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PAKISTAN: Shiites killed in Gilgit-Baltistan during the sacred month of Muharram

Shiites killed in Gilgit-Baltistan

Violence against Pakistani Shia Muslims during the sacred month of Muharram unfortunately repeats itself every year.

By Marco Respinti

Bitter Winter (08.08.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3AcWg6P> – Bitter Winter has published series and articles about the persecution

of the Shiite minority in Pakistan. The difficult situation of Shia Muslims there is receiving increasing international attention. As for other tragedies, though, the risk is that, when violence becomes routine, a form of "news fatigue" affects international media and incidents are no longer reported.

Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, and one of the four sacred months for Muslims. The Mourning of Muharram commemorates the killing of Imam Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala in 680, within the context of events that led to the separation between Shiite and Sunni Islam. Although Sunnis also respect the bravery of Husayn, the Mourning of Muharram is primarily a Shiite memory.

Radical Sunni Muslims regard the specific Shiite celebrations at Muharram as anti-Sunni and offensive. In Pakistan where, as frequently explained in Bitter Winter, anti-Shiite feelings are fueled by ultra-fundamentalist Islamic political organizations, this dissent routinely generates deadly violence.

The month of Muharram started on July 31, and unfortunately anti-Shia violence started too. Police is currently investigating an incident that happened near the monument of Yagdar Chowk in Gilgit City, in the autonomous territory of Gilgit-Balistan (former Northern Territories) at the beginning of Muharram.

A local Shiite leader, Agha Rahat Hussain al Hussaini., raised the flag of Imam Husayn. Suddenly, a Sunni mob attacked the Shiites. Two young Shiites were killed, Syed Iqrar Hussain, 25, a resident of Nagaral, and Mohammad Ali, 15, from Hoper valley of Nagar. The Shiites reacted, and the confrontation left 17 injured.

These incidents are unfortunately not isolated. Shiites are

both skeptical that the perpetrators will be sentenced for their crimes and persuaded that violence will continue as long as radical Sunni group will be allowed to disseminate anti-Shia hate speech.

Photo: The Two Shiites killed, Mohamad Ali and Syed Iqrar Hussain. From Twitter.

Marco Respinti is the Editor-in-Chief of International Family News. He is an Italian professional journalist, member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), essayist, translator, and lecturer. He has contributed and contributes to several journals and magazines both in print and online, both in Italy and abroad. Author of books, he has translated and/or edited works by, among others, Edmund Burke, Charles Dickens, T.S. Eliot, Russell Kirk, J.R.R. Tolkien, Régine Pernoud and Gustave Thibon. A Senior fellow at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal, a non-partisan, non-profit U.S. educational organization based in Mecosta, Michigan, he is also a founding member as well as Board member of the Center for European Renewal, a non-profit, non-partisan pan-European educational organization based in The Hague, The Netherlands, and a member of the Advisory Council of the European Federation for Freedom of Belief. He serves as Director-in-Charge of the academic publication *The Journal of CESNUR* and *Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights in China*.

Further reading about FORB in Pakistan on HRWF website

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content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line **1267**

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/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-
content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line **1268**