

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

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12 December 2006

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Pakistan/United States: Lahore Ahmadiyya organizations located in the United States (US); their mission and activities; their membership requirements, including whether an individual without status in the US can be a member; procedure for verifying membership
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

According to its international Web site, the Lahore Ahmadiyya organization is based in Lahore, Pakistan and its official name is the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Islam (also known as the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam Lahore, AAIIL) (AAIIL n.d.a). The organization's United States (US) Web site indicates that its name is Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. U.S.A. (AAIIL USA) but also refers to itself as the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement (AAIIL USA n.d.a). According to the international Web site, there are three branch offices in the United States: one in Dublin, Ohio; one in Hollis, New York; and one in Newark, California (AAIIL n.d.b).

The following information was provided by the Secretary of the Newark, California branch of AAIIL USA (hereafter, AAIIL Newark) in a 10 November 2006 telephone interview with the Research Directorate. The Secretary stated that the full name of their branch is Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman for Propagation of Islam Incorporated. The Secretary subsequently clarified that there are four Lahore Ahmadiyya branches in the United States: one located in Dublin, Ohio; one in Newark, California; one in Oakland, California; and one in New York state (14 Nov. 2006). However, the Secretary was not certain of the city in which the New York office was located. According to the Secretary, the Newark, California branch is registered in California as a religious non-profit organization and is recognized by the international headquarters in Lahore, Pakistan (10 Nov. 2006).

AAIIL was founded in 1914 in Pakistan by "senior companions" of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (AAIIL USA n.d.a). According to the international Web site, "the main object[ive] of this Movement is to present the true, original message of Islam to the whole world - Islam as it is found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad" (n.d.a). AAIIL USA publishes several documents related to their beliefs, including the magazine *The Light and Islamic Review* (n.d.b).

AAIIL's international Web site indicates that Muslims wishing to join the movement must first understand the terms of the pledge and then complete a pledge form and submit it online (n.d.c). A copy of the terms of the pledge and the pledge form are attached to this Response to Information Request. The Secretary of the Newark, California branch of AAIIL USA confirmed in a 10 November 2006 telephone interview with the Research Directorate that the pledge form they use is the same as the one found on the AAIIL international Web site. However, on the US Web site, under the "Contents" section, the link entitled "Joining the Movement" brings up a different pledge form, accompanied by the 10 conditions of the pledge. A copy of this pledge form is also attached to this Response to Information Request.

The following information was provided by the Secretary of AAIIL Newark in a 10 November 2006 telephone interview with the Research Directorate. The Secretary explained that individuals must sign a pledge form that states that they agree to abide by the conditions outlined in the pledge form and make monthly donations to the organization. The size of the monthly donation depends on the financial situation of the member and varies from member to member; however, members who fail to pay for two months lose their memberships.

The Secretary indicated that one does not have to have valid status in the US to become a member of the organization and that there are no cards or other documents issued to members to indicate their membership with the organization. However, the Secretary stated that the AAIIL Newark can issue a letter certifying that a named individual is a member of their organization. The Secretary stated that they have issued five such letters for use in asylum claims in the last twenty years. Before issuing such a letter, the organization asks the member to provide a certificate from headquarters in Lahore indicating that the member was a Lahore Ahmadiyya member in Pakistan. The AAIIL Newark also contacts the headquarters in Lahore, Pakistan directly to verify that the individual in question was a Lahore Ahmadiyya member in Pakistan. The Secretary indicated that they also inquire as to the status of the member in the US. However, because they have

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never dealt with a case where the member asking for certification had illegal status in the US. The Secretary stated that he could not speculate as to what would happen in such a situation. The Secretary specified that the five cases where certification was provided involved members who were in the US with valid visas. The Secretary stated that if a case involving someone with illegal status were to arise, AAIIL Newark would have to contact the board of directors for instructions on how to proceed.

The Secretary explained that membership certification letters appear on AAIIL Newark letterhead. The letter certifies that the individual in question is an Ahmadi, a follower of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement, from Pakistan, and provides the date the individual joined the AAIIL Newark as a member.

The Secretary gave the following description of the AAIIL Newark letterhead, which is used for membership certification: at the top of the letter, "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" appears in both Arabic and English, followed by the title of the organization, i.e., The Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman for Propagation of Islam Inc.; at the bottom, the organization's address, i.e., 36911 Walnut Street, Newark CA 94560 appears. According to the Secretary, only the President and the Secretary can sign such letters and certify that an individual is indeed a member of their organization.

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.

References

Ahmadiyaa Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam Lahore (AAIIL). N.d.a. "Home." <<http://www.aaiil.org/index.shtml>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006]

_____. N.d.b. "Our Worldwide Missions." <<http://www.aaiil.org/text/cntct/contact.shtml>> [Accessed 9 Nov. 2006]

_____. N.d.c. "The 'Becoming a Muslim / Converting to Islam / How to Become a Muslim / Joining Our Movement' Section." <<http://www.aaiil.org/text/join/mainjoin.shtml>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006]

The Lahore Ahmadiyya Anjuman for Propagation of Islam Incorporated, Newark, California. 14 November 2006. Telephone interview with the Secretary.

_____. 10 November 2006. Telephone interview with the Secretary.

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. United States of America (AAIIL USA). N.d.a. "A Word About Ourselves." <<http://www.muslim.org/who.htm>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006]

_____. N.d.b. "Contents of Publications Area." <<http://www.muslim.org/cont-pub.htm>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: A representative of AAIIL and two representatives of the Dublin, Ohio office did not respond within time constraints of this Response.

Attempts to contact the New York office were unsuccessful.

Attachments

Ahmadiyaa Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam Lahore (AAIIL). N.d.d. "The Terms of the Pledge." <<http://www.aaiil.org/text/join/pledge/terms.shtml>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006], 2 pp.

_____. N.d.e. "E-Pledge Form to Enter the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Islam." <<http://www.aaiil.org/text/join/pledge/pledgeform.shtml>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006], 3 pp.

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. United States of America (AAIIL USA). N.d.c. "The Pledge" and "The Ten Conditions of the Bai'at (Pledge) as Laid Down by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad". <<http://www.muslim.org/intro/pledge-frm.htm>> [Accessed 8 Nov. 2006], 2 pp.

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