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Responses to Information Requests

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1 March 2006

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Pakistan: Situation of members of the Lahori Ahmadiyya Movement in Pakistan; whether differences exist between the treatment of Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis; procedure for verification of membership in Lahori Ahmadiyya Movement (February 2006)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Size of Lahori Ahmadi Community in Pakistan

People adhering to the Ahmadi faith in Pakistan are divided into Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis (MRG Sept. 2002, 10; ICG 18 Apr. 2005, 4) based on their religious beliefs (UK Oct. 2005, 61). Several reports on Ahmadis in Pakistan equate Ahmadis with Qadiani Ahmadis and fail to mention Lahori Ahmadis (AFP 7 Oct. 2005; *The Hindu* 8 Oct. 2005; MRG 2002, 4; US May 2005, 125; *NYT* 8 Oct. 2005). Similarly, according to the results of the 1998 Pakistani census, Qadiani Ahmadis compose 0.22 (Pakistan n.d.b) per cent of the population of Pakistan, or approximately 291,000 people; however, the census results do not show the number of Lahori Ahmadis in Pakistan (ibid.; ibid. n.d.a). *International Religious Freedom Report 2005* explains that "Ahmadis have boycotted the census since 1974, rendering official numbers [of Ahmadis] inaccurate" (*International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. 1). The Peshawar-based bureau chief of the Pakistani daily newspaper *The Nation* also explained in correspondence to the Research Directorate that an accurate estimate of the number of Ahmadis in Pakistan is unavailable since Ahmadis are "reluctant to be counted or introduced as [a] minority" (Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006).

Several reports indicate that there are approximately four million "Ahmadis" in Pakistan (MRG 2002, 10; UK 2 Feb. 2006, Para 3.6.2; US May 2005, 130), while the International Federation of Human Rights estimates that there are three million "Ahmadis" (International FIDH Jan. 2005, 61), and the *International Religious Freedom Report 2005* states that there are "at least" two million adherents of the Ahmadi faith in Pakistan (*International Religious Freedom Report 2005* 8 Nov. 2005, Sec. 1). According to Lahori Ahmadi and Qadiani Ahmadi sources consulted by the Research Directorate, the number of Lahori Ahmadis is "far less" than the number of Qadiani Ahmadis in Pakistan (AMI 21 Feb. 2006; ibid. 23 Feb. 2006; AAI 22 Feb. 2006). The supervisor of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore (AAII) office in the United Kingdom, who is a Lahori Ahmadi and returns to Pakistan often, estimated that there are between 5,000 and 10,000 Lahori Ahmadis in Pakistan and that this community is "not growing" (ibid.). The bureau chief of *The Nation* also stated that "the Lahori Ahmadi community is diminishing in Pakistan" due to restrictions placed on Lahori Ahmadi religious practices (Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006).

Situation of Lahori Ahmadis in Pakistan

Concerning residence locations of Lahori Ahmadis, the AAI supervisor said in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that in Pakistan, Lahori Ahmadis live mainly in Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Peshawar and in smaller villages in Punjab and Sindh provinces (AAII 22 Feb. 2006). Without specifying which group of Ahmadis, the bureau chief of *The Nation* wrote in correspondence to the Research Directorate that "Ahmadis" live mainly in Rabwa and in Chinot in Punjab province, but also reside in Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Swat, Zaida, Bazed Khel, Karachi, Quetta, Rawalpindi and Islamabad (Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006). Also without specifying which group of Ahmadis, other reports state that "Ahmadis" live in Mandi Bahauddin (*TDN* 8 Oct. 2005; BBC 7 Oct. 2005; *Dawn* 11 Oct. 2005), a town located approximately 100 kilometres south of Islamabad (ibid.), and in towns and cities in central Punjab province (MRG 2002, 10).

Regarding Lahori Ahmadi places of worship, the AAI supervisor stated that each major city with a Lahori Ahmadi community has a place of worship "not identifiable as [a] Lahori Ahmadi mosque..." (ibid.). However, the bureau chief of *The Nation* noted in correspondence to the Research Directorate that "Ahmadis prefer [to] worship inside their houses" (Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006).

This bureau chief and the Ottawa-based regional ameer for the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam (AMI) in Canada, who is a Qadiani Ahmadi, both stated that in terms of education, Ahmadis may register at any university in Pakistan (AMI 21 Feb. 2006; Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006). The AAI supervisor corroborated this information, stating that Lahori Ahmadis may attend any educational institution in Pakistan (AAII 22 Feb. 2006). The AAI supervisor added that Lahori Ahmadis do not attend certain educational institutions over others (ibid.). In general, "Ahmadis" are highly educated (AMI 21 Feb. 2006; Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006) and, according to the bureau chief of *The Nation*, "Ahmadis" tend to study Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering and Literature (ibid.).

According to the AAI supervisor, Lahori Ahmadis are employed in the army and as doctors (AAII 22 Feb. 2006). However, their promotion depends on which city or town they reside in and on whether people know they are Ahmadi (ibid). The AAI supervisor and the AMI regional ameer explained that every year or two employers in Pakistan circulate a questionnaire in which employees must identify their religion and sign a statement certifying that they have filled in the form truthfully (ibid.; AMI 21 Feb. 2006). The result, according to the AMI regional ameer, is that once people are identified as Ahmadis, they will occupy only lower-ranking positions (ibid.), and will be "effectively disenfranchised" (US May 2005, 130). In contrast, the bureau chief of *The Nation* wrote that "a large number of high-ranking civil and military authorities are also ... Ahmadis. The Ahmadis ... occupy important [positions] in all professions" (Bureau Chief 20 Feb. 2006).

In applying for a passport or identity card, Pakistani citizens must sign a questionnaire similar to the one circulated by employers, in which they must identify their religion (AAII 22 Feb. 2006), which is then indicated on their identity document (ibid.; US May 2005, 130). However, the AMI regional ameer commented that "the average person [preparing the passport] doesn't care [about identifying Ahmadis]," and stated that in some cases, a passport agent might put "Muslim" rather than "Ahmadi" in the religious category (AMI 21 Feb. 2006).

Treatment of Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis in Pakistan

In the opinion of the AMI regional ameer, Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis are treated the same under the law and both "face difficulties" from the general public and state authorities, though Qadiani Ahmadis suffer from ill-treatment more often than Lahori Ahmadis since they are "more visible," due to a larger number of members and the existence of Qadiani Ahmadi institutions, which the Lahori Ahmadi population does not have (ibid.). Similarly, the Maple, Ontario-based AMI president commented in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that Qadiani Ahmadis are "treated worse" in Pakistan than are Lahori Ahmadis since Qadiani Ahmadis are more numerous and have a central organization in London, rendering their group more visible to government authorities in Pakistan (ibid. 23 Feb. 2006). Lahori Ahmadis do not have such an organization, and as a result, "other clerics feel [more] threatened by Qadiani Ahmadis" (ibid.). Furthermore, Ahmadi "persecutors" (government and religious authorities) are not threatened by Lahori Ahmadis since they have realized the Lahori Ahmadis lack strong leadership (ibid.). The AAI supervisor echoed these opinions saying that although the situation is difficult for both Lahori Ahmadis and Qadiani Ahmadis in Pakistan, Qadiani Ahmadis are treated worse than are Lahori Ahmadis because "they are spread everywhere, their organizations are well-off, and they have television stations" (AAII 22 Feb. 2006).

According to the AAI supervisor, some people in Pakistan feel differently about Qadiani Ahmadis than they do about Lahori Ahmadis (22 Feb. 2006). Also, the quality of relations between Lahoris Ahmadis and members of other religious groups varies (AAII 22 Feb. 2006). For example, interactions between Lahori Ahmadis and more educated Sunni Muslims are usually "better" than those between Lahori Ahmadis and non-educated Sunni Muslims (ibid.).

Independent sources focus on the ill-treatment of "Ahmadis" in Pakistan and do not specifically discuss the situation of Lahori Ahmadis (*Dawn* 7 Oct. 2005; International FIDH Jan. 2005, 61; HRCP 7 Oct. 2005; HRW Jan. 2006; ICG 18 Apr. 2005, 5-6, 25-27; UN 20 Feb. 2006; MRG 2002, 3; *The Persecution* n.d; PPI 7 Mar. 2005; UK 2 Feb. 2006, 6; US May 2005, 130), except for sometimes acknowledging that Ahmadis are divided into Lahori and Qadiani groups (MRG 2002, 10; ICG 18 Apr. 2005, 4).

With regards to treatment of Qadiani Ahmadis, on 7 October 2005, three men (AFP 7 Oct. 2005; AI 11 Oct. 2005; BBC 7 Oct. 2005; *Dawn* 8 Oct. 2005) attacked Qadiani Ahmadis during prayer (AMI 21 Feb. 2006; CNN 7 Oct. 2005) with gunfire in Mong, Punjab province (*Dawn* 7 Oct. 2005; ibid. 8 Oct. 2005; AI 11 Oct. 2005; HRCP 7 Oct. 2005). According to one news article, this attack was the "first in several years" (*TDN* 8 Oct. 2005). Government officials, including the president and prime minister (*Dawn* 7 Oct. 2005), interior minister (*NYT* 8 Oct. 2005; BBC 7 Oct. 2005) and information minister (AFP 7 Oct. 2005) condemned the attack.

Ahmadi Membership Verification

In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the Ottawa-based AMI regional ameer identified the Ahmadiyya Movement of Islam in Canada as an organization which could verify Qadiani Ahmadi membership (AMI 21 Feb. 2006). The AMI determines whether an individual is a Qadiani Ahmadi by their family name, mannerisms, the language that they use and their knowledge of the names of the secretary and president of the Jamat in Pakistan and of prayer locations (AMI 21 Feb. 2006). The bureau chief of *The Nation* stated in correspondence to the Research Directorate that names such as Ahmad, Ur Rehman, Sahibzada, Wattoo and Khokhar are "popular" among Ahmadis, including Lahori Ahmadis (20 Feb. 2006). If these methods cannot be used to identify someone as a Qadiani Ahmadi, then AMI phones or writes to the president of the relevant Qadiani Ahmadi institution in Pakistan to confirm the membership of the individual; however, the AMI usually identifies people of Ahmadi faith by checking with its own personal connections (AMI 21 Feb. 2006; ibid. 23 Feb. 2006). The Maple, Ontario-based AMI president also explained in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that for someone to verify that he or she is a member of the Qadiani Ahmadi group, the individual must fill out a form and submit it to the AMI (23 Feb. 2006). The organization then checks the Canada-based references of this individual and the AMI president or vice-president then makes a decision as to whether the person is indeed Qadiani Ahmadi (AMI 23 Feb. 2006). If further information is needed, the form that the individual filled out goes to Rabwah via London and then to the relevant local level in Pakistan for verification (ibid.).

Concerning verification of Lahori Ahmadi membership, the AAI supervisor stated that the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore (AAII) can verify Lahori Ahmadi membership (AAII 22 Feb. 2006). This supervisor commented "we know our people very well" and explained that most Lahori Ahmadis, including international members (*The Light* Jan./Feb. 2006, 8), know about each other since Lahori Ahmadis gather annually at the head office of the Lahori Ahmadi in Lahore, Pakistan (AAII 22 Feb. 2006). However, in the case that an unfamiliar individual approaches AAI for membership confirmation, AAI asks the person to present them a letter from the Lahori Ahmadi head office in Pakistan confirming their membership, after which AAI contacts the Lahori Ahmadi head office to verify the letter is authentic (ibid.). As well, the AAI supervisor stated that Lahori Ahmadi membership can be verified by reviewing records of one's monetary contributions, which they are obliged to make (ibid.).

The AMI president and regional ameer, as well as the AAI supervisor admitted that individuals had made claims of Ahmadi membership in their organization that the organization had deemed "false" (AMI 21 Feb. 2006; ibid. 23 Feb. 2006; AAI 22 Feb. 2006). Further information on Lahori Ahmadi and Qadiani Ahmadi membership verification could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

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

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Oral sources, including: Several unsuccessful attempts were made to contact Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam Lahore [Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Pakistan, United States of America], Department of Religious Studies at Carleton University, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Jang Newspapers [Pakistan], Minority Rights Group International (MRG), The Persecution, Supreme Court of Pakistan.

Internet sources, including: Aljazeera, Asia Source [New York] *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, Current History, *Daily Times* [Lahore], *The Economist*, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Muslim World, Pakistan Tribune, United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights.

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