

Breach of Faith

Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh

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Glossary

A.L. Awami League: Opposition party led by Sheikh Hasina Wajed

BNP Bangladesh National Party: Ruling party led by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia

IOJ Islamic Okiye Jyote:
Junior partner in ruling coalition; Islamist party

K.N. Khatme Nabuwat:
International umbrella organization of Islamists dedicated to the “preservation of the finality of Mohammad’s prophethood.”

J.I. Jama’at-e-Islami: International Wahabi Islamist political movement and name of a political party in Bangladesh.

J.P. Jatiyo Party: Minor political party headed by General Ershad, former military ruler.

I. Summary

An unprecedented climate of fear now pervades Bangladesh's minority Ahmadiyya community, a heterodox religious group that considers itself part of the larger Muslim world. Ahmadis have been the target of deadly violence and organized and widespread intimidation. Extremist Muslim groups have organized mass political rallies calling for an official declaration that Ahmadis are not Muslims and for a ban on their publications and missionary activities. Ahmadiyya mosques have been attacked, individuals have been beaten up or killed, and others have been denied access to schools and sources of livelihood. While the police have generally provided protection to Ahmadis against mob violence, the current Bangladeshi government has aligned itself politically with groups and individuals inciting violence against Ahmadis.

Throughout 2004 and into 2005, the Khatme Nabuwat (K.N.), an umbrella organization of Islamist groups dedicated to the preservation of "the finality of the prophethood" of Mohammad, has threatened the Ahmadiyya community with attacks on their mosques and campaigned for Ahmadis to be declared non-Muslim. The K.N. enjoys links to the governing Bangladesh National Party (BNP) through the BNP's coalition partners, the Jama'at-e-Islami (J.I.) and the Islami Okye Jote (IOJ).

One of the worst attacks on Ahmadis took place on April 17, 2005 when a mob led by the K.N. attacked members of the Ahmadiyya community, injuring at least twenty-five people. The attack took place in Joytidrianagar, a remote village in the southwestern Satkhira district. Witnesses reported that thousands of K.N. members brandishing sticks, machetes, and darts started marching towards the Sundarban Bazar. The K.N. activists sought to place a signboard on the Ahmadi mosque in the area which stated: "This is a place of worship for Kadianis; no Muslim should mistake it for a mosque." As the K.N. activists reached the Ahmadiyya mosque at Sundarban Bazar, the Ahmadis, led by their chief missionary in Bangladesh, tried to prevent the incident from taking place. Incensed at the resistance, K.N. activists started throwing stones at them and injured dozens of people, some seriously, including six women. The police, instead of preventing the incident from occurring, sought to contain the situation by taking possession of the signboard and hanging it themselves on the Ahmadi mosque.

Immediately afterwards, K.N. activists went on a rampage, looting nearby Ahmadi homes and injuring many Ahmadis in the process, who were beaten with sticks and sustained serious injuries. During the attack and for three days afterwards, alleged K.N. activists looted at least ten Ahmadi houses at Sundarban Bazar in the village.

Similarly, on October 29, 2004, when a mob of at least three hundred linked to the K.N. launched an attack on an Ahmadi mosque in Brahmanbaria, seventy-five kilometers northeast of Dhaka. The axe-wielding mob pelted Ahmadi worshippers with stones as they congregated to offer Friday prayers. Subsequently, the mob broke down the doors of the mosque with axes and attacked the worshippers with the same weapons. Eleven Ahmadis were seriously injured in the attack. Underlining the government's hostility to Ahmadis, no prosecutions of these high profile attacks have taken place.

While Ahmadis, followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a 19th century religious leader who claimed to be a prophet and sought the renewal of Islam, have faced persecution and ostracism in many countries since the group's founding in 1889, it is only recently that the government of Bangladesh has taken a direct part in curbing the religious freedom of members of the Ahmadiyya community. The most tangible expression of governmental hostility towards Ahmadis came on January 8, 2004, when the Bangladeshi government banned all Ahmadiyya publications.

The ban on publications was enacted in response to an upsurge in anti-Ahmadi protests and violence in late 2003 incited by Islamist groups. These groups, including at least one of the partners in the government's ruling coalition, the Islamic Ojha Jote, demanded that the Bangladeshi government declare the Ahmadis to be non-Muslim. Such a declaration would have a profoundly detrimental effect on Ahmadis in Bangladesh, as it has in Pakistan, as also described in this report. Ahmadis would have reasonable fears that institutionalized discrimination and violence would become the norm. The ongoing legal and extra-legal persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan provides a chilling precedent.

Since the government ban on Ahmadiyya publications was introduced, anti-Ahmadi activities have continued and intensified across Bangladesh. These incidents have included massive anti-Ahmadi rallies, threats against members of the group, attacks on mosques, the refusal to allow Ahmadi children to go to school, and the confiscation of Ahmadiyya publications.

At worst, Bangladeshi officials have themselves supported discrimination against Ahmadis, or stood by idly while Ahmadi mosques were attacked. Most often, the official response has been based not on human rights principles (including the equality of all citizens and freedom of all to profess the religion of their choice), but on political calculations of risk and benefit, a sliding scale that, depending on the circumstances, has included everything from denunciations of anti-Ahmadi discrimination to adoptions of policies that are themselves discriminatory, to acquiescence in acts of violence.

On December 21, 2004, Bangladesh's High Court temporarily suspended the January 8 order banning Ahmadiyya publications in response to a legal challenge launched by human rights groups in the country. While the stay remained in effect at this writing, the ultimate disposition of the case remained unclear.

Ahmadis fear that the literature ban will be followed by a ban on the practice and expression of their religion, and other assaults on their identity. The gradual shift of Bangladesh away from its secular roots, including the increasing Islamization of Bangladeshi politics and society, gives some credence to these fears.

Given the alarmingly high levels of communal violence in Bangladesh directed against other minorities, including Hindus and indigenous peoples, further government concessions to extremist religious demands would set a particularly dangerous precedent. In the overheated, sectarian atmosphere of contemporary Bangladesh, with the ruling government more religiously intolerant than any government since the country's founding, Ahmadis fear that even a tiny spark could unleash a serious and perhaps uncontrollable wave of violence against members of their community.

Why are Ahmadis facing such persecution? The Ahmadiyya are a relatively small religious group that considers itself to be part of the larger Muslim community. However, for doctrinal reasons, particularly their heterodox beliefs (see background section below), many Muslims consider Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. Ahmadis are seen by many of their detractors in the Muslim world, and especially in South Asia, as a British creation of 19th century colonial India, dedicated to subverting one of tenets of Islam—the “finality of the prophethood of Mohammed.” They make easy targets in times of religious and political insecurity. For those pursuing populist political goals, such as Islamist and conservative parties in Bangladesh, raising the bogey of Ahmadi subversion and persecuting them, ostensibly in order to preserve the faith, provides a fast track to political power.

The current national government has taken an increasingly populist stance on religion, pandering to groups that want to change Bangladesh from an officially secular state to an Islamic republic. A four-party coalition led by the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) holds a slender majority of the popular vote over its bitter secular opponent, the Awami League.

Both junior coalition partners, the J.I. and the IOJ, have been linked to violent attacks connected to religious issues. In February 2001, two top leaders of the IOJ, Maulana Azizul Haq and Maulana Fazlul Haq Amini, were arrested in connection with the

lynching of a policeman in violence that followed a ruling by the Bangladesh High Court banning the use of fatwas (religious edicts). The IOJ leaders allegedly also threatened the two judges who banned the issuance of fatwas. In October 2003, a J.I. leader in Jessore, Maulana Aminur Rahman, led a mob attack in which local Ahmadiyyah leader Mohammed Shah Alam was killed.

The J.I. maintains that Ahmadis are non-Muslim, though it has been silent on the literature ban, apparently in order to present itself as a moderate religious force to the West (in Pakistan the J.I. is part of the Islamist Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) coalition that holds power in the country's strategically important North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan). Openly anti-Ahmadiyya actors have found a more vocal platform in the IOJ, which is using the Ahmadiyya issue as a vehicle through which to attract public attention and win more votes and power in the government.

The J.I.-IOJ alliance is essential to the BNP's continued hold on power. As a result, the J.I. has been given two key ministries in the Bangladeshi government, the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Industries. The Social Welfare Ministry governs nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Not surprisingly, the J.I. has been vocal against NGOs because they are seen to empower women and raise awareness of women's rights and human rights more generally. Further, NGOs are viewed as a powerful secular force in Bangladesh, as the international community has over the years funneled enormous sums of aid through NGOs to deliver key services and sidestep government corruption.

The BNP at times has sought to please its coalition partners J.I. and IOJ and some of its own members by implementing discriminatory policies—such as the ban on Ahmadiyya publications—and by turning a blind eye to acts of violence and intimidation against minorities such as Ahmadis, Hindus, Christians, and others. While the BNP claims it is not a communal party and that it is not leading or instigating attacks on minorities, it has failed to take any serious action against those who carry out attacks or incite violence. The government's capitulation to certain anti-Ahmadi demands, moreover, belies its assertions that if there are any religious fundamentalist groups in Bangladesh they have little power.

This report details acts of intimidation, harassment, and violence against Ahmadis since October 2003. The government ban on Ahmadiyya publications and the failure of officials to respond adequately to the attacks constitute violations of the fundamental rights of members of the Ahmadiyya community. Such acts and omissions violate their right to freedom of religion under the Bangladeshi Constitution, and their rights to freedom of religion and expression as well as their right to be free from religious

discrimination under international human rights law, notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bangladesh is party. The government further has an obligation under international law to investigate effectively abuses against Ahmadis and to prosecute those responsible. Victims of such abuses must be ensured an effective remedy.

The government of Bangladesh must act decisively to respect the rights and dignity of members of the Ahmadiyya Community. Human Rights Watch calls upon the government of Bangladesh to:

- Immediately rescind the ban on all Ahmadiyya publications.
- Investigate thoroughly and impartially attacks on members of the Ahmadiyya community, as well as other religious minorities, and prosecute the perpetrators and sponsors of such attacks.
- Ensure that the police register and investigate all cases of communal violence regardless of the religious background of the victim.
- Ensure that these investigations address the conduct of the local leadership and members of all political parties and party leaders who may have incited, took part in, or were complicit in the planning or execution of religion-motivated attacks.
- Allow unfettered access to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion in order that she may visit Bangladesh on terms consistent with her mandate with specific reference to the persecution of members of the Ahmadiyya community. Immediately provide the Rapporteur with specific dates when she may undertake the visit.
- Take appropriate measures to combat religious discrimination and intolerance in public schools and madrassas.

Note on methodology

This report is based on Human Rights Watch research in Bangladesh in August 2004 and interviews conducted and an earlier text written by HLS Advocates for Human Rights/Harvard Human Rights Program in March 2004. The HLS Advocates for Human Rights/Harvard Human Rights Program text has been reviewed and authenticated by Human Rights Watch, including through follow-up interviews in Bangladesh. This report covers the period from October 2003 to April 2005. Due to limitations described below, this report does not purport to provide a comprehensive list of cases of anti-Ahmadi violence that occurred during this period. Indeed, it could not be, given the routine intimidation and harassment that takes place at the village level, which goes unaddressed by the authorities, and which leads many victims to remain

silent for fear of retaliation. In addition, much of Bangladesh is inaccessible to outside researchers and Human Rights Watch was not able to visit all areas where incidents are believed to have taken place.

II. History of the Ahmadiyya Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (the official name of the community) is a contemporary messianic movement founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1839–1908), who was born in the small village of Qadian in Punjab, India.¹ The Ahmadiyya community is also referred to derogatorily by some as the “Qadiani” (or “Kadiyani”) community, a term derived from the birthplace of the founder of the movement. In 1889, Ahmad declared that he had received divine revelation authorizing him to accept the *baya'ah*, or allegiance of the faithful.² In 1891, he claimed to be the expected *mahdi* or messiah of the latter days, the “Awaited One” of the monotheist community of religions, and the messiah foretold by the Prophet Mohammed.³ Ahmad described his teachings, incorporating both Sufic and orthodox Islamic, Hindu, and Christian elements, as an attempt to revitalize Islam in the face of the British Raj, proselytizing Protestant Christianity, and resurgent Hinduism.⁴ Thus, the Ahmadiyya community believes that Ahmad conceived the community as a revivalist movement within Islam and not as a new religion.

Members of the Ahmadiyya community (“Ahmadis”) profess to be Muslims. They contend that Ahmad meant to revive the true spirit and message of Islam that the Prophet Mohammed introduced and preached.⁵ Virtually all mainstream Muslim sects believe that Ahmad proclaimed himself as a prophet, thereby rejecting a fundamental tenet of Islam: *Khatme Nabuwat* (literally, the belief in the “finality of prophethood”—that the Prophet Mohammed was the last of the line of prophets leading back through Jesus, Moses, and Abraham). Ahmadis respond that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a non-law-bearing prophet subordinate in status to Prophet Mohammed; he came to illuminate and reform Islam, as predicted by Prophet Mohammed. For Ahmad and his followers, the Arabic *Khatme Nabuwat* does not refer to the finality of prophethood in a literal

¹ “Ahmadiyya,” *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2003 [online], <http://www.bartleby.com/65/ah/Ahmadiyy.html> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

² *Ibid.*

³ “The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam: An Overview,” Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, 1995-2005 [online], <http://alislam.org/introduction> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

⁴ “Ahmadiyya,” *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 2003 [online], <http://www.bartleby.com/65/ah/Ahmadiyy.html> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

⁵ M. Nadeem Ahmad Siddiq, *Enforced Apostasy: Zaheerudin v. State and the Official Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan*, (14 Law and Inequality: 1995), p. 275-79.

sense—that is, to prophethood’s chronological cessation—but rather to its culmination and exemplification in the Prophet Mohammed. Ahmadis believe that “finality” in a chronological sense is a worldly concept, whereas “finality” in a metaphoric sense carries much more spiritual significance.

The exact size of the Ahmadiyya community worldwide is unclear, though there are concentrations of Ahmadis in India, Pakistan, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Gambia.⁶

Ahmadis have lived in what is present-day Bangladesh since the early 1900s.⁷ Roughly 100,000 Ahmadis live in Bangladesh today. Violence towards the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh has occurred for almost two decades. The recent upsurge in the persecution of the Ahmadis can be understood as part of a gradual trend in Bangladesh away from the country’s secular roots toward more blending of religion and politics. This Islamization of government can be explained partially by examining the history of Bangladesh.

In 1971, Bangladesh, then East Pakistan, fought a liberation war to secede from its union with Pakistan, in order to protect its own Bengali language and culture. After a brutal nine-month war, the newly independent Bangladeshis created a constitution founded upon four guiding principles: nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism.

Starting with Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman in 1972, however, the role of Islam slowly began to increase in Bangladesh’s civil society and state apparatus. In 1977, the government replaced Article 12 of the founding constitution, which provided that the principle of secularism should be realized by the elimination of communalism in all its forms, with the assertion that the Muslim faith would be one of the nation’s guiding principles. In 1988, Bangladesh moved a step further away from its secular heritage when Islam officially became the state religion through an amendment to the constitution, Article 2-A, which reads: “The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic.”

⁶ Figures for the total membership of the Ahmadiyya Community vary greatly between sources. While it is difficult to provide an exact figure of the Ahmadiyya population, estimates of around 20 million would be appropriate

⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Amadiyya Muslim Jama’at, Dhaka, August 23, 2004.

While these constitutional amendments have set the tone for Bangladeshi society, the reversal of the constitutional prohibition on religious parties allowed for the reemergence of the Jama'at-e-Islami and for the formation of extreme religious parties, such as the Islamic Okye Jyote (IOJ). The religious parties were able to return to power despite arguing that nationalism is un-Islamic and the secession from Pakistan was unwarranted.

Sporadic attacks and threats against Ahmadis became more systematic in the early 1990s as Bangladesh returned to parliamentary government. The attacks began in earnest during the BNP government (1991-96), continued through the period of Awami League rule (1996-2001), and acquired renewed vigor as the BNP returned to power in 2001, this time in coalition with the J.I. and OJI.

Between December 27-29, 1991, the Khatme Nabuwat (K.N.), an Islamist organization dedicated to safeguarding the sanctity of the finality of the Prophet Mohammed, held a conference to organize activities aimed at banning Ahmadi religious practice and identity in Bangladesh.⁸ As one Bangladeshi Ahmadi explained to Human Rights Watch, “the K.N. want the Ahmadis to leave Bangladesh. They have threatened that they would attack us if we do not surrender, if we continued to be Ahmadis.”⁹ On February 5, 1992, Mahfuzur Rahman, the president of the Khilafat (“Caliphate”) Student Movement – an Islamist student group—led a public protest in the Noakhali district demanding that the Ahmadi community be declared non-Muslim.¹⁰

The anti-Ahmadi conferences held by Khatme Nabuwat and the Khilafat Student Movement sparked fresh attacks on Ahmadis. On February 29, 1992, several hundred people under the leadership of the Imam Council, a group of Imams from the Helatala and Niral mosques in Khulna, attacked an Ahmadi mosque and mission house on the Nirala Housing Estate in the city.¹¹ The group attempted to set fire to the buildings, stole and destroyed Ahmadi books, including Ahmadi copies of the Qur'an, and inflicted property damage on a charitable medical dispensary nearby.¹² The police near Khulna arrested eight of the group's members, who had also planned to disrupt an Ahmadi

⁸ “Appeal to Government For Banning All Activities of Qadianis,” *Weekly Ittesal (Narayangan)*, January 3, 1992.

⁹ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Kamal Ahmed, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Khakdan, March 29, 2004.

¹⁰ “Demand for the Declaration of the Qadianis as non-Muslims,” *The Daily Inqilab*, February 5, 1992.

¹¹ “Attack on the Qadianis in Kulna,” *Daining Sangbad (National Daily)*, March 1, 1992.

¹² *Ibid.*

congregation under the direction of a local imam.¹³ The imam and members of the Jama'at-e-Islami Bangladesh condemned the arrests.¹⁴

On October 30, 1992, a procession of more than 1,200 people launched a massive attack on the main Bahshkibazar Ahmadiyya complex in Dhaka. After ransacking rooms, burning hundreds of books, including many copies of the Qur'an, and looting the building of all valuables, the attackers detonated some thirty-five crude bombs in the building and set it on fire.¹⁵ At least twenty Ahmadis were injured in the attacks and a total of twelve people were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious wounds. Police lobbed at least twenty-five tear gas canisters to drive the mob away from the burning complex.¹⁶ The Dhaka police held the student wing of Jama'at-e-Islami Bangladesh, Islami Chhatra Shibir, responsible for the attack.¹⁷ On November 27, 1992, a group of anti-Ahmadi protestors attacked and demolished an Ahmadi mosque under construction in Rajshani.¹⁸ The mob looted all construction materials, including sand and bricks.¹⁹ No police relief was provided for the Ahmadiyya community in Rajshani.²⁰

On December 24, 1993, K.N. Bangladesh held a conference in Dhaka to pressure the government officially to declare Ahmadis non-Muslims, to ban Ahmadi publications, and to remove Ahmadis from high-ranking government posts.²¹ Prior to the conference, Maulana Ubaidul Haq, spokesperson for the organization, informed media outlets of the forthcoming visit of several prominent Ulema (religious leaders) from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and India.²² He also indicated that Abdur Rahman Biswas, President of Bangladesh, would inaugurate the conference formally.²³ Professor Golam Azam and Maulana Matiur Rahman Nizami (the incumbent State Minister for Industries), the President and the Secretary General of J.I. in Bangladesh at the time, formally expressed their support for the conference, stating their hope that the government would declare

¹³ "Six Held For Resorting To Violence in City," *The Daily Tribune (Khulna)*, March 1, 1992.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ "Ahmadiyya Masjid Complex Set Ablaze," *The Daily Star*, October 30, 1992.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc., *Bangladesh: State of Religious Freedom*, Statement for the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, April 30, 2004.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ "Khatme Nabuwat Grand Conference: December 24," *The Bangladesh Observer*, December 20, 1993.

²² "Ahmadiyyas Worried Over Friday's Congregation," *The Daily Star*, December 18, 1993.

²³ "Khatme Nabuwat Grand Conference: December 24," *The Bangladesh Observer*, December 20, 1993.

Ahmadis non-Muslims in order to show respect for the sentiments of the Muslim populations of Bangladesh.²⁴

The conference was held in two sessions with imams from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India presiding over each session as scheduled, and representatives from J.I., the BNP, participating in the sessions.²⁵ Leaders at the conference announced that January 1, 1994 would be “demand day” in Bangladesh whereby all conference participants would press the government to declare Ahmadis non-Muslim.²⁶

New anti-Ahmadi organizations emerged on the scene in 1994-95. On March 30, 1994, *The Bangladesh Times* reported that the Bangladesh Khilafat Andolen and Islami Shasantantra Andolen, two extremist Islamist organizations, had joined J.I. in supporting a four-hour sit-in demonstration organized by K.N. to take place in Dhaka. The demonstrators, many of them carrying placards and sticks, raised slogans against the Ahmadis, calling them “kafirs” (disbelievers).

In March 1995, a group of demonstrators attacked a central Ahmadi mosque in Dhaka. This time, secular activists and members of civil society strongly condemned the attacks.²⁷

While on tour in Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia, on February 28, 1997, the Chief Imam of the Masjid-e-Nabawi (the Prophet’s Mosque) in Medina, Saudi Arabia, Allama Dr. Shaikh Ali Bin Abdur Rahman Al Huzaiifi, condemned Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and his followers as “traitors...misleading others by their self-made and false Quranic commentary.”²⁸ On May 22, 1997, the K.N. once again held a large-scale public meeting, this one at Children’s Park in Dhaka.²⁹ Participants reiterated their demand to declare Ahmadis non-Muslims.³⁰ The meeting ended with a collective resolution making fresh demands on the government, including a ban on all uses of Qur’anic passages and Islamic terminology on Ahmadi mosques, a ban on the burial of Ahmadis in Muslim graveyards, and, for the first time, a ban on and confiscation of all Ahmadi publications,

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Khatme Nabuwat Is To Observe 1st Jan. as ‘Demand Day,’” *Daily Shongbad (Dhaka)*, December 25, 1992.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Inc., *Bangladesh: State of Religious Freedom*, Statement for the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Apr. 30, 2004, p. 7.

²⁸ “Muslims Should Lead an Islamic Lifestyle,” *Daily Inqilab (Dhaka)*, February 28, 1997.

²⁹ “Public Meeting in Children’s Park: Call to Declare Qadianis as Non-Muslims,” *Daily Gonodabi, Patukhali (Bengali)*, May 22, 1997.

³⁰ Ibid.

including Ahmadi copies of the Qur'an.³¹ On July 7, 1997, members of Khatme Nabuwat marched to the Parliament House in Dhaka to submit a formal memorandum of these demands.³²

Violence against Ahmadis in major cities outside of Dhaka began to appear in the late 1990s. On July 23, 1998, members of Touhid Jonota, another anti-Ahmadi group, attacked and destroyed a new Ahmadi office building inaugurated by the local government in Zhinaigati. Three police officers were injured in the attacks.³³ On January 7, 1999, the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, members of the Jama'at-e-Islami attacked an Ahmadi mosque in the Koldiar-Majdiar village of the Khushtia District.³⁴ Over fifty Ahmadis were injured in the raid, eleven of them critically.³⁵ Nearly a month after the Khushtia mosque attack, over a hundred Ahmadi families were forced to leave the surrounding villages after they were not allowed to pray in their mosque.³⁶ The families did not return to their village in Kushtia for six months. The U.S. State Department reported that an Ahmadiyya mosque in Kushtia was forcibly occupied by Sunni extremists in 1999 and remained under police control for about three years, preventing Ahmadis from praying in it. In August 2002, the Ahmadiyya community regained control of the mosque.³⁷

On October 8, 1999, a bomb killed six Ahmadis and injured severely several others who were attending Friday prayers at their mosque in Khulna.³⁸ In November 1999, Sunni Muslims ransacked an Ahmadiyya mosque near Natore, in western Bangladesh.³⁹ In subsequent clashes between Ahmadis and Sunni, thirty-five people were injured. Ahmadis regained control of their mosque and filed a criminal case against thirty people

³¹ Ibid.

³² "A Memorandum to the Speaker to Declare the Qadianis as 'Non-Muslim'," *Daily Inqilab*, July 5, 1997; "Procession Towards Parliament House," *The Daily Sangram (Dhaka)*, July 5, 1997.

³³ "Kadiani office attacked," *Jamalpur Barta*, July 24, 1998.

³⁴ "50 hurt in attack on Kadiani mosque in Kushtia," *Prothom Alo*, January 8, 1999.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ "Kadianis flee Kushtia after mosque capture," *Prothom Alo*, February 9, 1999.

³⁷ "Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh 2003" Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2003 [online], <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24468.htm> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

³⁸ "Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh 2000," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, September 5, 2000 [online], http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/irf/irf_rpt/irf_banglade.html (retrieved May 25, 2005).

³⁹ "Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh 2000," " *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State.*

allegedly responsible for the conflict.⁴⁰ The case, however, was not pursued by local authorities.⁴¹

On April 15, 2000, villagers at Kodda and Basudev, spurred by the twin attacks in Kushtia and Kulna, threatened to attack all Ahmadi homes in the area. Over fifty Ahmadi homes were looted and vandalized.⁴² On April 25, 2000, anti-Ahmadi activists burned down several Ahmadi homes, destroyed crops of Ahmadi farmers, and threatened the lives of the remaining Ahmadi in the village.⁴³ They also took over the Ahmadi mosque in the area, burning furniture and books, demolishing the structure, and flooding it with water as a symbolic gesture to “clean out the Ahmadi” from the village.⁴⁴

On June 24, 2001, members of K.N. attacked an Ahmadi mosque under construction in Jamalpur.⁴⁵ The mob destroyed the mosque’s walls and foundation as well as the house of an Ahmadi next door.⁴⁶ It then proceeded to attack the person who had sold the property upon which the Ahmadiyya mosque was being constructed.⁴⁷ Police arrested three members of the mob.⁴⁸ On October 15, 2002, a brawl broke out outside the Upazila Parishod⁴⁹ courthouse in Gajipur where a case was being filed against members of the Ahmadiyya community. Twelve Ahmadi were arrested and questioned in the incident for allegedly distorting verses of the Qur’an and certain Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed) in the translation of their texts.⁵⁰ Shortly after the arrest of the Ahmadi, a mob destroyed an Ahmadi house in the area.⁵¹

On January 2, 2003, the K.N., led by its president, Maulana Ubaidul Haq, held another international conference in Dhaka. Prominent speakers from Egypt, India, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom introduced new fatwas calling for the excommunication of the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Kadianis flee to Akhaura after looting,” *Bhorer Kagoj*, April 16, 2000.

⁴³ “Kadiani homes burnt, mosque destroyed in Kodda” *Prothom Alo*, April, 26, 2000.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ “Kadiani mosque attacked in Jamalpur,” *Ajker Kagoj*, June 25, 2001.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ An *upazila* is a sub-district.

⁵⁰ “Kadianis Arrested,” *Doinic Ikilab*, October 15, 2002.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Ahmadis in Bangladesh.⁵² Leaders of K.N. vowed to introduce a bill in Parliament to declare Ahmadis non-Muslims. One Libyan leader at the event, Dr. Abdur Razzak, accused Ahmadis of being part of a British colonial conspiracy.⁵³

Shortly after the conference, Bangladesh Khilafat Andolen organized a protest procession led by Maulana Jafrullah Khan, who demanded that Parliament declare Ahmadis to be non-Muslim or risk future litigation and disturbance.⁵⁴ On February 1, 2003, the newspaper *Doilike Inqilab* reported that, at a gathering in Komina, Member of Parliament Maulana Delawar H. Saidee declared Ahmadis non-Muslims and called for a complete halt on all Ahmadi activities, describing the Ahmadiyya community as “satanic.”⁵⁵

The recent ban on Ahmadiyya publications also has a lineage: since at least the 1970s, Bangladeshi governments have frequently banned publications deemed offensive to Muslims. Such determinations have usually been made to appease extremist groups. For instance, in 1985, the government issued an order banning a book published by the Ahmadiyya community on the basis that it contained passages highly offensive to Muslims, who believe that the Prophet Mohammed is the last prophet of Allah. The order was unsuccessfully challenged before the High Court in 1993.⁵⁶ The Bangladesh government behaved similarly in the case of Salman Rushdie’s book, *Satanic Verses*, banning it in 1989. It has also consistently banned books by the Bangladeshi feminist novelist Tasleema Nasreen. Also, in recent years, the government has banned several publications, including *Radar* and *Satellite*, which contained reports on human rights violations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.⁵⁷

III. Persecution of the Ahmadiyya: The Pakistani Model⁵⁸

The Ahmadiyya community has long been persecuted in Pakistan. What has happened in Pakistan, of which Bangladesh was a part until 1971, is instructive in understanding the nature and potential objectives of those attacking the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh. The situation of Ahmadis in Bangladesh suggests a similar pattern of

⁵² “International Khatme Nabuwat conference held,” *Doinic Ikilab*, January 3, 2003.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan demands Kadianis be declared infidels,” *Doinic Ikilab*, January 11, 2003.

⁵⁵ “Kadianis ‘satanic non- Muslims’,” *Doinic Ikilab*, February 1, 2003.

⁵⁶ *Bangladesh Anjuman-E-Ahmadiyya v. Bangladesh*, 45 D.L.R. 185.

⁵⁷ Reported in Asian Human Rights Commission Newsletter, Volume 108, Number 1.

⁵⁸ Amjad Mahmood Khan, *Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan: An Analysis Under International Law and International Relations*, (Boston: Harvard Human Rights Journal, 2003).

systematic persecution as in Pakistan and a similar trend toward the excommunication of all Ahmadis. Moreover, there exist clear and specific links between anti-Ahmadi organizations in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Since 1953, when the first post-independence anti-Ahmadiyya riots broke out, the relatively small Ahmadi community in Pakistan has endured persecution.⁵⁹ Between 1953 and 1973, this persecution was sporadic but since that time it has been sustained. In 1974, a new wave of anti-Ahmadi disturbances spread across Pakistan. In response, Pakistan's parliament introduced amendments to the constitution which defined the term "Muslim" in the Pakistani context and listed groups that were, legally speaking, non-Muslim. Put into effect on September 6, 1974, the amendment explicitly deprived Ahmadis of their identity as Muslims.⁶⁰

In 1984, Pakistan's penal code was amended yet again. As a result of these amendments, five ordinances that explicitly targeted religious minorities acquired legal status: a law against blasphemy; a law punishing the defiling of the Qur'an; a prohibition against insulting the wives, family, or companions of the Prophet of Islam; and two laws specifically restricting the activities of Ahmadis. On April 26, 1984, General Ziaul Haq issued these last two laws as part of Martial Law Ordinance XX, which amended Pakistan's Penal Code, Sections 298-B and 298-C.

Ordinance XX undercut the activities of religious minorities generally, but struck at Ahmadis in particular by prohibiting them from "indirectly or directly posing as a Muslim." Ahmadis thus could no longer profess their faith, either orally or in writing. Pakistani police destroyed Ahmadi translations of and commentaries on the Qur'an and banned Ahmadi publications, the use of any Islamic terminology on Ahmadi wedding invitations, the offering of Ahmadi funeral prayers, and the displaying of the *Kalima* (the statement that "there is no god but Allah, Mohammed is Allah's prophet," the principal creed of Muslims) on Ahmadi gravestones. In addition, Ordinance XX prohibited Ahmadis from declaring their faith publicly, propagating their faith, building mosques, or

⁵⁹ In the 1998 Census, 286,212 individuals declared themselves to be Ahmadis. [*Census of Pakistan 1998*, (Pakistan Report, December 2001), p. 207, table 8.] The 2004 population of Pakistan is estimated to be 148 million in the Economic Survey of Pakistan 2003-04. Using the same proportion as in the 1998 census, the Ahmadi projection for 2004 would be 319,680. Due to fears of persecution or the fact that they do not consider Census categorizations of "Muslim" and "Qadiani" to be mutually exclusive, it would be reasonable to assume that many Ahmadis opted for the "Muslim" category. Assuming only one in four declared themselves as Ahmadis to the Census takers, the 2004 size of the community in Pakistan could be projected to be 1,278,720 (approximately 1.28 million or 0.86 per cent of the population).

⁶⁰ Articles 260(3)(a) and (b) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were added. In addition to the constraints the amendment placed on Ahmadis, it also called for the nationalization of Christian schools, so that the influence of private Christian groups was radically reduced.

making the call for Muslim prayer. In short, virtually any public act of worship or devotion by an Ahmadi could be treated as a criminal offense.⁶¹

With the passage of the Criminal Law Act of 1986, parliament added Section 295-C to the Pakistan Penal Code. The “Blasphemy Law,” as it came to be known, made the death penalty mandatory for blasphemy.⁶² General Ziaul Haq and the Pakistani government institutionalized the persecution of Ahmadis as well as other minorities in Pakistan with Section 295-C. The Ahmadi belief in the prophethood of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is considered blasphemous insofar as it “defiled the name of Prophet Muhammad.”⁶³ Therefore, theoretically, Ahmadis could be sentenced to death for simply professing their faith.

While Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims, their persecution is wholly legalized, even encouraged, by the Pakistani government. Ahmadi mosques have been burned, their graves desecrated, and their very existence criminalized. Since 2000, 325 Ahmadis have been formally charged in criminal cases (including blasphemy) for professing their religion.⁶⁴ Between 1999 and 2003, the government charged scores of Ahmadis with blasphemy; several have been convicted and face life imprisonment or death sentences pending appeal. The offenses charged included wearing an Islamic slogan on a shirt, planning to build an Ahmadi mosque in Lahore, and distributing Ahmadi literature in a public square.⁶⁵

As a result, thousands of Ahmadis have fled Pakistan to seek asylum abroad.

⁶¹ M. Nadeem Ahmad Siddiq, *Enforced Apostasy: Zaheerudin v. State and the Official Persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan*, (14 Law and Inequality: 1995), p. 275-89. In Mujibur Rahman v. Government of Pakistan, the Federal Shariat Court was asked to exercise its jurisdiction under Article 203D of the constitution to rule whether or not Ordinance XX was contrary to the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunnah. The court upheld the validity of Ordinance XX and ruled that parliament had acted within its authority to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims. Ordinance XX, the court maintained, merely prohibited Ahmadis from “calling themselves what they [were] not,” namely Muslims. See Mujibur Rehman v Gov't of Pakistan, 1985 S.D. Vol. II (Fed. Shariat Court) 382, 473 (Pak.).

⁶² Pakistan Penal Code Section 295-C (part of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1986, which amended the punishments enumerated in Sections 298-B and 298-C to include death). “Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) shall be punished with death, or imprisonment for life, and shall be also liable to fine.”

⁶³ Pakistan Penal Code Section 295-C (part of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1986, which amended the punishments enumerated in Sections 298-B and 298-C to include death).

⁶⁴ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: Bangladesh 2003” December 18, 2003 [online].
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35514.htm> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

IV. Human Rights Abuses Against the Ahmadiyya

Discrimination and violence against the Ahmadiyya in late 2003 and early 2004

This chapter presents some illustrative cases of human rights abuses against Ahmadiyya in late 2003 that directly preceded the government's decision to ban the Ahmadiyya publications. As noted above, this is not intended to be a complete chronology, nor do we provide an exhaustive list of incidents. Limitations on access to certain parts of Bangladesh and the unwillingness of some Ahmadis to speak for fear of retribution have limited what can be presented here. Even so, the cases that follow demonstrate how dangerous the climate has become for Ahmadis in Bangladesh and illustrate how inadequate the government response has been.

The Bangladesh government is obligated under international human rights law to protect the rights of members of the Ahmadiyya community and other religious minorities. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bangladesh is a party, ensures the rights to freedom of religion and expression.⁶⁶ Bangladesh is obligated to afford all persons the equal protection of the law and to provide to effective protection against discrimination based on religion.⁶⁷ The members of religious minorities should not be denied the right to practice their own religion.⁶⁸

Killing of an imam, assault, and damage to a mosque in Jessore

On October 31, 2003 at about 2:15 p.m., a large armed group attacked members of the Ahmadiyya community at Raghunathpurbag under Jhikargachha sub-district in Jessore. Mohammed Shah Alam, president and local imam of the Ahmadiyya community in Jhikargachha, died from injuries received outside the Ahmadi mosque, which sustained considerable damage in the attack.

Mohammad Aatur Rehman, an Ahmadi and Raghunathpurbag local, witnessed the attack that led to the death of Shah Alam:

⁶⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) p. 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), enforced March 23, 1976. Articles 18 & 19. Bangladesh became a party to the ICCPR in 2000.

⁶⁷ Ibid, article 26.

⁶⁸ Ibid, article 27.

Imam Shah Alam became an Ahmadi in 1988 and brought me to the faith in 1993. On the morning of October 31, Maulana Aminur Rahman, a J.I. leader, brought us the newspaper and said “Qadianis [Ahmadis] in Uttar Bhabanipur are being taught a lesson. Now, nothing will happen to us if we beat and torture Qadianis.” In the afternoon, after Friday prayers, Shah Alam, I and Abul Bashar were sitting together outside our mosque. It was the holy month of Ramadan and we were all fasting. A big crowd emerged from the neighboring [Sunni] mosque. The mob was led by Maulana Aminur Rahman and the most belligerent (who subsequently attacked us) were Aminur Rahman, Hobi, Salim, Shahid, and Tuzam. They first spoke to me directly. Hobi said to me that if I didn’t leave the Ahmadi mosque and start praying in the Sunni mosque, my bones would be broken. I stood silently and said nothing in response. Hobi moved towards me and punched me in the face. Then he told Bashr the same thing and hit him. Then he turned towards Imam Shah Alam and said that we would all have to leave the Ahmadiyya Jama’at or they would isolate us and kill us. Shah Alam replied that we were content in our house and they should be in theirs. Upon hearing this they started beating us all indiscriminately.⁶⁹

Abul Bashr described what happened next:

They started hitting us with bamboo sticks. They beat us and beat us. We tried to escape but it was not possible. Shah Alam was being beaten particularly harshly by Aminur Rahman and Shahid. They continued hitting us with the bamboo sticks, particularly on the head. I could see that Shah Alam was getting badly injured. They beat his brain out of his head. I could see it. We asked them to stop as we could see Shah Alam was dying and had to be taken to hospital. But they did not. The entire incident lasted about thirty minutes. That is all I remember clearly. My memory has suffered as a result of what happened.⁷⁰

Shah Alam died the same day. While Rahman fled in the aftermath of the killing, his followers continued to threaten the Qadianis and Shah Alam’s two sons went into hiding.⁷¹ Shah Alam’s widow filed a police report immediately after the Jessore attack

⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Ataur Rehman, Dhaka, August 25, 2004.

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch interview with Abul Bashr, Dhaka, August 25, 2004.

⁷¹ “Kadiani Imam Killed Under the Leadership of Jama’ati Imam,” *Bhorer Kagoi*, November 17, 2003.

and identified sixteen people responsible for the murder of her husband, including Maulana Aminur Rahman.⁷²

One villager, Abdul Qadir, a Sunni Muslim, told Human Rights Watch that the incident occurred after Aminur Rahman, a local J.I. leader, called upon his followers to attack the Ahmadis, saying that Ahmadis were non-Muslim and to stand against them was a form of jihad.

I don't believe their [Ahmadis'] religion but I discussed religion with them often. A few days before the incident, I heard that Aminur Rahman was instigating people against the Qadianis and planning a big attack on them. On the day of the attack, I was in the mosque for Friday prayers and Aminur Rahman said in his sermon that if the believers beat the Qadianis, there will be no punishment. He then organized the mob. Shah Alam was killed only because he was an Ahmadi and it happened in front of me. There are so many religions in the world and no religion asks you to kill and bring people back forcibly to the faith. These people [the perpetrators] should be punished.⁷³

Justice K.M. Subhan, a former judge of the Bangladeshi Supreme Court and human rights activist, who visited the area immediately after the murder, told Human Rights Watch:

Shah Alam and his family had been harassed prior to the attack. Members of K.N. and J.I. had obstructed his path to work, destroyed water wells near his house to cut off the water supply to his family, and had harassed his children en route to school. Shah Alam's widow and daughter viewed the attack on Shah Alam from only a few meters away through the window of their home. Alam's daughter cried and ran towards her father as he was beaten to death. The idea was to kill Shah Alam brutally so family members will remember what it is to not be a member of the faith.⁷⁴

⁷² HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, March 26, 2004.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Qadir, Dhaka, August 26, 2004.

⁷⁴ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Justice K.M. Subhan, Retired Supreme Court Justice, Dhaka, March 28, 2004.

To date, Bangladeshi officials have not apprehended the alleged killer of Shah Alam, despite eyewitness accounts readily available from Shah Alam's wife, other witnesses and the press.⁷⁵ The Bangladeshi government has not investigated the role in the attack of the J.I. leader despite evidence of his involvement.⁷⁶

Discrimination, denial of education, and ill-treatment in Kushtia District

On October 21, 2003, in the village of Uttar Bhabanipur in the southwestern Kushtia District, a group of local Islamic leaders declared seventeen Ahmadi families "excommunicated" and held them virtual prisoner in their own village for twenty-five days. During this period, these families were forbidden from buying or selling goods, from sending their children to school or from harvesting crops. A local Ahmadi, Mohammad Shabbir Ali, told Human Rights Watch:

I was about to leave for Dhaka in mid-October when I first heard rumors that an attack was about to take place against Ahmadis in Uttar Bhabanipur and Ahmadis would be tortured. This attack was being planned by local extremist mullahs. I knew that Jalal, a local BNP leader, and Abdur Rajjak and Moulana Mojammel of the Jamaat-e-Islami were involved in the planning. I was very afraid when I heard this.⁷⁷

Around this time, a meeting was held by local BNP and J.I. leaders in Dharampur Bazar to discuss further actions to be taken against the Ahmadis.⁷⁸ Afchar Ali, president of the Dharampur Union BNP, Moulana Abdur Rajjak, a local imam, and Moulana Mojammel presided over the meeting.⁷⁹ At the meeting, a resolution was passed, demanding a total boycott of the Ahmadis. The boycott meant that from that day forward, Ahmadis would be able to travel only on their own lands and government roads, their children could not go to school, and other Muslims would not trade with them.⁸⁰

According to Shabbir Ali, local anti-Ahmadi leaders destroyed his crops in an effort to economically marginalize the Ahmadis:

⁷⁵ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Justice K.M. Subhan, Retired Supreme Court Justice, Dhaka, March 28, 2004..

⁷⁶ "Kadiani Imam Killed Under the Leadership of Jama'ati Imam," *Bhorer Kagoi*.

⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with Shabbir Ali, Dhaka, August 25, 2004.

⁷⁸ "Ten Kadiani Families Under House Arrest For a Week in Bheramera," *Andoloner Bazar*, October 28, 2003.

⁷⁹ "No Settlement Between Qadiyanis and Sunnis in Bheramera," *The Banglabazar Patrika*, October 30, 2003.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

My only family business was the *paan* [betel leaf] fields we owned. These people destroyed my fields. They claim others did it but we know it was them. When we discovered this, I returned and filed a complaint with the police. But the police told me that ‘We cannot disturb the entire village just for the sake of your fields. Why don’t you move somewhere else?’ I had no option but to bear the loss.⁸¹

The anti-Ahmadiyya boycott and other discriminatory acts in Uttar Bhabanipur can be traced to familial resentment against relatives converting to another faith. The BNP, J.I., and other orthodox Islamist elements have fully exploited family tensions, not just in Uttar Bhabanipur but in other parts of Bangladesh, to fuel anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment. Mohammad Mominul Islam, known as Raqeeb, a twenty-seven-year-old resident of Uttar Bhabanipur who converted to the Ahmadiyya faith, described to Human Rights Watch the beatings and torture he underwent at the hands of the village (including from members of his family) in the run-up to the boycott:

Troubles first broke out between the Ahmadis and the rest in 1999. As I had good relations with the Ahmadis, I supplied them with food during this period. I was not an Ahmadi then. In October 2003, as the boycott of the Ahmadis got underway, I again decided to supply them with food and clothing. I was seen delivering food to the Ahmadis by other villagers. The next morning, I woke up because I heard a commotion outside my house. I saw that a large mob was coming towards my house. My father, Maulvi Abdul Rajjak, and Jalal, a local BNP leader, were leading the mob. They asked for me to come out of the house. I saw that they were all carrying bamboo sticks and were threatening to kill me or beat me severely. I ran through the crowd. A large number of people followed me and surrounded me. They tied me up and dragged me back to the larger crowd. Someone then ordered that I be untied. Someone asked me if I was a Qadiani or a Christian? I replied that in the name of the Prophet (Muhammad) and God, I was an Ahmadi.⁸²

Upon hearing Raqeeb’s confession, the mob tied and beat him up again. Several hours later, he was set free by the villagers. He collected his belongings that had been thrown out on the street along with his wife and daughter, and moved his family and their personal effects to his in-laws’ house. As he felt unsafe in the village, Raqeeb left the

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Shabbir Ali, Dhaka, August 25, 2004.

⁸² Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Mominul Islam alias Raqeeb, Dhaka, August 24, 2004.

same day for Bheramara, a village about five kilometers away from his. When he arrived, he discovered that a missionary from the Ahmadiyya community was present in the village. Raqeeb took the formal oath of allegiance (*Ba'ait*) to the Ahmadiyya faith that day. Fifteen days later, he returned to his village.

As soon as I returned to the village, Mr. Jalal [the BNP leader] accused me of damaging the tube-wells that belonged to Mr. Wahab and Mr. Shabbir (two other Ahmadis). This was a total lie, of course. As I was talking to my cousin, I saw a large crowd wielding knives, sticks, and rods heading towards me. The crowd included my brother and father. They accused me of being a Christian and a Qadiani and asked me to repent immediately or I would be killed on the spot. I refused and told them it was the holy month of Ramadan, I was fasting and I could not lie. They tied a rope around my neck and took me to Mr. Jalal's house. They tied me to a tree outside his house.

When it was time to break the fast, I was not allowed any food or water. My mother tried to give me some water but my father snatched it away from her and beat her. Then they decided to drag me to the police station but stopped at a local Madrassa instead. The Maulana [religious teacher] there beat me severely as well with a stick and his hands, telling me to leave the Qadianis. I did not obey. So they dragged me back to Jalal's house where I was held captive. A few hours later the police came to the house but Jalal, my father, and others told the police I was not there. Hearing this I made a run for it. The policeman saw me and rescued me. They did this because my cousin Masoom had reported that I was being beaten and held forcibly.⁸³

Even the end of the boycott did not spell an end to Raqeeb's persecution at the hands of villagers. Trouble erupted again for him when he returned from an Ahmadi missionary training session on July 19, 2004. This time, the police, far from rescuing Raqeeb, joined in beating him.

Early in the morning, after the Fajr (dawn) prayers, a mob from the village surrounded my house, dragged me out, and tied me to a tree. Then they started beating me with sticks and rods. Then they carried me to the local market and beat me more, this time even more badly. Just

⁸³ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Mominul Islam alias Raqeeb, Dhaka, August 24, 2004.

when I thought I was going to die, local policemen came to the spot and took me to another house and then the policemen asked me to leave the Ahmadiyya faith. When I refused, the policemen started beating me. Then they took me to the police station and put me in the lock-up where they handcuffed me and beat me again. The next morning, at about 11 o'clock, the policemen took me to the district headquarters of the police and beat me again. Maulana Abdul Rajjak and others came to check what was going on. The Officer in-Charge informed them within earshot of me that they should not worry, the police would "deal" with me "properly." The police said that it was clever of the village people to register a robbery case against me and that they would use that as an excuse to beat a Qadiani.⁸⁴

Raqeeb remained in custody until he was granted bail on July 26, 2004, after legal proceedings were initiated by other members of the Ahmadiyya community to secure his release. A robbery case is pending against him and he has taken refuge in Dhaka and has not returned home.

Bangladeshi newspapers that covered the October 2003 events in Kushtia also reported that three Ahmadis from Dhaka had come to the area for three days to provide food secretly and to attempt to resolve the conflict, but were forced to leave after being confronted by a group of angry Sunni Muslims.⁸⁵ According to press reports, when one of the Ahmadis from Dhaka, Shamsudain Ahmed Masoom, attempted to explain to the boycotting Sunnis why Ahmadis are Muslims, the Sunnis threatened to kill him.⁸⁶

Ahmadi children in the district were also prevented from attending school. Some school teachers were complicit in enforcing the boycott. The boycott of Ahmadi schoolchildren centered around the Dharampur Intermediate Middle School. Human Rights Watch interviewed not only the victims of the boycott but also non-Ahmadi students of the school. One of the latter, who preferred not to be named, told Human Rights Watch:

I am one of the students here. The school and the school committee decided not to allow Ahmadis into the school and to strictly boycott them. So, our instructions from our teachers and parents were clear: if

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Mohammad Mominul Islam alias Raqeeb, Dhaka, August 24, 2004.

⁸⁵ "No Settlement Between Qadiyanis and Sunnis in Bheramera," *The Banglabazar Patrika*; "Ten Kadiani Families Under House Arrest For a Week in Bheramera," *Andoloner Bazar*.

⁸⁶ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, March 26, 2004.

the Ahmadis go to the school, we will not. We are now going to school with them but we do not want to.⁸⁷

Shabbir Ali is the father of three daughters who attended the Daharampur School. He was told by the leaders of the boycott that if his daughters continued to attend the school, he and they would be killed:

When I returned to the police with this complaint, they told me: “We cannot run the school just for your three girls. It would be better if you establish a separate school for them.”⁸⁸

Shireen, a thirteen-year old Ahmadi girl described her experience of the boycott to Human Rights Watch:

On October 25, I went to school as usual. When I got there I was informed by another student that students had been told that Qadianis should be boycotted and not allowed to come to school. Then the local village leader Jalal told us: “If you come to this school, nobody other than Qadianis will be allowed to attend here. So it would be better if you just left the school. So why don’t you take a few days off.”⁸⁹

Shireen returned to school thirteen days later on November 7, 2003. She described what happened:

When I returned to school, Jalal was very harsh and told me to go back home immediately. Another teacher, Mr. Jaffar said: “If Qadiani girls come to school, we will not teach them anything or even talk to them.” Mr. Razaul Islam, the Bengali Language teacher said the same thing. He also said: “If you persist in coming to school, we will tell the boys to tease you and do other terrible things to you.” After this, we did not go to school and one Ahmadi girl moved away from the village in fear.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with non-Ahmadi school-goer. Dhaka, August 25, 2004.

⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch interview with Shabbir Ali, Dhaka, August 25, 2004.

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Shireen, Dhaka, August 26, 2004.

⁹⁰ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at, Dhaka, March 26, 2004.

Bilquis Akhtar, another thirteen-year-old female student at the same school described her experience:

The Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Abdul Rajjak, came to my house and told my family and me that if I dared go to school, my parents would have to deal with the consequences. He told us that I would suffer in unspeakable ways if I went to school again.⁹¹

Other students who faced the boycott reported similar experiences.

On October 27, members of the Ahmadiyya community filed a petition with the police, alleging deprivation of their fundamental human rights. One Ahmadi also filed a separate petition, alleging that he had been taken forcibly from his home and made to attend a Sunni mosque in an attempt to make him relinquish his Ahmadi faith. The Bangladeshi press widely reported that other Ahmadis were forced to sign papers stating that they had voluntarily returned to the Islamic Sunni faith.⁹²

On October 28, 2003, the District Police Superintendent, Abdul Salam, visited the area and stated that he hoped the economic and social boycott would be resolved over time since both parties belonged to the Muslim faith.⁹³ Ahmadi Missionary Abdul Awwal told Human Rights Watch, however, that it took the murder of Ahmadi Imam Shah Alam a few days later in Jessore to induce the government to act decisively. At that point, the Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdury intervened and ordered the police to use their influence to end the boycott, which they did successfully.⁹⁴

Anti-Ahmadiyya violence, hate speech and agitation: November 2003 to January 2004

In another case, during the month of November 2003, a Sunni Muslim group connected to the K.N. launched a virulent campaign to pressure the government to declare Ahmadis non-Muslim, protesting in the streets and attempting to forcibly enter and seize an Ahmadi mosque in central Dhaka. During the evening of November 20, 2003, a

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Bilquis Akhtar, Dhaka, August 26, 2004.

⁹² "Ten Kadiani Families Under House Arrest For a Week in Bheramera," *Andoloner Bazar*.

⁹³ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, March 26, 2004; "No Settlement Between Qadiyanis and Sunnis in Bheramera," *The Banglabazar Patrika*.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, August. 26, 2004.

group of three hundred to five hundred men, led by Mahmudul Hasan Mamatazi, president of Khatme Nabuwat Committee, tried to storm an Ahmadiyya mosque in Nakhalpara in Tejgaon Industrial area, Dhaka.⁹⁵ Chanting anti-Ahmadiyya slogans, the group besieged the mosque around 9:30 p.m. after night prayer and threw stones at the mosque.⁹⁶ Alerted by local residents, law enforcement authorities dispatched twenty-four police officers who managed to disperse the crowd.⁹⁷ Rafiq Ahmad, leader of the local Ahmadiyya community at the Nakhalpara mosque, who witnessed the scene from his neighboring house, told Human Rights Watch that the police denied Mamatazi and his group a request to pray inside the mosque and that police continued to guard the mosque after the incident.⁹⁸

On the following day, November 21, consistent with an announcement made the evening before, hundreds of Islamists gathered in front of Rahim Metal Mosque in Tejgaon to press the government to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslims.⁹⁹ Shortly after noon, again at the exhortation of Mamatazi, around 500 men armed with iron rods, bamboo sticks, and stones tried to force their way into the Ahmadiyya mosque in Nakhalpara to evict its occupants from the area.¹⁰⁰ They were intercepted by a battalion of 200 police officers who had been stationed at the mosque in the wake of the prior evening's attack.¹⁰¹ Violent clashes reportedly broke out when militants tried to break through the police barricade. When policemen retaliated with teargas, militants went on a rampage, damaging several vehicles and torching different establishments in the area including a police outpost.¹⁰² They also dragged two police motorcycles to the middle of

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Rafiq Ahmad, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, April 2, 2004. His account is confirmed by one local newspaper. "Crowd Tries to Attack Ahmadiyya Mosque in City," *The Daily Star*, November 21, 2003.

⁹⁶ "Crowd Tries to Attack Ahmadiyya Mosque in City," *The Daily Star*.

⁹⁷ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Rafiq Ahmad, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, April 2, 2004.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ "Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali," *New Age*, May 12, 2004; "Hundreds Clash with Cops over Ahmadiyya Mosque Row," *New Age*, November 22, 2003; "Tejgaon Industrial Area Turns into Battlefield," *The Bangladesh Observer*, November 22, 2003; "Clash Centering Qadiani Mosque: 50 Injured," *The Independent*, November 22, 2003; "Nakhalpara Turns into a Battlefield," *The News Today*, November 22, 2003; "Controversy over Kadianis; 150 Hurt as Police, Muslims Clash," *The New Nation*, November 22, 2003; "50 Injured in Clash with Kadianis," *The Financial Express*, November 22, 2003.

¹⁰¹ "Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali," *New Age*.

¹⁰² "Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali," *New Age*; "Hundreds Clash with Cops over Ahmadiyya Mosque Row," *New Age*; "Tejgaon Industrial Area Turns into Battlefield," *The Bangladesh Observer*; "Clash Centering Qadiani Mosque: 50 Injured," *The Independent*; "Nakhalpara Turns into a Battlefield," *The News Today*; "Controversy over Kadianis; 150 Hurt as Police, Muslims Clash," *The New Nation*; "50 Injured in Clash with Kadianis," *The Financial Express*.

the road and set them ablaze.¹⁰³ The group reportedly dispersed for the Friday prayer but launched a second attack shortly thereafter under the command of Mamatazi.¹⁰⁴ The protestors, this time estimated to be between three thousand and five thousand,¹⁰⁵ again engaged in violent clashes with the police, who used teargas and rubber bullets to push them back.¹⁰⁶ Two cases were filed on the same day against Mamatazi, Namzul Haq (president of Bangladesh Imam Sanghati Parisad), Mojibur Rahman, Enayetullah Abbasi, Ehsan Idris, Nasir Uddin, Kala Mia and ten thousand to twelve thousand unknown others.¹⁰⁷ Tejgaon Police Station sources informed the press that they had not received any directive to arrest anyone.¹⁰⁸ However, on November 22, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ashraful Huda informed the media and NGOs that an investigation would be made and that the videotape of the attacks was being scanned to take action against the protestors.¹⁰⁹

Over the next ten days, although things remained calm in Dhaka, anti-Ahmadi incidents occurred around the country. *The Daily Star* reported on several of these incidents. On November 28, an Islamist group attacked an Ahmadi man at Dharmapur in Madarganj upazila in Rangpur district. On December 1, a group of Islamic militants damaged an Ahmadiyya mosque in the Balardiya village of Sharishabari Pourasabha of Jamalpur district and called for an anti-Ahmadi demonstration the following Saturday. Militants also raided the house of Abu Sama Sarkar and threatened Ahmadis with arson if they did not leave the area, causing many Ahmadis to flee their homes. On December 6, 2003, about one thousand anti-Ahmadi demonstrators under the banner of K.N. went to the sub-district administration's office at Sarishabari in Jamalpur and issued an ultimatum giving the government one week to declare Ahmadis non-Muslim. And on December 5, 2003, Islamists forced an Ahmadi man at Garobazar in Ghatail, Tangail district to sign a statement renouncing his religion.¹¹⁰

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali," *New Age*; "Hundreds Clash with Cops over Ahmadiyya Mosque Row," *New Age*.

¹⁰⁵ "Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali," *New Age*; "50 Injured in Clash with Kadianis," *The Financial Express*.

¹⁰⁶ "Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali," *New Age*; "Hundreds Clash with Cops over Ahmadiyya Mosque Row," *New Age*; "Tejgaon Industrial Area Turns into Battlefield," *The Bangladesh Observer*; "Clash Centering Qadiani Mosque: 50 Injured," *The Independent*; "Nakhalpara Turns into a Battlefield," *The News Today*; "Controversy over Kadianis; 150 Hurt as Police, Muslims Clash," *The New Nation*.

¹⁰⁷ "IGP Pledges Action against Attackers," *The Daily Star*, November 23, 2003.

¹⁰⁸ "No Move to Arrest Attackers, Instigators," *The Daily Star*, November 23, 2003.

¹⁰⁹ "IGP Pledges Action against Attackers," *The Daily Star*.

¹¹⁰ "Yet Another Warning in Sarishabari," *The Daily Star*, December 7, 2003.

From November 2003 until early January 2004, Islamist groups held a series of demonstrations in various cities aimed at maximizing pressure on the government to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslim. On December 5, 2003, under the banner of K.N. Andolon Samannay Committee (KNASC)—another name used by organizations under the K.N. umbrella—and again led by Mamatazi, thirty thousand militants held a demonstration in east Nakhhalpara, Tejgaon (Dhaka) and again issued an ultimatum giving the government one-week to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslims.¹¹¹ The demonstrators, shouted hate slogans against Ahmadis and threatened them with arson.¹¹² Mamatazi reportedly said that “the anti-Ahmadiyya group would not be responsible for the fate of Ahmadis” if the government failed to take action.¹¹³ In the presence of Mohiuddin Khan, a leader of the Islami Oikya Jote party, a member of the governing coalition, Mamatazi also reportedly announced a month-long anti-Ahmadi program.¹¹⁴

On December 19, 2003, 1,500 people took part in a demonstration organized jointly by K.N. and another Islamist group, Aamra Dhakabasi, on Mymensingh road in Dhaka.¹¹⁵ Those leading the demonstration threatened to paralyze the country if the government failed to evict the Ahmadis from Nakhhalpara mosque by January 3, 2004.¹¹⁶ Addressing the demonstration at Tongi Muktiyoddha Chattar, Mamatazi threatened to evict the Ahmadis from the area on January 9 upon failure of the government to take action.¹¹⁷

On December 26, 2003, Mamatazi and other Islamist leaders told 1,500 demonstrators on Shaheed Faruq Road in Dhaka that the government should declare the Ahmadis non-Muslims. Mamatazi is said to have threatened to paralyze the country if the government failed to oust the Ahmadis from the Nakhhalpara mosque by January 9, 2004.¹¹⁸ Joint Secretary General of K.N., Nazmul Haq, also reportedly threatened to drive the Ahmadis out of their mosque on the same date.¹¹⁹

On January 2, 2004, three thousand members of the K.N. took part in a demonstration on Mirpur-1 in Dhaka to gather support for the January 9 demonstration to drive

¹¹¹ “Anti-Ahmadiyya Group Gives One-Week Deadline to Government,” *The Daily Star*, December 6, 2003; “Qadiani-Rally Muslims’ Ultimatum to Remove Ahmadiyya Mosque,” *The Independent*.

¹¹² “Anti-Ahmadiyya Group Gives One-Week Deadline to Government,” *The Daily Star*.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ “Anti-Ahmadiyyas’ Ultimatum to Government,” *The Daily Star*, December 20, 2003.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ “Bigots demand Bill Declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims,” *The Daily Star*, December 27, 2003.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Ahmadis out of Nakhhalpara mosque.¹²⁰ The demonstrators took an oath to launch a “holy war” against the Ahmadis if the government did not declare them non-Muslims by January 9.¹²¹ The demonstration was the last of a series of demonstrations carried out since November 21 to get support for the January 9 ultimatum.

The government ban on Ahmadi publications

On January 8, 2004, the government of Bangladesh authorized a ban on all publications of the Ahmadiyya community, one day prior to the deadline given by Islamist groups, led by the IOJ and the KNA, to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslim. The ban, enforcement of which subsequently was suspended by the courts pending further deliberations, violates Bangladesh’s obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to uphold the rights to freedom of religion and of expression.¹²² The Home Ministry’s press release stated that:

The government has banned the sale, publication, distribution and retention of all books and booklets on Islam published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at Bangladesh, which includes the Bengali or any other translation (with explanation) of the Qur’an Majid. The ban has been imposed in view of objectionable materials in such (Ahmadiyya) publications which hurt or may hurt the sentiments of the majority Muslim population of Bangladesh.¹²³

A day before the ban was announced, key government officials including State Minister for Religious Affairs, Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, and State Minister for Home Affairs, Lutfozzaman Babar met with K.N. leader Mamtazi as well as several other KNA leaders.¹²⁴ Ahmadiyya community leaders were not invited. At the meeting, the government agreed to institute a ban on Ahmadiyya publications. It also agreed that the two cases filed against the anti-Ahmadiyya group charged with assaulting policemen guarding the Nakhhalpara mosque on December 5, 2003, would be dropped.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ “Anti-Ahmadiyya Group Issues Fresh Threat,” *The Daily Star*, January 3, 2004.

¹²¹ “Anti-Ahmadiyya Group Issues Fresh Threat,” *The Daily Star*, January 3, 2004.

¹²² International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) p. 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), enforced March 23, 1976. Articles 18 & 19.

¹²³ Sharier Khan, “New Wave of Intolerance: Bangladesh Cracks Down on Muslim Sect,” *OneWorld South Asia*, January 2004 [online], <http://www.thepersecution.org/world/bangladesh/2004/own040109sa.html> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

¹²⁴ “Ahmadiyya Books Banned,” *Daily Star*, January 9, 2004.

¹²⁵ Khan, “New Wave of Intolerance: Bangladesh Cracks Down on Muslim Sect,” *OneWorld South Asia*.

By March 2004, twenty Ahmadi publications to be banned had been listed in an official circular. This indicated that the ban had been sent to the government's official press for publication in the official gazette, which is required for the ban to have legal effect.¹²⁶

The decision to ban the books came as a surprise given a statement made by State Minister Shahjahan on December 8, 2003, in which he had asserted that "only God had the right to declare someone a non-Muslim." Minister Shahjahan explained that the government's sudden shift in position should be understood as a compromise necessary to prevent further campaigns and violence against the Ahmadiyya community.¹²⁷ He said he took a chance and announced the ban "to save the minority groups from killing and to prevent the destruction of mosques."¹²⁸ He further explained that if the government had used the police and applied sanctions, the situation would only have deteriorated.¹²⁹

Mahfuz Anam, the editor-in-chief of *The Daily Star*, told Human Rights Watch:

The government has allowed this issue to go too far. At first, there were just a few hundred people in the streets. But then it rose to eight or nine thousand. Why did they allow that?¹³⁰

While Minister Shahjahan told our researchers that he passed the ban to prevent further violence, he himself recognized that the ban was "not a good thing and a hindrance to human rights."¹³¹ Notwithstanding this, he argued that the ban would lead to a decrease in violence. He further noted that he anticipates the eventual repeal of the ban.¹³² Minister Shahjahan's views were not shared by many of those Human Rights Watch interviewed. Journalist Mahfuz Anam explained: "The government will wait again until it becomes an unmanageable issue. There will be one concession after another."¹³³

¹²⁶ Human Rights Watch interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury, Central Missionary, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, August, 26, 2004.

¹²⁷ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, State Minister, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Dhaka, March 25, 2004.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Mahfuz Anam, Editor in Chief, *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, March 27, 2004.

¹³¹ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, State Minister, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Dhaka, March 25, 2004.

¹³² HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Mosharef Hossain Shahjahan, State Minister, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Dhaka, March 25, 2004.

¹³³ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Mahfuz Anam, Editor in Chief, *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, March 27, 2004.

Minister Shahjahan himself indicated that further concessions would depend upon whether there is further violence, stating in a BBC interview, “I am not sure that the demand will come to pass. We are observing the situation. If the situation is peaceful, the demand will not be necessary.”¹³⁴ The implication appeared to be that if the situation did not remain peaceful, the government might capitulate again to further demands of the Islamist groups.

The ban began to be “implemented” shortly after it was announced, often at the instigation of K.N. mobs. On April 6, in Shalkiri village (Ponchogorh district), the leader of the local chapter of K.N., Maulana Abdul Karim, arrived at Ahmadiyya houses in a police jeep and conducted searches for publications.¹³⁵ Under the Penal Code, searches of homes may only be conducted pursuant to a magistrate’s warrant and require the presence of a police officer at the level of sub-inspector or higher. Central Ahmadi Missionary Abdul Awwal informed Human Rights Watch that the local Ahmadi asked the police if they had a warrant; they did not.¹³⁶ The police officer, who was only of Assistant sub-inspector rank, told them he would come back.¹³⁷ The Ahmadi missionary posted in Ponchogorh met with Deputy Commissioner Chowdhury on March 24, who told him that Ahmadi still have all their citizen rights, but that the police would go house to house to search for the publications.¹³⁸

On April 16, 2004, approximately two thousand K.N. demonstrators gathered again in front of the Nakhalpara Ahmadiyya mosque in Dhaka.¹³⁹ Although the police had been guarding the mosque for several months, they permitted some of the demonstrators into the mosque to seize Ahmadiyya publications that were listed in the ban. Indeed, instead of protecting the Ahmadi, the police entered the mosque along with protestors and seized the Qur’an and the Bukhari Sharif, a Hadith collection.¹⁴⁰ The police then reportedly handed the books over to the protesting Sunni clergy.

On December 21, 2004, while not in session, Bangladesh's High Court temporarily suspended the order of January 8, 2004 banning the Ahmadiyya publications in response

¹³⁴ “Deputy Minister of Religious Affairs Told BBC That Publication Has Been Banned to Protect the Ahmadi,” *Prothom Alo*, January 10, 2004 [Human Rights Watch translation].

¹³⁵ “Fiddling While Bangladesh Burns,” *The Daily Star*, April 27, 2004.

¹³⁶ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdhury, Dhaka, March 26, 2004.

¹³⁷ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdhury, Dhaka, March 26, 2004.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ “Police Allow Zealots to Storm Ahmadiyya Mosque,” *The Daily Star*, April 17, 2004.

¹⁴⁰ “Protest Against Ahmadiyyas in City,” *The New Age*, April 17, 2004.

to a legal challenge launched by human rights groups in the country. The court issued an interim stay order suspending the ban pending the reopening of the High Court. It also directed that the ban not be notified in the official Bangladesh gazette. In January 2005, the High Court extended the stay order and it remained in effect at this writing.

The government's response

Bangladesh is obligated under international human rights law to ensure that the rights of all individuals within its territory are respected, regardless of religion. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, this includes enacting legislation and other measures, including preventive action, to give effect to these rights. Furthermore, Bangladesh must ensure that any person whose rights have been violated has an effective remedy and that these remedies be enforced by the competent authorities.¹⁴¹ This includes an obligation to investigate the alleged violations and to ensure that similar violations do not occur in the future.¹⁴²

On December 8, 2003, as already noted, State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan properly rejected the demand that the government declare Ahmadis non-Muslims, saying in a press interview:

Now they [anti-Ahmadiyya groups] are demanding it...once the demand is met, they will want to capture a mosque, then a church....¹⁴³

Minister Shahjahan also declared himself ready to talk with the agitating anti-Ahmadi groups.¹⁴⁴

However, a month later, the minister himself announced the ban on Ahmadiyya publications. That same day, a government spokesperson told *The Daily Star* on condition of anonymity that the government would even consider declaring Ahmadis non-Muslims:

¹⁴¹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), G.A. res. 2200A (XXI), 21 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 16) p. 52, U.N. Doc. A/6316 (1966), enforced March 23, 1976. Article 2.

¹⁴² Manfred Nowak, *U.N. Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: CCPR Commentary* (Arlington: Engel, 1993), p. 65.

¹⁴³ "Minister Snubs Demand for Declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim," *The Daily Star*, December 9, 2003.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The government has not yet taken any decision on the issue of declaring the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims. We discussed the demand but need to explore all aspects to reach a decision in this regard.¹⁴⁵

The minister's turnaround likely is explained by political considerations.

At a rally at the Bangabandhu Stadium in Dhaka on April 2, 2004, K.N. leader Mamatazi thanked the government on behalf of his organization for what he termed its correct decision to proscribe the translation of the Qur'an and other religious books of the Ahmadis. He then announced that he and his followers would take "all steps necessary" in order to push the government to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslim.¹⁴⁶

On April 6, 2004, the Khatme Nabuwat Committee Bangladesh again threatened to launch a broader movement if the government did not declare Ahmadis non-Muslim by June.¹⁴⁷ Lauding the January 8 ban on Ahmadi publications, Muhammad Shamsul Haq, a leader of the group, stated:

The government decision proves the rationale of our movement.
Declare them non-Muslim or pay for it in the next general election.¹⁴⁸

Through all of this, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has noticeably failed to speak out in support of the right of Ahmadis to freely profess and propagate religion. While police protection has been provided to the Ahmadis and has in some cases prevented bloodshed, neither the police nor the government have taken serious or sufficient steps to stem threats and intimidation. Many Ahmadis live in fear, and the prime minister has done nothing to address this.

¹⁴⁵ "Ahmadiyya books banned," *The Daily Star*, January 9, 2004.

¹⁴⁶ Rally in Dhaka, April 2, 2004.

¹⁴⁷ "Islamist Group's New Deadline for Declaring Ahmadiyyas non-Muslim," *The Daily Star*, April 7, 2004.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Discrimination and violence against the Ahmadiyya since March 2004

Incitement to anti-Ahmadiyya violence in Barguna District¹⁴⁹

In March 2004, a little over two months after the ban on Ahmadiyya publications, over one thousand Ahmadis in the villages of Khakdah, Krishnagar, and Kukua, in Barguna's Amtoli sub-district, felt the repercussions of anti-Ahmadi agitation themselves.¹⁵⁰ On March 14 and 15, the K.N. organized a *mahafil*, or religious gathering, at the Kukuahat High School. Leaflets were distributed encouraging people to attend the gathering at the high school on those days to listen to sermons on religious teachings.¹⁵¹

Joyнал Abedin, a villager from Kukua who attended the religious gathering, told Human Rights Watch:

Approximately three hundred to five hundred people, from Gajipur, Aamtoli, Kukua, Aulipur, Potoakhali, and other villages appeared to hear various mullahs speak about Islam. At the time seven or eight mullahs spoke, including a few mullahs from Dhaka. Local mullahs, including Omar Faruq, Mezbuh Rahman, and Maulana Mulim Ali also spoke to the crowd. While many of the mullahs spoke about Islam, there were also anti-Ahmadiyya speeches.¹⁵²

Lutfor Rahman, a primary school teacher at Kukuahat Government Primary School in Kukuahat since 1992 and member of the Ahmadiyya community, listened to the rallies on both nights from the side of the street.

At one point during the rally, Omar Faruq pointed directly at me and said, "Don't send your children to his school." Omar Faruq urged

¹⁴⁹ The events described in this section come from HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interviews conducted on March 29 and 30, 2004 with eight Ahmadi villagers, two members of the press, and three members of the police.

¹⁵⁰ Bangladeshi administration is broken down into *upalizas* (or *thanas*) which are the equivalent of police stations. In every *thana*, or *upaliza*, there is an O.C., who is a police commissioner, and a UNO, or union nirbahi officer, who is the administrative officer. The three villages affected in this incident are Kukua, Khakdan, and Krishnanagar, which all fall under the Aamtoli thana. The Deputy Commissioner is the head of both the O.C. and the UNO.

¹⁵¹ Harvard Human Rights Program/HLS Advocates for Human Rights interview with Ali Ahmed Master, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Krishnanagar, March 30, 2004.

¹⁵² HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Joyнал Abedin, March 30, 2004.

attending parents that I should be stopped on my way to school and efforts should be made to compel me not to continue with my [Ahmadiyya] community. He also said that I should not be allowed in the school until I leave the Ahmadiyya community.¹⁵³

Kamal Ahmed, an Ahmadi in Khakdan, also attended the rally in order to find out what was being planned, despite the fact that some people who recognized him as an Ahmadi told him not to go. Fearing for his safety, he stood in a shop beside the high school field, along with two other men his age.

I heard Omar Faruq ask the crowd gathered to raise their hands if they were against the Ahmadis. Approximately 250 raised their hands. On the night of March 15, I heard Mullah Omar Faruq announce that on Friday, March 19, people would gather at the same high school field and then go to the Kadiyani mosque. Faruq said the people would capture the mosque, pray there, and then lock the mosque up. After a while, fearing that the shop itself was no longer safe, I left.¹⁵⁴

The following day, Ahmed went to the police and filed a petition asking for the police to protect the Ahmadiyya community.¹⁵⁵ Ali Ahmed Master, leader of the local Ahmadiyya community in Krishnanagar, told Human Rights Watch that he also filed a petition with the police, noting that the Ahmadiyya mosques were to be attacked and that the Ahmadis would be driven away.¹⁵⁶ According to Kamal Ahmed, a police officer assured him that the Ahmadis in the area would be safe.¹⁵⁷ For the next two days, the Ahmadis waited in fear as opposing factions drove rickshaws in the vicinity, using a microphone, announcing their plans to gather on the morning of March 19 to break the Ahmadiyya mosque for all to hear.¹⁵⁸ One witness, Ali Ahmed Master, recognized those in the

¹⁵³ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Lutfur Rahman, March 30, 2004

¹⁵⁴ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Kamal Ahmed, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Khakdan, March 29, 2004.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Ali Ahmed Master, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Krishnanagar, March 29, 2004.

¹⁵⁷ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Kamal Ahmed, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Khakdan, March 29, 2004.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

rickshaw threatening Ahmadiyya mosques as students of the madrassas in Aamtoli district.¹⁵⁹

On March 19, a crowd gathered at the high school. As Ali Ahmed Master recounted the events to Human Rights Watch, this time local police acted effectively to prevent violence:

Around five hundred to six hundred people had gathered on the morning of March 19 around 10 a.m. Maulana Moslem Ali presided over the group, seeking to incite those present to violence. Meanwhile, the Ahmadiyyas of Khakdan had gathered in their mosque in fear. At the same time, due to the supplications of the Ahmadiyya community, fifty to sixty policemen also arrived as the crowd moved in the direction of the Qadiyani mosque. The police stopped the mob and forced them to disperse. Five or six police officers came to the Khakdan mosque to ensure its safety and that of the Ahmadiyyas while six police officers were sent to the mosque in Krishnanagar.¹⁶⁰

Incitement to anti-Ahmadiyya violence and destruction of religious property in Dhaka

On March 26, 2004, a local group of thirty to fifty people in the Taltola area of Dhaka entered onto the land of Arman Ali and his wife, Anhar Ali, shouting anti-Ahmadi slogans and attacked their religious property. Five or six Ahmadi families live in the immediate vicinity of the Ali house.¹⁶¹ Arman Ali is considered the unofficial imam for the Ahmadi families in the area.¹⁶² At the time Human Rights Watch conducted its research there, he was building a mosque on the land behind his home and the Ahmadiyyas were housing their religious books in a tin shed on the corner of his property.

Arman Ali and his wife, Anhar Parveen Begum, told Human Rights Watch that on March 26, a Friday, a crowd led by local mullahs gathered in the field outside Ali's house and a few entered onto his property. According to neighbors who were present, the

¹⁵⁹ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Ali Ahmed Master, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Krishnanagar, March 29, 2004.

¹⁶⁰ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Ali Ahmed Master, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Krishnanagar, March 30, 2004.

¹⁶¹ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Rokeya Begum, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, March 31, 2004.

¹⁶² HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Nuzmul Kabir, Amadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Dhaka, March 31, 2004.

crowd chanted slogans such as “You belong to the Bush community,” “You are the pimps of the United States,” “You are not Muslim,” “If you want to live in our community, you have to do prayers the way we do.”¹⁶³ They also shouted, “Qadianis won’t be able to build the mosque” and “We will burn your mosque.”¹⁶⁴ Reportedly, one person in the crowd picked up a stick from the wood being used to build the mosque and tapped on the house, yelling, “Why are you scared? Come outside the house.”¹⁶⁵ At the time, however, no one was at home since most of the family was away from the city and Anhar Ali had gone to another mosque in Dhaka. People in the crowd then took some of the Ahmadi religious books from the tin shed and threw them onto the roof of the Alis’ house.

Four days after this incident, Anwar Ali received veiled threats from two local Muslim leaders concerning the construction of the mosque. The two leaders informed Ali that they were under pressure from “external quarters” to tell him not to build the mosque. They also indicated that if the mosque were built, despite the fact that they were neighbors and friends, they would not be able to do anything if something were to happen to the mosque. While Ali informed Ahmadi religious leaders of the incident, he did not report it to the police.

In an another incident, members of the K.N. from Barisal district in south-central Bangladesh, declared on May 6, 2004 that the some twenty-seven thousand Ahmadi in the Barisal and Patuakhali districts would be forcibly evicted by May 12, and those in Chittagong by May 28.¹⁶⁶ At a press conference, K.N. leader Mamtazi detailed the eviction program.¹⁶⁷ The Islamic Constitution Movement and the IKNM jointly organized a “mass contact” mobilization drive in Patuakhali district from May 9 to May 11.¹⁶⁸ The organizations also circulated leaflets urging the government to declare the Ahmadiyyas “non-Muslim” and ban their activities.¹⁶⁹ On May 12, police in the Patuakhali district were able to block the eviction plans of the IKNM.¹⁷⁰ Police

¹⁶³ HLS Advocates for Human Rights/ Harvard Human Rights Program interview with Arman Ali and Anhar Parveen Begum, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at, Dhaka, March 31, 2004.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ “Panic Grips Ahmadiyyas In Barisal, Patuakhali,” *The Daily Star*, May 11, 2004; “Ahmadiyyas Urge Safety, Security,” *New Age*, May 10, 2004.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ “Panic Grips Ahmadiyyas In Barisal, Patuakhali,” *The Daily Star*; “Ahmadiyyas Urge Safety, Security,” *New Age*.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ “Anti-Ahmadiyya Plan Foiled,” *The Daily Star*, May 13, 2004; “Bid to Capture Ahmadiyya Mosque Foiled in Patuakhali,” *New Age*, May 12, 2004.

nonetheless seized copies of the Qur'an and books of Hadith from the Ahmadiyya mosque in Patuakhali, and the local commissioner posted a signboard asking people not to mistake the structure for a mosque.¹⁷¹

On August 27, 2004, the Dhaka police stopped an attempt by supporters of the K.N. to take over the Ahmadiyya headquarters in Bakshibazar, Dhaka.¹⁷²

On October 29, 2004, a mob of at least three hundred members of the K.N. launched an attack on an Ahmadi mosque in Brahmanbaria, seventy-five kilometers northeast of Dhaka. The axe-wielding mob pelted Ahmadi worshippers with stones as they congregated to offer Friday prayers. Subsequently, the mob broke the doors of the mosque down with axes and attacked the worshippers with the same weapons. At least forty-five minutes elapsed before the police intervened to restore order. Eleven members of the Ahmadiyya sect were seriously injured in the attack.¹⁷³

The Bogra incident

Over time, the police appear to have become increasingly tolerant of the threatening and inciting behavior of K.N. activists. A compelling example was in evidence on March 11, 2005, when anti-Ahmadiyya protestors, backed by police, hung a signboard reading, "A place of worship of the Qadianis in Bogra Town; no Muslim should be deceived into considering it a mosque," on an Ahmadiyya mosque at Seuzgari in the northern district of Bogra.

The March 11 incident began when around ten thousand supporters of the K.N. Movement gathered in the town after Friday prayers and held a meeting followed by a rally that continued until 4:00 p.m. The protestors, armed with rods, marched towards the Ahmadiyya mosque. When the police intercepted the procession at Seuzgari, the K.N. leaders demanded that the police search the mosque and hand over Ahmadiyya publications to them. They also asked the police to replace the existing signboard, reading "Ahmadiyya mosque," with the one brought by them. The police acquiesced and took five Nabuwat leaders to the mosque. Ignoring protests by members of the Ahmadiyya community, led by their chief missionary, Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdhury, Additional Superintendent of Police Zakir Hossain ordered his men to replace the

¹⁷¹ "Anti-Ahmadiyya Agitation: Minister Admits Government Failute, Victims Sniff Jamaat Link," *Matamat*, May 30, 2004 [online], <http://www.matamat.com/fullstory.php?gd=17&cd=2004-05-30> (Retrieved May 25, 2005).

¹⁷² "Ahmadiyya Complex capture foiled," *The Daily Star*, August 28, 2004.

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Abdul Awwal Chaudry, November 5, 2004.

Ahmadiyya signboard with the Nabuwat one at 6:00 p.m. that evening.¹⁷⁴ Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has failed to condemn these events. One reason may be that members of her coalition partner, the IOJ, openly participated in the demonstration.

In contrast, the Prime Minister has been quick to warn foreign countries and donor agencies not to interfere in the country's internal affairs. Three days after the Bogra incident, in a speech to parliament on March 14, 2005, she said she would not entertain any dictates from donors and the international community and would run the country according to the laws of the land. "I would like to remind foreigners that Bangladesh has its own constitution and laws."¹⁷⁵ As the Bogra case and others described in this report show, however, those laws are not being applied to protect the rights of all Bangladeshi citizens.

A fact-finding committee led by Justice (retired) K.M. Sobhan was in Bogra on the day of the incident (in response to threats being openly made by Islamist leaders, the committee had arrived in Bogra the previous day). At a press conference following the incident, Justice Sobhan condemned the police behavior and termed it a violation of the country's constitution.¹⁷⁶

Satkhira attack

One of the worst attacks on Ahmadis took place on April 17, 2005, when a mob led by the K.N. attacked members of the Ahmadiyya community, injuring at least twenty-five people. The attack took place in Joytidrianagar, a remote village in the southwestern Satkhira district.¹⁷⁷

Witnesses reported that thousands of K.N. members brandishing sticks, machetes, and darts started marching towards the Sundarban Bazar. The K.N. activists sought to place a signboard on the Ahmadi mosque in the area which stated: "This is a place of worship for Kadianis, no Muslim should mistake it for a mosque."

¹⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Abdul Awwal Chowdhury, March 24, 2004.

¹⁷⁵ Waliur Rehman, "Bangladesh in Foreigners Warning," BBC News Online, March 15, 2005 [online], http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4351765.stm (retrieved May 25, 2005).

¹⁷⁶ "Cops help Bogra bigots pull down mosque signboard," *The Daily Star*, March 12, 2005 [online], <http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/03/12/d5031201033.htm>

¹⁷⁷ "50 hurt as bigots attack Ahmadiyyas in Satkhira," *The Daily Star*, April 18, 2005 [online], <http://www.thedailystar.net/2005/04/18/d5041801022.htm> (retrieved May 25, 2005).

As the K.N. activists reached the Ahmadiyya mosque at Sundarban Bazar, Abdul Awwal Khan Chowdury tried to prevent the incident from taking place. Incensed at the resistance, the K.N. followers started throwing stones at them and injured dozens of people, some seriously. The police, instead of preventing the incident from occurring, sought to contain the situation by taking possession of the sign-board and hanging it themselves on the Ahmadi mosque. Awwal Chowdury told Human Rights Watch:

Thousands of K.N. members armed with sticks and machetes started marching towards the Sundarban Bazar at about 1:00 p.m. K.N. Deputy Leader Mufti Nur Hossain Nurani and central leader Mohammed Muntasir Ahmed led the procession. As it reached near the Ahmadiyya mosque at Sundarban Bazar in Jotindryanagar, sixty-five kilometers off the Satkhira district headquarters, we tried to keep the bigots from hanging the signboard by trying to prevent them moving forward. The K.N. followers started throwing stones at us.¹⁷⁸

At one stage, the police stationed in the area fired blanks in the air. Ahmadiyya community members moved backwards and the K.N. members stepped forward to hang the signboard. At the request of police, the K.N. leaders handed the signboard to them, which the police then hung in the presence of the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Sohrab Hossain, superintendent of police in Satkhira, Abdur Rahim, and Magistrate Mina Masuduzzaman.

Immediately afterwards, K.N. activists went on a rampage, looting nearby Ahmadi homes and injuring many Ahmadis in the process, including women, who were beaten with sticks and sustained serious injuries. During the attack and for three days afterwards, alleged K.N. activists looted at least ten Ahmadi houses at Sundarban Bazar in the village.

About twenty K.N. activists armed with sticks and bricks attacked the house of Abdul Majeed Sardar, leader of the Sundarban Ahmadiyya Jamaat, who has a house in the 1.3 acre complex containing the mosque. The complex is surrounded by Ahmadi houses and an Ahmadi-founded school.

Six women from the house and surrounding areas sustained head injuries and broken bones in the attack. They include Salina Islam, twenty-five, a mother of two; Rahima

¹⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview with Abdul Awwal Chowdhury, May 26, 2005.

Begum, thirty-six; Firdausi Begum, thirty-two; Farida Begum, thirty two; and Mrs. Naseer Sardar, fifty-five. The injured were moved, under police guard, to Shyamnagar health center for treatment and two were sent to Dhaka for further treatment in light of the seriousness of the head injuries sustained. The following day, members of the Ahmadiyya community lodged a case with the police at Shaymnagar police station. The police have not taken any action to date. Rahima Begum informed Human Rights Watch:

I was in the house when five men wielding sticks forcibly entered and started destroying things. When I raised a hue and cry and tried to resist, they stated beating me with sticks. I fell to the ground and there was blood gushing out of my head, which seemed to have been split open. They were busy looting and also attacking other women who intervened.¹⁷⁹

Cash, ornaments and other valuables were looted from the houses of G.M. Sabbir, G.M. Mobarak Ahmed, S.M. Wahid, Abdul Mazid Sardar, S.M. Matiar Rahman, G.M. Abu Daud, G.M. Rois Ahmed and others.¹⁸⁰

V. Conclusion

Bangladeshi law states that “every citizen has the right to profess, practice or propagate any religion,” and that “every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.”¹⁸¹ The failure of the prime minister and many other leaders to invoke these provisions and denounce religiously partisan threats and assaults on Ahmadis is explained at least in part by the reality of Bangladeshi political arithmetic. As noted above, the ruling BNP government holds power as part of a four party coalition. The BNP holds 191 seats, the J.I. has eighteen seats, the IOJ has two seats, and the Jatiya party has four seats. In the most recent election in 2001, the BNP-led coalition won by a very close margin of 46 percent to 42 percent over the Awami League. The J.I.-IOJ alliance with the BNP determines if the BNP remains in power, and consequently, the BNP appears to be conceding to the pressure of the anti-Ahmadiyya while attempting to minimize bloodshed.

¹⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch interview with Rahima Begum through Awwal Chowdury, May 28, 2005

¹⁸⁰ “50 hurt as bigots attack Ahmadiyyas in Satkhira,” *The Daily Star*, April 18, 2005.

¹⁸¹ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Law*, April 30, 1996 [online], <http://www.bangladeshlaw.org/constitution.php>, article 41 (1972) (retrieved May 25, 2005).

If the BNP's political strategy is to give in to some extremist demands, thereby retaining J.I. and IOJ support, while simultaneously working to maintain the greater peace, the policy is not only dangerous, it appears to be failing. The Bogra and Satkhira incidents and other cases documented in this report indicate that anti-Ahmadiyya activity continues and that conflicting signals from the government are emboldening extremists.

While the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh numbers only some one hundred thousand, many of those Human Rights Watch spoke with believe the government's failure to act decisively against anti-Ahmadi movements is indicative of a larger problem in Bangladesh. While the BNP claims it is not a communal party that is instigating attacks on minorities, it has failed to demand that its coalition partners desist from any role in aiding or abetting attacks and restrictions on religious minorities, it has not aggressively punished perpetrators, and it has not revoked the ill-considered ban on Ahmadiyya publications.

VI. Recommendations

To the government of Bangladesh

- Immediately rescind the ban on Ahmadiyya publications.
- Investigate thoroughly and impartially attacks on the Ahmadiyya community, as well as other religious minorities, and prosecute the perpetrators and sponsors of such attacks to the fullest extent of the law.
- Investigate fully the role of Islamist political parties and organizations in these attacks, and prosecute as appropriate the leaders and members of such organizations who may have incited, took part in, or were complicit in the planning or execution of attacks.
- Promptly respond to and investigate all threats against Ahmadi and Ahmadiyya mosques, and provide police protection as needed to the threatened mosques of the Ahmadiyya community.
- Ensure that minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture and to profess and practice their own religion.
- Take prompt and appropriate administrative or legal action against any government official, including elected representatives and members of the state or local administration, who endorse, encourage, or otherwise promote discrimination against Ahmadi or any other group.
- Allow unfettered access to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion in order that she may visit Bangladesh on terms consistent with her mandate

with specific reference to the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community. Immediately provide the Rapporteur with specific dates when she may undertake the visit.

- Combat religious discrimination and intolerance in public schools and madrassas.
- Oppose blasphemy legislation. Adopt and implement measures to ensure the security of human rights defenders, journalists, and NGOs working in Bangladesh to promote human rights and non-discrimination.

To foreign governments:

- Urge the government of Bangladesh to rescind the ban on Ahmadiyya publications and discourage it from resorting to bans on religious publications.
- Urge the Bangladesh government to prosecute all those responsible for planning or executing attacks against the Ahmadiyya and other religious minorities.
- Urge the Bangladesh government to immediately provide the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion firm dates to visit Bangladesh on terms consistent with her mandate with specific reference to the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community.
- Support the adoption of preventative measures to ensure that violence against and intimidation and harassment of minorities is prevented. These measures may include monitoring of curricula in madrassas and mosques of all Muslim sects and the introduction of community education and awareness programs.

To international donors and lending institutions:

- Ensure that anti-discrimination measures built into World Bank and Asian Development Bank-funded projects are thoroughly implemented in areas where there is any likelihood of religious discrimination. As part of their commitment to good governance, the World Bank and other international lending institutions should establish ongoing dialogue with NGOs at all stages of the decision-making process, including before a loan is released, while the project is being implemented, and in the course of any post-project evaluation.
- Ensure that all social impact assessments prior to approval of projects investigate the effect of proposed policies and programs on political violence and religious discrimination. In consultation with NGOs, explore ways in which programs could help address these problems.
- Support the adoption of preventative measures addressing violence against and intimidation and harassment of minorities. These measures may include the

monitoring of curricula in madrassas and mosques of all Muslim sects to ward against hate speech and the introduction of community education and awareness programs.

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