islam by Ahmadi Muslims. This has resulted in hundreds of murders of Ahmadi Muslims and thousands of instances of violence. In contravention of Article 25 of the ICCPR, Ahmadi Muslims are denied many of their civil rights, including the right to vote without distinction on the basis of religion or other status.

This newsletter aims to provide short summaries of the regular denial of human rights suffered by Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan where persecution is most widespread.



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