

UPR side-event highlights the ongoing and systematic persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

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CAP Liberté de Conscience (13.11.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2AHjXDb> - On 13 November, the Coordination of Associations and Individuals for Freedom of Conscience, (CAP) held a side event at the Palais des Nations alongside Pakistan's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the United Nations Human Rights Council. The side event reflected on the challenges facing religious communities in Pakistan, particularly the country's draconian anti-Ahmadi and Blasphemy laws that have been used by the state to persecute religious communities for more than 40 years.



With representatives of international NGOs and various UN Missions in attendance, this timely event highlighted the plight of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Declared non-Muslim by Pakistan's Constitution in 1974, the sect remains among the most marginalised religious communities in the world. Faith-based hate and discrimination against the community is being propagated at the highest levels of the Pakistani government.

Most recently three members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community were sentenced to death in Pakistan under false blasphemy charges.

This escalating and state-sponsored persecution is of particular concern due to Pakistan's upcoming general elections in 2018. The side event brought much needed attention to the fact that Ahmadis in Pakistan are facing an electoral apartheid unlike any other citizen in the country and are the only disenfranchised community in Pakistan.

The event was headlined by an international panel of experts and also featured messages of support from Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion, who stressed the need for urgent action to end the systemic persecution of Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan which he noted was "legally sanctioned" by the laws. He added that the persecution was impacting on all communities and called on Pakistan to implement in full the recommendations of the UPR.

Jim Shannon MP (Chair of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief) and Siobhain McDonagh MP (Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community UK) also sent messages of support urging for an end to all religious discrimination in Pakistan.

Speakers included Sir Iftikhar Ayaz, Chairman of the International Human Rights Committee, Dr. Aaron Rhodes, President of the Forum for Religious Freedom Europe, Mahmood Ahmad, General Secretary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Lawyers Association USA, and Baseer Naveed from the Asian Human Rights Commission.

The event was moderated by Thierry Valle, President CAP Liberté de Conscience who further underscored the significance of the issue saying,



"This side event has laid plain that 70 years on from the creation of Pakistan it is still not living up to Jinnah's vision of Pakistan as a country with complete freedom of religion for all.

"The Pakistan Government must act to end the Federal laws targeting the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the daily persecution faced by Christians, Shias, Ahmadis and other communities."

Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion:

View video

here: <http://www.freedomofconscience.eu/united-nations-the-denial-of-religious-freedom-in-pakistan/>