

# PAKISTAN: Stop crusade against Ahmadiyya community

*A statement by the Asian Human Rights Commission*

Asian Human Rights Committee (13.04.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2orjzS5> – A new wave of persecution and killings of the Ahmadi sect has started after an Islamabad high court judge took a position on religious matters of individuals, particularly about free discussions on social media. Judge Shaukat Siddiqui is generally known as a bigot and hate monger. Leading the movement for the release of Constable Mumtaz Qadri, the murderer of former governor of Punjab province, Mr. Salman Taseer, the judge declared Qadri as 'Ghazi' (victorious for upholding the teachings of Islam).

In recent days, Judge Siddiqui is taking cases of alleged blasphemy and instructing the authorities to ban the accused persons' accounts of Facebook, Twitter and Internet. The Judge's interpretation of blasphemy amounts to any free discussion on Islam or its sacred personalities.

Unfortunately, the backlash of this focus on blasphemy is faced by the Ahmadiyya community, which ironically never challenges the ideas of other religions or sects of Islam. Harassed, ostracized, and made outcastes, the "kafir" (infidel) Ahmadi community has been suffering incessantly at the hands of fundamentalist groups who vowed to wipe out all Ahmadis from Pakistan. Since 1974, when Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims, the country has witnessed a systematic cleansing, and a political, social, and economic ostracization of Ahmadis.

As Justice Siddiqui started delivering his decisions on bloggers accused of blasphemy charges, the persecution and killings of Ahmadis began again. Within a span of 10 days, two Ahmadis were gunned down. A few days ago, Malik Saleem Latif, a prominent Ahmadi lawyer in Nankana Sahib was shot dead, while his son was injured. Mr. Malik was a member of the Nankana Bar Association and relative of Pakistan's first Nobel Laureate, Dr. Abdus Salam. The proscribed group Lashkar e Jhangi claimed responsibility for his murder, raising doubts about the efficiency and effectiveness of the ongoing military operation against the group.

Before that, 68-year-old Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad was shot at from point blank range near Scheme Mor, Lahore on April 7, while he was going to Friday prayers along with his grandson and a friend. A motorcyclist, wearing a helmet, approached and shot at his temple, killing him immediately. Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad had a PhD in food and nutrition and was retired from the University of Veterinary Sciences.

At least six Ahmadis were killed in Pakistan in 2016 because of their religious beliefs, claims a recent report issued by the Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya. Pakistan's state inaction in the face of discrimination and prejudice against the Ahmadiya minority is condemnable and deplorable, to say the least. Pakistan is the only country in the world where not only is such prejudice institutionalised, but also practiced as a matter of religious duty. The country's law enforcement turns a deaf ear to hate speech against the beleaguered community, whose members despite being citizens of the state, are left to fend for themselves.

In December 2016 for instance, a mob attacked and burned down

an Ahmadi place of worship in District Chakwal. In a **letter** addressed to the District Coordinator earlier, the community had notified the concerned authorities about their apprehension of an attack. The officials paid no heed to the warning, and instead tried to muzzle the voice of the victimized community by banning its publication of an Ahmadi paper, terming it seditious and inflammatory.

While charges of blasphemy have been a harbinger of mass atrocities against all religious minorities, the Ahmadi community has borne the brunt. Even amongst educated and well versed Pakistanis, the Ahmadis are considered the least deserving minority in terms of equal opportunities and civil rights, according to polls conducted by **reputed organizations**. To date, several Ahmadis have been killed and hundreds injured as a result of mass hysteria in the name of blasphemy.

The world is well aware of the murder of hundreds of Ahmadis in Pakistan because of their faith and belief. Ahmadis are constantly drawing the attention of the international community to the barbaric laws targeting them in Pakistan, depriving them of freedom of religion and their fundamental human rights.

The Asian Human Rights Commission urges the media and all concerned organisations to take up this issue resolutely and pressure the Government of Pakistan to repeal discriminatory laws against religious minorities. Moreover, the Government must stop a well organised hate campaign against Ahmadis, resulting in killing, harassment and discrimination of innocent community members. The Government's claim to take action against extremists and militant organisations appears to be nothing more than political rhetoric. The actions of

such hate mongers have not only destroyed the peace of Ahmadis, but also social harmony. In order to stop the violence and discrimination, it is crucial for the Government to take strict legal action against the perpetrators and revoke all laws that support their vicious intentions.

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