

## Ahmadis behind bars in Pakistan

By Willy Fautré, *Human Rights Without Frontiers*

HRWF (22.08.2017) – Ahmadis are *persona non grata* in Pakistan (1). They are routinely arrested on false charges of blasphemy, kept for years in prison without any judgment or sentenced to several years of deprivation of freedom. As of August 2017, the following Ahmadis were in prison in Pakistan.

### Ghulam Ahmad, Ihsan Ahmad Mubashir Ahmad

On 13<sup>th</sup> May 2014, a case was opened against these three Ahmadis from Bhoiwal (District Sheikhpura) at the Police Station Sharaqpur after someone tore down an anti-Ahmadi poster. A fourth Ahmadi who was involved the case was murdered three days later by a madrassah student while in police custody. They were all accused of violating Article 295-A (2) of the Pakistani Penal Code (PPC) on blasphemy. On 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017, they were refused bail by the Supreme Court. The bench hearing the case comprised three judges: Manzoor A. Malik, Sardar Tariq Masoor and Mazhar Sher. The three Ahmadis were arrested on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2014. They have been **in prison for the last three years without any judgment.**

### Tahir Mahdi Imtiaz

Tahir Mahdi Imtiaz, who is the printer of the Ahmadiyya monthly *Ansarullah*, was arrested by the police on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in the premises of a Lahore court where he had gone to seek confirmation of bail in another fabricated case registered with Millat Town police on behest of mullas, more than a year before.

In 2015, he was accused of

- Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs (PPC Section 295-A)
- Defiling, etc. of the Holy Qur'an (PPC Section 295-B)
- Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet, punishable with life imprisonment or death (PPC Section 295-C)

He was also charged under the 1997 Anti-Terrorism Act, Article 8-W, which prohibits acts intended or likely to stir up sectarian hatred, including: using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, displaying, publishing, distributing, or possessing written material, visual images, or sounds, which are threatening, abusive or insulting. He will be tried by an anti-terror court.

He rejects all the accusations. He was denied bail. He has been **in prison since 2015 without any judgment.**

### Qamar Ahmad Tahir

He was arrested on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015 after a major arson attack in Jehlum by a mob on Pakistan Chip-board Factory which was owned by an Ahmadi and of which he was a security official (See pictures at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1221273>). The incident resulted in riots, extensive damage to Ahmadiyya property and massive flight of Ahmadis from the locality. The

next day, a mob attacked the local Ahmadiyya mosque, set fire to its furnishings and occupied it. The police made some arrests but most of the attackers and arsonists were released on bail. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017, after 19 months of pre-trial detention, Mr Liaquat Ali Ranjha, Additional Session Judge, sentenced **Qamar Ahmad Tahir was sentenced to life imprisonment** for allegedly defiling the Holy Quran (PPC article 295-B) during the November 2015 events in Jhelum. He denies the charges.

### **Shakoor Bhai and Mazhar Abbas**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015, officials of Punjab's Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) accompanied by a contingent of the Elite Force raided Shakoor Bhai's bookshop, arrested him as well as Mazhar Abbas, the shop assistant, a Shia. He was accused of selling religious books published by the Ahmadiyya Community. The books found in his store (including copies of the Holy Quran) were purely religious in nature and in no way incited or condoned the use of violence. Two days later, a speedy trial in an anti-terrorism court dispensed **five years' imprisonment** to each of the accused. **Shakoor**, 81, was sentenced to **three additional years in prison** under the anti-Ahmadiyya law.

### **Sabah ul Zafar and Idrees Ahmad**

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, twenty-eight armed police contingent of the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) carried out a raid on Ahmadiyya central offices and Zia-ul-Islam Press in Rabwah. They arrested four Ahmadiyya officials. Two of them were released.

Sabah ul Zafar and Idrees Ahmad remained behind bars as bail was not granted to them. They were sentenced to **three years' imprisonment**.

### **Amjad Iqbal Salooni and Ikram Ilahi**

These two Ahmadis were arrested on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017 for preaching their faith. They were charged under Article 295-A and 298-C of the PPC. A judge added terrorism clauses to the case and set it to an anti-terrorism court. Their pleas for bail were rejected. On 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017, a judge in Faisalabad sentenced them to **three years in prison**.

1. In 1974, Prime Minister Bhutto amended the Pakistani Constitution to declare Ahmadis non-Muslims. Then, in 1984, under General Zia, the Government of Pakistan enacted Ordinance XX that made it a criminal offence for Ahmadis to call themselves Muslims, to call their place of worship a 'mosque', to use the Islamic greeting 'Assalamo alaikum' (Peace be on you) and to preach or propagate their faith. Any of the above acts is punishable by three years imprisonment or by death if convicted under the blasphemy laws.

#### **2. Pakistan Penal Code, Chapter XV: Offences relating to religion**

295. Injuring or defiling place of worship, with Intent to insult the religion of any class: Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction damage or defilement as an insult to their religion. shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

295-A. Deliberate and malicious acts Intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting Its religion or religious beliefs: Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the 'religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Pakistan, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine, or with both. Sec. 295-A ins. by the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, XXV of 1927.

295-B. Defiling, etc., of Holy Qur'an : Whoever willfully defiles, damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Qur'an or of an extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life. Sec. 295-B added by P.P.C. (Amendment) Ordinance, I of 1982.

295-C. Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet: Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine. Sec. 295-C ins. by the Criminal Law (amendment) Act, 111 of 1986, S. 2

Source: <http://www.oecd.org/site/adboecdanti-corruptioninitiative/46816797.pdf>