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Responses to Information Requests

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4 December 2008

PAK102972.E

Pakistan: The situation of Ahmadis, including legal status and political, education and employment rights; societal attitudes toward Ahmadis (2006 – Nov. 2008)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The Ahmadiyya [Ahmaddiyya] Movement in Islam was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in India (UK Jan. 2007, 1). There are more than two million followers of the Ahmadi faith in Pakistan (US 11 Mar. 2007, Sec. 2c; HRW 6 May 2007; MRG n.d.). Human Rights Watch (HRW) explains that "Ahmadis differ with other Muslims over the exact definition of Prophet Mohammad being the 'final' monotheist prophet" (6 May 2007; see also Minority Rights Group International n.d.) and that "[m]any Muslims consider the Ahmadiyya to be non-Muslims" (HRW 6 May 2007). The Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) *South Asia Human Rights Index for 2008* states that religious minorities, including Ahmadis, "face systematic discrimination ... by the State" (1 Aug. 2008, 73).

Legal status

According to the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders *Annual Report 2007*, Ahmadis in Pakistan face legal discrimination (FIDH/OMCT 2007, 216). With respect to the legal status of Ahmadis, Freedom House states that Pakistan's "constitution classifies them as a non-Muslim minority, and the penal code severely restricts their religious practice" (2008; see also US 19 Sept. 2008, Sec. 2). Minority Rights Group International and the United Kingdom (UK) Parliamentary Human Rights Group (PHRG) indicate that a 1974 constitutional amendment, found in Clause 3 of Article 260 (Minority Rights Group International n.d.), declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslim (ibid.; UK Jan. 2007, 1). Ordinance XX of 1984, an amendment to the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), contains sections 298b and 298c, which curtail Ahmadis' freedom of religion and expression (UK Jan. 2007, 1; see also HRW 6 May 2007).

Country Reports 2007 provides the following information:

The law prohibits Ahmadis ... from engaging in any Muslim practices, including using Muslim greetings, referring to their places of worship as mosques, reciting Islamic prayers, and participating in the Hajj or Ramadan fast. Ahmadis were prohibited from proselytizing, holding gatherings, or distributing literature. Government forms, including passport applications and voter registration documents, require anyone wishing to be listed as a Muslim to denounce the founder of the Ahmadi faith. (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2c)

Similarly, HRW provides the following information in a May 2007 article:

The persecution of the Ahmadiyya community is wholly legalized, even encouraged by the Pakistani government. Pakistan's penal code explicitly discriminates against religious minorities and targets Ahmadis in particular by prohibiting them from "indirectly or directly posing as a Muslim." Ahmadis are prohibited from declaring or propagating their faith publicly, building mosques, or making the call for Muslim prayer. (HRW 6 May 2007)

Under Pakistan's penal code, blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad is punishable by a death sentence (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2b; HRW 6 May 2007).

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), in June 2008, police in Rabwah filed a First Information Report (FIR) against "thousands" of Ahmadis for engaging in religious celebrations that occurred in May 2008 (30 June 2008). The HRCP notes that the FIR stated that Ahmadis were seen by police to be "in a joyous mode and wearing colourful caps and displaying badges with religious slogans," using fireworks and "greeting each other," which is tantamount to preaching the Ahmadi faith and proscribed by law (HRCP 30 June 2008).

The US *International Religious Freedom Report* reports that from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008, "45 Ahmadis faced criminal charges under religious laws or because of their religious beliefs: 7 under the blasphemy laws, 23 under Ahmadi-specific laws, and 15 under other laws but motivated by their adherence to Ahmadiyya religious beliefs" (19 Sept. 2008, Sec. 2). According to the ACHR, in 2006, there were 90 blasphemy cases reported, of which 11 of the accused were Ahmadis (ACHR 1 Aug. 2008, 74; see also HRW 2008). Freedom House notes that "[t]o date, appeal courts have overturned all blasphemy convictions, but suspects are generally forced to spend lengthy periods in prison, where they are subject to ill-treatment, and they continue to be targeted by religious extremists after they are released" (2008). HRW reports that "[i]n several instances, the police have been complicit in harassment and the framing of false charges against Ahmadis, or stood by in the face of anti-Ahmadi violence" (6 May 2007).

Both Freedom House and the ACHR indicate that Ahmadis face restrictions with respect to printing and possessing publications (Freedom House 2008; ACHR 1 Aug. 2008, 73). According to Freedom House, "[a]uthorities occasionally confiscate or close Ahmadiyya publications and harass journalists or printers involved in their production (2008). The ACHR reports that the public sale of Ahmadi publications is prohibited (ACHR 1 Aug. 2008, 73) and that, in 2007, five Ahmadi children were arrested for subscribing to an Ahmadi children's magazine (ibid., 74; see also US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2c).

Political status

According to the Minority Rights Group International *World Directory of Minorities*, Ahmadis "have penetrated deeply into all walks of life and become one of the most significant groups within Pakistan politics" (n.d.). However, the ACHR and the European Union (EU) report that, when voting in elections, Ahmadis must register on a separate voters' list (ACHR 1 Aug. 2008, 73; EU 16 Apr. 2008, 4). The EU Election Observation Mission to Pakistan observes that if Ahmadis do not register on this list, they "may be required to swear an oath before the electoral authorities that Mohammad is the last prophet" (16 Apr. 2008, 49). Similarly, the US *International Religious Freedom Report* states that in order to be listed as a Muslim, a person "must swear to believe that Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet and denounce the Ahmadiyya Movement's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslims" (19 Sept. 2008, Sec. 2). Significant numbers of Ahmadis boycotted the February 2008 national and provincial assembly elections due to this requirement (EU 16 Apr. 2008, 4). Further information on the boycotting of the February 2008 elections could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Education and employment rights

According to a professor of politics at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) in Pakistan, "[v]arious discriminatory practices in the educational and professional fields and social alienation in general have forced Ahmadis to migrate ... in the last two decades" (10 Nov. 2008). A scholar who specializes in Pakistan at the Middle East Institute (MEI), a Washington, DC-based organization that focuses on increasing knowledge of the Middle East (MEI n.d.), said in a telephone conversation with the Research Directorate that some Ahmadis are in positions of considerable authority but are not vocal about their faith (Scholar 10 Nov. 2008). The *International Religious Freedom Report* states that "[p]romotions for all minority groups appeared limited with the civil service ... [and that] these problems were particularly acute for Ahmadis" (US 19 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2). Similarly, *Country Reports 2007* indicates that the Ahmadi community along with other religious minorities "reported significant discrimination in employment and access to education, including at government institutions" (US 11 Mar. 2008, Sec. 2c).

With respect to education rights, the *International Religious Freedom Report* states that there were "[n]o reports of discrimination against Ahmadis ... when they applied for entry to universities and medical schools" (US 19 Sept. 2008, Sec. 2). However, the report further states that "Muslim students must declare in writing that they believe that Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet, a measure that singles out Ahmadis" (US 19 Sept. 2008, Sec. 2).

Societal attitudes

In November 2008 correspondence, the LUMS Professor reported that "[t]he anti-Ahmadiya sentiment has been on the decline for some time, except that there have been 3 cases of murder of Ahmadis in Sindh in the last two months" (10 Nov. 2008). However, HRW states that, in 2007, "[t]he Ahmadi religious community was a particularly frequent target of religious discrimination" (2008).

HRW states that although there has been a reduction in violence against Ahmadis since the 1980s, "Ahmadis continue to be injured and killed and see their homes and businesses burnt down in anti-Ahmadi attacks" (6 May 2007). Both *The Daily Times* and the AHRC report that, on 8 September 2008, Ahmadi doctor Abdul Manan Siddiqui was killed in Mirpurkhas in Sindh province (*The Daily Times* 9 Sept. 2008; AHRC 10 Sept. 2008) in "an apparent sectarian attack" (*The Daily Times* 9 Sept. 2008). The AHRC states that, on 9 September 2008, the district chief of the Ahmadi sect was killed in Nawab Shah in the province of Sindh (10 Sept. 2008). According to the AHRC, the deaths followed shortly after a 7 September 2008 television program in which former federal minister for religious affairs Amir Liaquat Hussain "declared the murder of Ahmadi sect members to be necessary ... according to Islamic teachings" (AHRC 10 Sept. 2008). Amnesty International (AI) reports that, in September 2007 in Karachi, two Ahmadi doctors were killed reportedly "on account of their minority faith" (2008).

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

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to reach a Pakistani human rights journalist and officials at the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and the Human Rights Group of Pakistan (HRGP) were unsuccessful. A professor of law at the University of Warwick specializing in Pakistan and an official at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ottawa were unable to provide information.

Internet sites, including: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), International Crisis Group, South Asia Analysis Group (SAAG), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI).

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Date modified: 2013-07-17 [Top of Page](#)

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