

Pakistan must repeal discriminatory measures leading to persecution of Ahmadis, say UN experts

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GENEVA (25 July 2018) – The Government of Pakistan must repeal discriminatory provisions in its electoral law which is leading to members of the Ahmadiyya minority being persecuted and targeted in violent attacks, say two UN human rights experts*.

“With national elections today, 25 July 2018, the current legal requirement for a separate electoral list for the Ahmadis, who have to declare themselves as non-Muslims in order to vote, is of particular concern,” said the experts.

Although Ahmadis identify themselves as Muslims, an amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan in 1974 declared the Ahmadis as non-Muslims. This provision is still included in the current Constitution. The civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Ahmadiyya minority have progressively been negated on account of doctrinal differences with the majority community.

“We are deeply concerned about increased acts of persecution of Ahmadis and about the discriminatory provisions against the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan’s domestic law. These measures contribute to acts of violence against Ahmadis based only on religious differences,” they added.

“Stipulating that Ahmadiyya citizens must register on a separate electoral roll for non-Muslims can have a serious impact on the level of participation of the Ahmadiyya minority in the political process,” the experts emphasized.

The UN expert on freedom of religion or belief added: “The right to manifest one’s religion or belief in private or public must be left to the discretion of each individual in accordance with article 18 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), and no one should be coerced to declare their religion or belief.”

Furthermore, the UN expert on minority issues stressed that the right to profess and practice one’s religion without interference or any form of discrimination is enshrined in Article 2 of the [1992 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities](#).



Both experts also expressed concern about the legal requirement that prevents Ahmadis from obtaining national identification and travel documents, thereby discriminating them on the basis of their religion or belief.

They also called for the repeal of the death penalty for blasphemy offences, saying such provisions were incompatible with international human rights law. They pointed out that individuals from religious minorities were disproportionately charged with “blasphemy” in Pakistan, simply for practising their faith.

The UN experts have been in contact with the Government of Pakistan to seek clarification about the issues of concern.

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The UN experts: **Mr. Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on [freedom of religion or belief](#); and **Mr. Fernand de Varennes**, Special Rapporteur on [minority issues](#); **Ms Agnes Callamard**, Special Rapporteur on [extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#).*

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

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*This year, 2018, is the **70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, adopted by the UN on 10 December 1948. The Universal Declaration – translated into a world record 500 languages – is rooted in the principle that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” It remains relevant to everyone, every day. In honour of the 70th anniversary of this extraordinarily influential document, and to prevent its vital principles from being eroded, we are urging people everywhere to **Stand Up for Human Rights**: www.standup4humanrights.org.*

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