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Ahmadis face rising persecution

Jollof Media Network (08.05.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2pAGFGh> - The Ahmadiyya Muslim community in the Gambia is coming under increased persecution by the country's predominant Sunni Muslim sect.

The small community of several thousands consider themselves Muslims, but that is a view rejected by mainstream Islamic sects.

The Gambia's main Muslim body, Supreme Islamic Council, responsible for the general activities of all Islamic affairs in the country has classed Ahmadis as non-Muslims, who only used the Muslim declaration of faith (Kalimah) to confuse other Muslim sects.

The council has issued a fatwa in 2015 forbidding the burial of Ahmadis in Muslim cemeteries.

"It is forbidden by Shari'ah to bury a non-Muslim at a Muslim cemetery. It is authenticated by Shari'ah law that Ahmadiyya are a non-Muslim community. Therefore it is totally forbidden [for them] to bury their dead at a Muslim cemetery," the Muslim council said.

Since the fatwa was issued, Ahmadis in the Gambia are finding it difficult to bury their relatives.

Last Saturday, a tension erupted in Tallinding, Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC) between Sunni Muslims and Ahmadis over the burial of a 70-year-old Ahmadi man at the town's cemetery.

Youths from the village blocked the funeral procession of the unnamed Ahmadi claiming that he was non-Muslim.

The youths later relented following hours of negotiations with the police.

This is the second time youths in the town have clashed with Ahmadis over the burial of an Ahmadi at the village's cemetery.

In August 2015, youths in the village threatened to exhume the body of an Ahmadi who was buried at the village's cemetery.

The youths claimed that the Ahmadi was buried at the cemetery without the knowledge of the imam and community heads.

The dispute was resolved by the police who prohibited the youths from exhuming the decomposed body in the interest of peace.

While this latest stand-off may have been resolved, the Supreme Islamic Council is yet to rescind its fatwa.

Speaking in September 2015, Imam Alhaji Momodou Lamin Touray, president of the Supreme Islamic Council said: "The council is advising the Ahmadiyya Jama'at to obtain their own cemetery in order to prevent violence and fitnah and turmoil within the society.

“The council is appealing to the entire Muslim ummah to strictly monitor their cemeteries in order to know who will be buried at these cemeteries.

“If we (Supreme Islamic Council) receive reports that Ahmadis have buried their dead at any Muslim cemetery and the people are not happy about it, we will ask them to exhume it and bury it elsewhere.”
