



INCIDENT REPORT



Ahmadi Muslim Shopkeeper Shot Dead in Peshawar

13 August 2020

At 9.00pm on Wednesday 12 August 2020, Mr Meraj Ahmad, an Ahmadi Muslim resident of Peshawar, Pakistan was shot dead in a religiously motivated attack by unidentified assassins. He was closing his medical store when the murder took place.



61 year old Meraj Ahmad was a well-known Ahmadi Muslim and had been the target of a concerted and sustained hate campaign including on Facebook. He had also been struggling to hire employees because of his faith. He leaves behind a widow, three sons and one daughter.

This is the latest incident in a recent upsurge in brutal violence on grounds of faith.

On 11 August, Sheikh Nasir Ahmad, an Ahmadi Muslim resident of Lala Musa Punjab, Pakistan was shot by unidentified attackers, when he was walking back home from the market. The attackers shot him four times before fleeing the scene. He survived the incident, but received substantial injuries.

Furthermore, on 12 August assailants fired gunshots at the house of Syed Naeem Bashir in Sahiwal, district Sargodha. He and his family survived the attack.

Additionally, days earlier US citizen Tahir Naseem, who was presumed by clerics to be an Ahmadi Muslim and was facing blasphemy charges, was murdered in a court room in Peshawar in the presence of a judge. Whilst he had not committed any blasphemy, his murder was celebrated by some clerics and far-right elements.

These four major incidents, including the murder of Meraj Ahmad, happened within the span of a few days and appear to be fuelled by state rhetoric against Ahmadi Muslims. For example, Ali Muhammad Khan, a Federal Minister of state released a video statement in which he stated: "Qadianiat basically is a great mischief (*Fitna*) against Islam We are soldiers of *Khatme Nabuwat* (End of Prophethood) and *Shane Risalat* (Honour of Messengership)."

He was also quoted by UCANews as saying: "Beheading is the only punishment for those who mock Prophet Muhammad." ¹

Additionally, Federal Minister Azam Swati stated in public last year: "I curse them (*Ahmadis*), and Imran Khan also curses Qadianiat." In a similar vein, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi, President of the influential Ulama (Cleric) Board of Punjab, stressed in a interfaith meeting: "... I am not willing to accept them [Ahmadis]

¹ ucanews.com/news/Pakistan-minister-calls

in the country....To speak against Qadianis is Religious Harmony.”² (Qadianis is a derogatory term for Ahmadis)

The spokesperson of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan, Mr Saleem Uddin said that the authorities and state institutions were not only failing in their duty to curb hate speech against Ahmadis, but in many instances they were active participants. This serves only to embolden extremist elements and legitimises hatred against Ahmadis, which in the worst instances leads to the murder of Ahmadis. He added that,

“The hate campaign started on social media had a key role to play in this violence. Ministers as well as state officials participated in this to the fullest and instigated hate and violence against Ahmadis.”

According to Pakistan’s anti-Ahmadi laws it is a crime, punishable by three year’s imprisonment (or death under the blasphemy laws), for an Ahmadi to call himself a Muslim or to practice his Islamic faith. This is a stark denial of human rights.

ACTION

We urge the Government of Pakistan to:

- Immediately bring the murderers of Meraj Ahmad to justice;
- Immediately bring the perpetrators of the shooting against Sheikh Nasir Ahmad to justice;
- Uphold its obligations under the rule of law to protect its citizens;
- Uphold its obligations under the international human rights framework to grant complete freedom of religion.

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² <https://youtu-be/rGTeEG3or7K>