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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website. Please note that some RIRs have attachments which are not electronically accessible. To obtain a PDF copy of an RIR attachment, please email the [✉ Knowledge and Information Management Unit](#).

11 January 2017

PAK105713.E

Pakistan: Religious and ethnic groups in Rabwah, including population size and regional distribution; availability of employment and housing for Ahmadis; situation of Ahmadis, including social discrimination (2015-2016)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

Sources indicate that Rabwah [state of Punjab, Pakistan] has been the Ahmadis' headquarters [or spiritual centre (Valentine May 2014, 101)] since 1948 when the religious group moved from Qadian [state of Punjab, India] (Bajwa and Khan Mar.-Apr. 2015, 1616; Valentine May 2014, 101) after the partition with India in 1947 (ibid.). According to sources, Rabwah is called Chenab Nagar by Pakistani authorities (US May 2009, 67; TPA 31 Dec. 2015, 90). In a paper on the Ahmadis in Pakistan, Simon Ross Valentine, a freelance British lecturer and researcher of Islam and comparative religions who has taught at Leeds University and Bradford University (Oxford University Press n.d.), states that the Punjab Assembly "forced" the Ahmadis to change the name of Rabwah first to Nawab Qadian and then to Chenab Nagar in 1989 (Valentine May 2014, 100).

In a paper [1] published in the academic journal *Science Internationale (Lahore)*, Shaheer Ellahi Khan, an assistant professor of anthropology at Bahria University, and Lubna Sausan Bajwa from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the same institution, indicate that

Rabwah is situated around 7 km from a historical city of *Chiniot* and covers around 24 square kilometers of land. It is approximately halfway between Faisalabad and Sargodha. ...The area is higher than the surrounding plains due to the dry hills which dot the landscape (thus aptly named "Rabwah" - meaning raised area) (Bajwa and Khan Mar.-Apr. 2015, 1616)

1.1 Population and Religious Composition

According to sources, the Ahmadi population in Rabwah is approximately 60,000 (Valentine May 2014, 101) or 70,000 (Bajwa and Khan Mar.-Apr. 2015, 1616). Sources indicate that Ahmadis in Rabwah represent around 90 percent (Shackle Apr. 2014, 43) or 95 percent of the population (TPA 31 Dec. 2015, 62; Valentine May 2014, 101). Further information on the religious and ethnic structure of Rabwah could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Situation of Ahmadis

Valentine states that Ahmadis in Rabwah "enjoy considerable freedom and prosperity" (May 2014, 101). Similarly, according to Bajwa and Khan, "compared with other cities of Pakistan, Rabwah allows a great level of freedom to the Ahmadis to organize themselves, and carry out their religious activities peacefully" (Bajwa and Khan Mar.-Apr. 2015, 1617). However, sources report that Ahmadis are not permitted to hold religious conferences in Rabwah (TPA 31 Dec. 2016, 62) and that peaceful gatherings by the religious group are not permitted by authorities (AHRC and IHRC 2015, 53). Bajwa and Khan cite "a local" from Rabwah as stating that "[c]ommunity meetings at local mosques take place under armed security men ... while a congregation larger than 30 people is not allowed within the city" (Bajwa and Khan Mar.- Apr. 2015, 1617). The same source further states that "despite being a city that is predominantly Ahmadi, [Rabwah] remains a sensitive place, where individuals are beleaguered by an undying sense of threat, which effectively compromises their daily life and routine activities" (ibid.). The UK *Country Information and Guidance* report on Ahmadis similarly indicates that

[w]hilst some Ahmadis see Rabwah as a secure place, which allows a greater level of freedom than other areas, daily life and routines are compromised due to the underlying sense of threat. Ahmadis living in Rabwah may also face threats from opponents who target the area because of the large number of Ahmadis in the city. (UK May 2016, para. 2.4.3)

A report on the findings of a fact-finding mission on the situation of Ahmadis in Pakistan [2], published by the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the International Human Rights Committee (IHRC) states that

whilst in the very short term there may be some shelter in the safety of numbers, the ever present threat for Ahmadis manifests itself with greater force in Rabwah. This is because opponents of the community are fully aware that there is a concentration of Ahmadis in Rabwah and seek to focus their attention upon this city. ... [E]ach entrance to the town is controlled by guards who vigilantly enquire into the business of all entrants to the town. Notably we learned that 100% of the local police force and local councillors are non Ahmadi and that the city is hemmed in by the Muslim Colony where madrassas have sprouted and that neighbouring Chiniot is reportedly a hotbed of anti Ahmadi activity. (AHRC and IHRC 2015, 74)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.1 Anti-Ahmadi Rallies

Sources indicate that anti-Ahmadi rallies are held several times a year in Rabwah (AHRc and IHRC 2015, 53; TPA 31 Dec. 2016, 62). A report documenting incidents of violence against Ahmadis in 2015 produced by The Persecution of Ahmadis (TPA), a website by the Ahmadi community "where they collate material on persecution including reports and articles by national governments, organizations such as Amnesty International, newspapers, and others" (Balzani

2014, 123), provides information on the following incidents in Rabwah:

- On 4 January 2015, Muslim clerics held a "number of very hostile" anti-Ahmadi rallies in Rabwah. One cleric reportedly stated that "[t]his mission will continue until the liquidation of the deniers of the Khatme Nabuwwat: Maulana Zahid ur Rashidi." The report further states that "[s]everal resolutions were made in the rally and published in the daily Aman of Faisalabad," including that "[t]he blasphemers should be given death punishment," that "[a] record of all persons attached with Qadiani (educational) institutes in Chenab Nagar and all over the country should be checked," and that "Qadianis should be removed from key posts in civil services and in the armed forces, as also from foreign service" (TPA 31 Dec. 2015, 23).
- Between 29 and 30 October 2015, a "conference" was held with the approval of authorities and with attendants predominantly from outside Rabwah. Attendants reportedly "spoke rabidly against the Ahmadiyya community and its elders," including making statements such as: "Qadianis are traitors to the nation and the country," and "Qadiani periodicals use Islamic terms and thereby hurt the sentiments of Muslims." "Resolutions and demands" made at the conference included the following: "Qadiani 'terrorist organization' Khuddamul Ahmadiyya (Ahmadi youth) should be banned" and "Qadianis should remain on watch-list; dual nationality holder Qadianis should be monitored and actively tracked all the time" (ibid., 65-66).
- On 24 December 2015, a rally of about 2,500-3,000 men was held in Rabwah to commemorate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammad. The rally stopped at the city centre where clerics reportedly used "foul language against Ahmadi and their elders;" derogatory statements issued by the clerics included the following: "Qadianis are apostates and destined for hell" and "Qadianis should mend their ways ... otherwise we shall undertake a campaign that will wipe them off from the face of the earth" (ibid., 57-58).

Further and corroborating information on these events could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.2 Other Events

Valentine indicates that in December 1989, authorities filed a charge sheet against the whole population of Rabwah for inscribing Quranic verses "'on their graves, buildings, offices of Ahmadiyya community, places of worship and business centres' in contravention of ... legal prohibitions" and for "persistently preaching their religion to Muslims in different ways" (May 2014, 108). An English translation of the First Information Report (FIR) on this incident, which is included in the AHRC and IHRC report, is attached to this Response (Attachment).

According to sources, in May 2008, the Ahmadi community in Rabwah organized a celebration of their faith (US May 2009, 67; Valentine May 2014, 108) but were interrupted by the police, who put the promoters of the celebrations under house arrest (ibid.). The 2008 US Commission on International Religious Freedom report indicates that "two weeks later, police lodged charges against the entire community under the anti-Ahmadi laws" (US May 2009, 67).

The AHRC and IHRC report cites a police officer who served in Rabwah four times between 2009 and 2014 as stating that there used to be an individual who went to police stations in Rabwah "on a daily basis to file blasphemy charges against various individuals" but that these attempts to file FIRs were not "entertained by the police" (AHRC and IHRC 2015, 42). The same report quotes

the police officer as stating that there is another man who "regularly files FIRs against individuals in Rabwah" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The TPA report indicates that on 12 January 2015, boys from a madrassa threw stones at Ahmadi's gravestones in Rabwah, damaging the gravestones (31 Dec. 2015, 146). According to the same source, such acts by Ahmadi opponents "happen quite often" (ibid., 82). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report that the owner of a bookstore located in Rabwah (*The Huffington Post* 1 Aug. 2016; TPA 31 Dec. 2016, 31) was detained alongside his non-Ahmadi assistant on 2 December 2015 (ibid.). A *Huffington Post* article, written by a member of the bookstore owner's extended family, reports that his shop sold Islamic books, "mostly" published by the Ahmadi community (*The Huffington Post* 1 Aug. 2016.). Sources report that the man was charged under Section 298-C of the Pakistani Penal Code and the Anti-terrorism Act, and sentenced to eight years in prison (ibid.; TPA 31 Dec. 2016, 31). Section 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code reads as follows:

298-C. Person 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 calls, 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 in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine. (Pakistan 1860)

Sources indicate that on 5 December 2016, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of the Punjab police raided the offices of the *Tehrik-e-Jadid* [Tehreek-e-Jadid] (*Rabwah Times* 5 Dec. 2016; SAAPK 7 Dec. 2016), a Rabwah-based Ahmadi monthly journal (ibid.). Sources further report that the CTD also closed the printing press used to publish *Tehrik-e-Jadid* and *Al Fazl* [*AlFazal*] (ibid.; *Rabwah Times* 5 Dec. 2016), the Ahmadi community's daily newspaper (ibid.). Four workers were arrested (ibid.; SAAPK 7 Dec. 2016). The raid was reportedly executed without producing a search warrant (ibid.; *Rabwah Times* 5 Dec. 2016). A press release by Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya, [Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya Pakistan Rabwah (SAAPK)], the Central Ahmadiyya Council that "look[s] after the administrative affairs" of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community (Al Islam n.d.), states that the police "assaulted and harrassed" the workers at the *Tehrik-e-Jadid* offices, and "assaulted" an employee whom they arrested at the printing press (SAAPK 7 Dec. 2016). The same sources notes that the CTD confiscated "various computers, laptops, mobile phones, office papers and books" from the *Tehrik-e-Jadid* offices, and "various papers, ink, films, diesel and other material" from the printing press (ibid.). Sources indicate that the government had banned *Tehrik-e-Jadid* and *AlFazl* in December 2014 (ibid.; *Rabwah Times* 5 Dec. 2016). However, the *Rabwah Times* reports that, according to the Ahmadiyya community, the courts granted a stay in June 2015 (ibid.). SAAPK states that appeals were filed against the ban, and quotes a June 2015 court injunction as indicating that "'until the next date of hearing, no coercive measures shall be adopted against the petitioner'" (7 Dec. 2016). *Rabwah Times* quotes the CTD Chief as stating that his legal team had informed him that "there [was] no stay order intact until now" and that the CTD team decided that "there '[was] no judicial bar' on conducting a raid" (5 Dec. 2016).

3. Employment and Housing

Based on information gathered during research for his paper on the Ahmadi in Pakistan, Valentine states that

Ahmadi in Faisalabad, Lahore and Rabwah [indicated] that the Government persistently discriminated against members of their communities in hiring for the civil service and in admissions to government institutions of higher learning. It was argued that they were prevented from being promoted to senior positions and that certain government departments refused to hire or retain qualified Ahmadi. Ahmadi businessmen, even solicitors, were often ostracized by other members of their trade or profession and by the local community generally. (May 2014, 107)

Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Information on Ahmadi's access to housing in Rabwah could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response. For information on the situation of Ahmadi in Pakistan, see Response to Information Request PAK105369 of January 2016.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] Bajwa and Khan state that the methodology employed for the research of their paper involved a process in which "[t]he researcher participated in a small *mahalla* of *Dar-ul-Yemen* [*Darul Yuman*, one of Rabwah's neighbourhoods] while relying on a number of qualitative tools for data collection, including participant observation, interview guides, key-informant technique, field notes, as well as memos and pictures" (Bajwa and Khan Mar.-Apr. 2015, 1615). "During the study, the researcher participated in most of the rituals, ceremonies and rites of passage within the community" (ibid.). "Data was derived by conducting 15 in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of respondents living in Rabwah comprising of *Waaqfeen-eZindagi* (devotees), family members of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed, the authority persons heading the organization as well as the locals living within the community" (ibid. 1615-1616). "The findings are presented in [the] form of qualitative descriptions that echo a combination of observations made by the researcher and narratives of the respondents" (ibid., 1616).

[2] AHRC and IHRC indicate that they jointly produced and commissioned the fact-finding mission, but that the report was written by independent parties not associated with either AHRC or IHRC, who were not paid for their contribution (AHRC and IHRC 2015). The same source states that the "Ahmadiyya Muslim Community" met the expenses for the mission (ibid, 22). The mission was carried out between 8 and 13 December 2014, by six "independent inquirers diplomats, journalists, lawyers and non-governmental organisations[,] who, for "security, welfare and political reasons" were granted anonymity (ibid.). The mission included visits to Lahore, Islamabad and Rabwah, and included interviews with "various state actors, human rights activists, members of the media, civic society and lawyers" and "took evidence from individuals who claimed to have been victims of persecution" (ibid.)

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; BBC; ecoinet; EU – European Asylum Support Office; Factiva; Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme; Freedom House; Human Rights Watch; Institute for War and Peace Reporting; International Crisis Group; IRIN; *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*; Minority Rights Group; The Muslim Times; Norway – Landinfo; Punjab – Police; Radio France internationale; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; Reuters; Switzerland – State Secretariat for Migration; United Nations – Refworld, ReliefWeb; United States – Central Intelligence Agency, Department of State.

Attachment

Punjab. 15 December 1989. Police. "[FIR Against the Whole Population of Rabwah](#)." Page 96. [Accessed 16 Dec. 2016]

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