

The ‘absent’ schoolteacher of Dulmial

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CHAKWAL: When he chose teaching as his profession in 2002, Malik Zahid Hameed never thought that he would end up in such a bizarre situation.

But the schoolteacher, who is also an office-bearer of the local chapter of the Ahmadiya Jamaat, landed in hot water alongside other members of his community on December 12 last year, when an enraged mob stormed into their place of worship in Dulmial village.

Since then, Mr. Hameed remains “absent from his duty” as per the official record. But ironically, it is not he who is not performing his duties; it is his boss, the chief executive officer of the District Education Authority, who has yet to decide where Mr Hameed should be appointed, despite the lapse of seven months.

"Malik Zahid Hameed has not been assigned a new duty station amid simmering communal tensions

Mr Hameed taught at a primary school in neighbouring Tatal Kahoon village, which is just 4km from Dulmial, when his village fell into turmoil. After a Muslim youth from the Tatal Kahoon village was killed during the attack, it became impossible for the teacher to continue his duties in the village.

He was transferred to Lari Shah Nawaz, 18km from Dulmial on Jan 6, but was soon told by his seniors he



could not join as circumstances were not much better in that village, either. Subsequently, his transfer orders were taken back and he was marked “absent”.

“I have not received my salary for the past six months since I have been declared absent,” the depressed teacher told Dawn.

“How can you live without a salary; it is main source of income for me and my family,” he said, adding: “My colleagues have no issue with me and hold me in high esteem, but there is a security risk is everywhere.”

He said that he felt relatively safer teaching at a school in the Katas village, since his own village was also afflicted by turmoil in the wake of the communal tensions.

An official from the Education Department told Dawn that due to security concerns, the department is not able to reach a decision about Mr Hameed’s appointment. “He is vulnerable to security risks,” the official added.

When contacted, District Education Authority CEO Dr Ghulam Murtaza Anjum claimed that a decision would be taken soon. “We are working to rectify this issue,” he said.

But peace remains elusive in Dulmial, as its Ahmadi residents are still not allowed to offer prayers at their place of worship, which remains sealed even after seven months and a case regarding its re-opening is pending before a local court.

Although both groups had inked a peace deal in February, it could not materialize since the heirs of Naeem Shafique, the youth killed during the attack, were not ready to reconcile.

So far, 60 out of 67 accused have been granted post-arrest bail; 46 secured bail from the Lahore High Court, while on June 23 14 more accused managed to secure bail from the Supreme Court.

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