

Persecution of Ahmadis

HRWF (31.10.2019) - "Ahmadis are particularly persecuted in Algeria as 'heretics' and 'apostates', and dozens of them have been sentenced to prison terms in the last few years." This is a statement that Willy Fautré, director of *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (HRWF) made at an academic conference titled "Ahmaddiya in a scholarly perspective" organized by the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions and Humanism in Antwerp-Wilrijk (Belgium) on 24-25 October.

Here is the excerpt of the paper concerning Algeria that HRWF presented at that conference:

There are an estimated 2,000 Ahmadis in Algeria, according to the Ahmadi community. In 2015, they applied for registration, but they received a negative answer from the Algerian authorities the following year. Their refusal was based mainly on articles which give the authorities broad leeway to refuse authorization if they deem the content and objectives of a group's activities to violate Algeria's "'fundamental principles' (*constantes nationales*) and values, public order, public morals, and the applicable laws and regulations."^[1]

In line with this refusal, government ministers have made several public anti-Ahmadi statements. In October 2016, the Minister of Religious Affairs Mohamed Aissa described the Ahmadi presence in Algeria as of a "deliberate sectarian invasion" and declared that the government brought criminal charges against Ahmadis to "stop deviation from religious precepts." In February 2017, he stated that Ahmadis are damaging the very basis of Islam.^[2]

In April, Ahmed Ouyahia, then chief of cabinet to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, said that "there are no human rights or freedom of religion" in the case of the Ahmadis, because "Algeria has been a Muslim country for 14 centuries." Furthermore, he called on Algerians to "protect the country from the Shia and Ahmadiyya sects."^[3]

It is in this general anti-Ahmadi climate that a wave of prosecutions started in June 2016 in the Blida governorate^[4], and spread to other areas. A year later, some 266 Ahmadis around the country had faced criminal charges^[5] and, as of early 2017, their president, Mohamed Fali said around 50 more were in the dock^[6]. The charges were as follows^[7]:

- denigrating the dogma or precepts of Islam, punishable by a prison term of three to five years and a fine of up to 100,000 Algerian dinars^[8], under article 144 of the penal code;
- participation in an unauthorized association, under article 46 of the Associations Law, punishable by a prison sentence of three to six months and a fine of 100,000 to 300,000 dinars;
- collecting donations without a license, under articles 1 and 8 of the decree 03-77 of 1977 regulating donations;
- conducting worship in unauthorized places, under articles 7, 12, and 13 of Ordinance 06-03 Establishing the Conditions and Rules for the Exercise of non-Muslim Religions;

- and possession and distribution of documents from foreign sources threatening national security, under article 96-2 of the penal code, punishable by up to three years in prison.

Some were also imprisoned for up to six months for allegedly representing a threat to the majority Sunni Muslim faith and plotting with foreign powers.

Several Ahmadis faced two or more trials, sometimes in different parts of the country.

Convictions and sentences were issued in more than 120 cases and ranged from three months to four years in prison.

A number of them were suspended from their public sector jobs because there were active court cases against them.

The President of the Ahmadi community, Mohamed Fali, is also particularly targeted. He was repeatedly charged and prosecuted in many cases across the country.

From February to May 2016, he spent three months in Chlef prison in provisional detention^[9].

On 28 August 2017, police came to his home in Ain Sefra, in the province of Naama, and arrested him on the basis of an in absentia judgment sentencing him to three years in prison. Two weeks later, he was additionally given a suspended sentence of six months in prison and a fine^[10].

As such, Fali was facing charges in six cases simultaneously and was either under investigation or on trial in five different Algerian cities.

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/04/algeria-stop-persecuting-religious-minority>

[2] <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/22/algeria-new-trials-shake-ahmadi-minority>

[3] Ibid

[4] <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/06/algeria-wave-of-arrests-and-prosecutions-of-hundreds-of-ahmadis/>

[5] https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/afrique/algerie/qui-sont-les-ahmadis-persecutes-en-algerie-qui-pronent-la-laicite_3058951.html

[6] Ibid 1

[7] Ibid 1

[8] 1000 Algerian dinars (DZD) = 7.50 EUR

[9] <https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/mohamed-fali-condamne-a-un-an-de-prison-ferme-276941/print/1>

[10] <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/474338/societe/algerie-fali-leader-ahmadi-condamne-libere-et-toujours-poursuivi-symbole-dun-acharnement-detat/>

Ahmadiyya in scholarly perspective: Program

Speakers

Prof. dr. Brahim Layouss: *Welcome*

Prof. dr. Chris Vonck: *Introduction 'A search for a Quran in the 50's'*

Heiko Wenzel: *Is Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat an Intolerant Version of Islam? A Dialogue with Hiltrud Schröter's Book on the Jamaat.*

Sumera Tariq: *The Two-Nation Theory and The Making of a Nation. Was Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad A Nation-Maker And Influenced the making of Pakistan?*

Muhammed Haron.: *Africa's Ahmadiyya Community: Its double-identity as a religious minority.*

Dr. Idrees Ahmad: *The history of the Ahmaddiya Muslim community.*

John H. Hanson: *The Ahmadiyya in Ghana: aspirational Muslims in a global community.*

Willy Fautré (Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers Int.): *Persecution of the Ahmadis in Pakistan and other countries.*

Sir dr. Iftikhar Ayaz: *Ahmadiyya History - A Theological Point of View .*

Dr. Ataul Wasih Tariq and Prof. Vasco Fronzoni (Univ. Napoli Orientale): *Blasphemy, Ahmadiyya theology and positive legislation.*

Prof. Fazeel S. Khan, Esq.: *Heresy or Hyperbole. An Assessment of the Claim of "Prophethood" Attributed to the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.*

Pr. Maria d'Arienzo: *Theory of sovereignty and power in the Ahmadiyya Community*

Ahmad Najib Burhani: *Ahmadiyya and Islamic Revivalism in the Twentieth Century Indonesia: A Neglected Contribution*

Thierry Valle (Director of CAP/ Freedom of Conscience with UN ECOSOC status): *Pro-Ahmaddiya Advocacy at the UN*

Organizers : Prof. Régis Dericquebourg, Prof. Bernadette Rigal-Cellard, Prof. Chris Vonck and Prof. Donald Westbrook.