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**PRESS RELEASE**

**ANOTHER BLOW TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN PAKISTAN**

***Ahmadiyya mosque handed over to adversaries by Executive order***

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat confirms that upon the orders of the District Co-ordination Officer (DCO) Chiniot, Punjab, an Ahmadiyya mosque in Ahmad Nagar (near Rabwah) was handed over to non-Ahmadis on January 14, 2010 upon the baseless grounds of pre-empting “*extreme law and order disturbance*”.

The mosque had been sealed by the police in 2003 on similar grounds, and Ahmadis have remained deprived of their place of worship for over six years. It is of great sadness that the local mullahs (clerics) have been able to approach the provincial and district administrations and coerce a favourable decision that seriously violates the legal and human rights of Ahmadis. It is a deliberate and gross infringement of Ahmadis’ freedom of religion and worship.

This mosque was built by an Ahmadi, Mr Wali Muhammad at his personal expense and on his personal land in 1982-1983. Its management was in the hands of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat for the next twenty years. Ahmadis routinely allow other Muslims the innocent use of their mosques; in fact they allow worship to anyone who worships one God. As such, on occasions, non-Ahmadis also used this mosque for worship.

In 2003, Ahmadis undertook repairs to its depleted structure. When the repairs were nearing completion, a cleric by the name of Ghulam Mustafa, who lives in Muslim Colony, Rabwah (Chenab Nagar) approached the police and claimed the mosque on the grounds that it had been used by Muslims. As is the wont with extreme clerics, he threatened violence. The police, under pressure, found it convenient to lock the mosque, with the promise to look into the rival claims subsequently.

The police were then presented by Ahmadi's irrefutable evidence and documents of Mr. Wali Muhammad's ownership of the land and the structure. The police SHO therefore categorically wrote in his report, on December 18, 2003:

***"In my opinion it is clear and there is no doubt that this mosque was built 18 or 20 years ago by Wali Muhammad Qadiani on his own land in his personal capacity. Muslims had no claim or role in it."***

Still the authorities did not restore the mosque back to Ahmadi's. In June 2007, the District Police Officer asked a report from the DSP along with documentary evidence. This was provided by the official who concluded:

***"....As for this mosque/Bait uz Zikr, Ahmad Nagar, it is a property of Jamaat Ahmadiyya as per evidence."***

Despite the above conclusive finding the mosque was not unsealed. In 2009, the extremist religious elements initiated a drive threatening to take over the mosque, by force if necessary. Upon this, Ahmadi's complained to the Chief Justice LHC. His decision is still awaited.

The Mullahs however decided not to wait for a judicial verdict. They issued threats to the administration, and have succeeded in obtaining a favourable decision through summary and unlawful methodology. It is a victory of blind religious extremism over fair and good governance.

The DCO's Order and the justification given therein are typical of bureaucratic circumvention.

The DCO quoted the anti-Ahmadiyya constitutional amendment and Ordinance XX to justify his unsupportable action. The DCO has used wholly unjustified and unfair laws to allow the gross violation of the fundamental human rights of a marginalised community.

It is hoped that the DCO's Order is reversed and the mosque is returned to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat as soon as possible.

### **End of Release**

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