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Persecution of Ahmadis in Bangladesh

Joint submission:

**Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de
Conscience (CAP LC)**

International Human Rights Committee (IHRC)



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CAP Liberté de Conscience is a secular European created in 1995 and dedicated to protect the Right of Freedom of Religion and Belief. We combat all forms of discrimination based on religion or belief by alerting European and International bodies. We collect testimonies of discrimination and human rights violations affecting religious or belief communities in order to disseminate them to international bodies, and in order to raise awareness and inform them as well as to generate debate on the protection of Freedom of Religion and Belief. We also advocate for any religious or spiritual group facing discrimination to have their right to Freedom of Religion and Belief recognized.



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The International Human Rights Committee (IHRC) is a non-profit and non-governmental organisation focusing on freedom of religion or belief. The IHRC has specific expertise and experience of working with marginalised religious groups and advocating their precarious position to bring about effective change so that they can enjoy the same rights as other citizens. The IHRC is the leading NGO on the persecution of Ahmadi Muslims having carried out several fact finding reports.

BACKGROUND

Persecution of Ahmadis

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has suffered long-standing persecution in Pakistan, where the very identity of an Ahmadi Muslim, existential by definition, has been denied. The community is persecuted and discriminated by law and by religious ideology. The fundamental right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion or belief as well as other human rights of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community have been seriously violated.

Unfortunately, the persecution of Ahmadis is not limited to Pakistan and the trend is spreading around the world, particularly in Muslim countries and even in some Western countries.

It is important to tackle the persecution of the Ahmadis as it is a form of violence in the name of religion that disproportionately targets religious dissidents, members of religious minorities or converts. The international community should take concerted efforts to raise awareness on the persecution of the Ahmadis and other religious minorities and to hold relevant authorities and perpetrators accountable for all the human rights violations, in particular, incitement to hatred and violence.

BANGLADESH

The lack of political will to safeguard and protect the rights of Ahmadis has only become worse in the past few years in Bangladesh. The government has routinely caved into pressure from religious elements in Bangladesh. The inaction of law enforcement agencies in the face of violence against the Ahmadis, the reluctance of politicians to be seen publicly supporting Ahmadis and the failure of the State generally to take positive or vigorous

action to take punitive action against perpetrators of violence and incitements to hatred and murder, all combine to permit a charter for the persecution of Ahmadis with impunity.

In 2015, a suicide-bomber detonated his vest during Friday Prayers at a mosque in a northern village of Bangladesh, injuring three. In 2005, thousands of members of the group Khatme Nabuwat processed towards houses owned by Ahmadi Muslims with sticks and machetes. Dozens of Ahmadi Muslims were injured and 10 houses looted. The police's participation was limited to placing a sign on the local Ahmadi mosque saying:

"This is a place of worship for Qadianis; no Muslim should mistake it for a mosque".

In 2019, 50 Ahmadis Muslims were injured in co-ordinated attacks in Panchagarh when groups of conservative Muslims vandalised and torched their houses.¹² The attack was carried out by way of protest against an annual conference held by the Ahmadiyya Community.

In March 2018, led by a local ruling party leader, approximately 80 armed members of the Muslim community in Jamalpur District attacked members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community at an Ahmadiyya mosque, injuring 22 Ahmadis.

Recently on 3 March 2023, on the inaugural day of the 98th Annual Convention of Ahmadi Muslims in Bangladesh, held at Ahmednagar, Panchagarh religious fanatics incited by extremist clerics attacked the convention as a large mob.

During the attack, Jahid Hasan, a young man around 25 years of age, was beaten to death while trying to protect the convention grounds. Four others were rushed to the hospital in serious condition, while many dozens were injured to a lesser extent. It is particularly tragic that the attack took place in broad daylight with the police present as silent onlookers. Despite assurances from the District Commissioner and the District Superintendent of Police that necessary measures would be taken to ensure the safety of the annual convention, the police remained silent or lenient during the majority of the attack.

189 houses and 50 shops were set ablaze. Ahmadi Muslims were under attack for three nights; knives and iron rods were used during the attacks and Ahmadis were not able to sleep in peace. More than 100 Ahmadis were injured and four were rushed to the hospital under critical condition even women were not spared and many sustained minor injuries. It is particularly tragic that the attack took place in broad daylight, as police stood by and watched.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Bangladesh holds its Annual Convention every year and each year the law enforcing authorities, the safety and security providing forces of Bangladesh assure Ahmadis of a peaceful Convention. However, very often on an occasion when the Ahmadis need the safety and security for their Convention, the authorities show complete indifference giving the extremist clergy the opportunity to incite public violence against Ahmadi Muslims.

A couple of years ago the Convention site was all burnt down by the extremist vandals and this year the Convention was dreadfully attacked and not only the structure was destroyed but the members of the Community were mercilessly murdered and tortured. This flare of violence has continued to this day. For the past three days there has been no peace for Ahmadi Muslims in Bangladesh. The clergy have the freedom to go about, address groups of vandals and incite them to go and attack and kill Ahmadis. This is a very tragic development which is bound to destroy the peace of all people, not only Ahmadi Muslims but the followers of other faiths as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Strengthen legislative and institutional responses in effectively addressing hate speech and incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, in accordance with the established international human rights standards and by integrating the guidance provided the Rabat Plan of Action.
2. To not restrict the religious practices of Ahmadis and other minorities.
3. Take positive steps to safeguard and protect Ahmadi Muslims and ensure they have access to justice. In particular to safeguard and protect the rights of women and children.
4. Address the multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination suffered by the Ahmadi community, including those faced by Ahmadi women and children.
5. Ensure accountability and prosecute all those responsible for violations and attacks against Ahmadis and other minorities.

