

A history of persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan

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Hundred years of persecution. 1984-2009: 105 Ahmadis killed, 22 Ahmadiyya mosques demolished, 28 sealed by authorities, 11 set on fire, 14 occupied while construction of 41 banned. 2010: new deaths...

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First time, back in 1953, six Ahmadis lost their lives when an anti-Ahmadiyya wave swept newly founded Pakistan. In 1974, a minor incident sparked other anti-Ahmadiyya riots leaving 24 members of Ahmadiyya community dead. When Zia-dictatorship introduced new anti-Ahmadiyya legislation and began patronising militant outfits, Ahmadis became a permanent target of assassins. In the period 1984-2009, 105 Ahmadis were target killed. On May 28, toll almost doubled in one go when two Ahmadiyya mosques were attacked in Lahore leaving over 90 dead. According to reports compiled by Ahmadiyya community, during 1984-2009, 22 Ahmadiyya mosques were demolished, 28 were sealed by authorities, 11 were set on fire, and 14 were occupied while construction of 41 was banned. In at least 47 cases, burials were denied in common grave yards while 28 bodies were exhumed.

Ahmadiyya movement

The Ahmadiyya movement has its origins in 'British-India' in the late 19th century, identifies itself as a Muslim movement that follows the teachings of the Koran.

However, it is regarded by many conventional Muslims as heretical.

The Ahmadiyya community takes its name from its founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, - born (1835) in the town of Qadian in Punjab - regarded by his followers as the messiah and a prophet. Ghulam Ahmad saw himself as a renewer of Islam and claimed to have been chosen by Allah.

The Ahmadis insist that he was not a "law-giving" prophet and his job was only to propagate the laws enunciated by Islam's Prophet Mohammad. But few among the Muslim mainstream are willing to accept this argument.

In the early part of the 20th Century, the Ahmadiyya movement split into two over questions of leadership. The original branch called the Ahmadis also took the name Qadiani after the birthplace Ghulam Ahmad. According to Oxford Islamic Studies Online, this group emphasised their founder's claim to prophethood. The second group known as the Lahore Party, regarded Ghulam Ahmad as

only a reformer. Both branches have their headquarters in the UK.

Qadian to Rabwah

In 1947, the community moved its religious headquarters from Qadian in India to Rabwah in Pakistan. Then in 1953, Islamist groups in Pakistan came together to form what they called the “anti-Qadiani movement”.

Described by rights organisations as one of the most relentlessly persecuted communities in Pakistan, the Ahmadiyya have seen their personal and political rights erode steadily over the years under pressure from fundamentalist groups.

In 1974, Pakistan’s first elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, introduced a constitutional amendment - known as the second amendment - which declared Ahmadis non-Muslims.

The amendment reads:-

Whereas it is expedient further to amend the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the purposes hereinafter appearing;

It is hereby enacted as follows:-

1- Short title and commencement.

(1) This Act may be called the CONSTITUTION (SECOND AMENDMENT) ACT, 1974

(2) It shall come into force at once.

2- Amendment of Article 106 of the Constitution.

In the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, hereinafter referred to as the Constitution in Article 106, in clause (3) after the words “communities” the words and brackets “and persons of Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves ‘Ahmadis’)” shall be inserted.

3- Amendment of Article 260 of the Constitution.

In the Constitution, in Article 260, after clause (2) the following new clause shall be added, namely—

(3) A person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of The Prophethood of MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him), the last of the Prophets or claims to be a Prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him), or recognizes such a claimant as a Prophet or religious reformer, is not a Muslim for the purposes of the Constitution or law."

It is pertinent to mention here that PPP MP and architect of 1973 Constitution, Mr. Ahmad Raza Qasoori staged a walkout during the proceedings for second amendment. Another PPP stalwart in the parliament, and prominent religious leader from Sindh province, Makhdoom Talibul Maoula, opposed the bill.

A decade later, a new law was brought in barring Ahmadis from calling their places of worship mosques or from propagating their faith in “any way, directly or indirectly”.

Gen Zia's 298-B and 298-C surpass Bhutto's 2nd amendment

Known as 298-B, this legislation was introduced by Zia-dictatorship (1977-88). This law envisaged:

"Misuse of epithets, descriptions and titles, etc. reserved for certain holy personages or places.

1) Any person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves Ahmadis or by any other name) who by words either spoken or written or by visible representations:

a) Refers to or addresses, any person other than a Caliph or companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as 'Ameerul Mumineen', 'khalifat -ul- Mumineen', 'Khalifat-ul-muslimeen', 'Sahaabi' or 'Razi-allah-Anho'.

b) Refers to or addresses any person other than a wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him) as 'Umm-ul- Munineen':

c) Refers to addresses any person other than a member of the family(Ahle-bait) of the Holy prophet (peace be upon Him) as Ahle bait, or

d) Refers to or names, or calls his place of worship as 'Masjid' ,

Shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine.

2) Any person of the Qadiani group or Lahori group (who call themselves 'Ahmadis' or by any other name) who by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation, refers to the mode or form of call to prayers followed by his faith Azan as used by the Muslim, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to fine,"

According to 298-C

"Persons of Qadiani group etc. calling himself a Muslim or preaching or propagating his faith. -Any person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves Ahmadis or by any other name) who directly or indirectly poses himself as a Muslim or call or refers to his faith as Islam or preaches or propagates his faith or invites others to accept his faith by words either spoken or written or by visible representations, or any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a team which may extend to three years and shall and shall also be liable to fine.

These Sections made it a criminal offence for an Ahmadi:-

a) to call or pose himself directly or indirectly as a Muslim or refer to his faith as Islam:

b) to preach or propagate his faith or to invite others to accept his faith or in any manner whatsoever outrage the religious feelings of Muslims:

c) to call people to prayer by reciting Azan to refer to his mode or form of call to pray as Azan:

d) to refer or call his place of worship as Masjid:

e) to refer any person other than a Caliph or companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as Ammerul Mumineen, Khalifatul-Muslimeen, Sahaaba, Razi-allah anho any person other than the

wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as Umm-ul- Mumineen and any person other than a member of the family of the Holy prophet (PBUH) as Ahle-bait.

Fearing the new law, the community moved its headquarters to the UK.

It has established itself in Britain, Europe, America, Africa, and other parts of Asia, with the building of mosques a high priority. In 1982, the Ahmadiyya mosque was the first mosque to be built in Spain since the Moors were expelled in 1492. While Ahmadis say they have 200 million followers, mainstream Islamic scholars say this is a massive exaggeration. They claim there are at best 10 million Ahmadis. Today, the Ahmadiyya community faces restrictions in many Muslim nations. It is however in Pakistan, they suffer most. Their sufferings have dramatically increased since Zia-ear anti-Ahmadi legislation.

All kinds of meetings of Ahmadis in Rabwah, the Ahmadiyya headquarters in Pakistan, large or small have been under a ban since April 1984 after the promulgation of anti-Ahmadiyya ordinance. Even sports events organized by the Community have been prohibited by the authorities. In 2008, a championship scheduled by Pakistan Amateur Basketball Association was disallowed by the authorities.

Since the promulgation of the anti-Ahmadiyya Ordinance XX, 3738 Ahmadis have faced charges in various courts excluding the whole population of Rabwah. The entire population of Rabwah has been booked twice under the Ahmadis-specific PPC 298-C.

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P.S.

* From Viewpoint:

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/fullstory.php?t=Hundred%20years%20of%20persecution&f=full-12-june-4.php&y=2010&m=june>