



AHMADIYYA



FOREIGN MISSIONS OFFICE

Rabwah (Pakistan), Telephone: + 92 -(0)47-6212326, Fax: +92 (0)47-6212296, email: wtabshir@gmail.com

Flash – Human rights

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Good old Mr. Abdul Shakoor, aka Shakoor Bhai, proprietor of the only book depot in Rabwah sentenced to (5+3) 8 years imprisonment and Rs. 600,000 fine by Anti-terrorism court

The septuagenarian accused was arrested a month ago by Counter Terrorism Department

Rabwah: Officials of Punjab's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) accompanied by a contingent of the Elite Force raided Shakoor Bhai's book shop, arrested Mr. Abdul Shakoor and Mr. Mazhar Abbas his shop assistant, a Shia, and drove them off to an unknown location on December 2, 2015.

On January 2, 2016, only a month later, after a speedy trial, the judge of the ATC sentenced Mr. Abdul Shakoor to 5 years' imprisonment under 9/11 Anti-Terrorism Act and 3 years under the anti-Ahmadi law PPC 298-C, and to pay Rs. 600,000 fine. The shop assistant was sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment and to pay Rs. 100,000 fine.

At the time of the raid they took away some books and magazines, the cash and some prize bonds. They photographed the interior and the exterior of the book depot extensively. They paid for some periodicals, obtained a voucher, had it stamped and took away the stamp with them. It seems they never came across a softer, milder and a more peaceful terror suspect.

The books they took away included translated copies of the Holy Quran, a short commentary written by Khalifa tul Masih II of the Quran, Tazkarah tul Mahdi (Biography of the Founder of Ahmadiyyat), a special edition of the daily Alfazl, the monthly Misbah (Ahmadi women's magazine) etc.

Most of the above material was banned by a sweeping order of the Punjab Government issued in August 2015. The order was issued on dictation of the Mutahiddah Ulama Board; any serious inquiry would show that it was highly *malafide* and a serious violation of Ahmadi's basic and essential freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution.

This raid and arrests made by CTD was definitely counter to the basic declared policy objective of the creation of this department and the intent of the National Action Plan. Ahmadi's will be happy if a high-level judicial commission (or committee) could examine the contents of the confiscated material to locate even a

single entry in support of terrorism. And how Ahmadiyya translations of the Holy Quran could be 'fit for banning', by the Ulama Board, while these mullas and their peers and elders have been blaming Ahmadis for more than a century of quoting the Quran for the 'abrogation' of Jihad. Banning Quran to Ahmadis would be somewhat like banning the Bible to Jehova's Witnesses in Europe or North America. Absurd – absolutely.

Mr. Shakoor is a senior citizen, a septuagenarian. He is an optician in addition to being a book-seller. He is one of the most decent shop-keepers in the bazaar, so he is very popular among his non-Ahmadi clients. Villagers from the suburbs of Rabwah make it a point to come to him for their glasses at low price, even free, if a customer is poor or asks for a free pair. His shop-assistant, arrested with him, is a non-Ahmadi. Surely, if Mr. Shakoor, an Ahmadi, was selling books that were provocative or highly objectionable to 'Muslims' Mr. Abbas would not be assisting him with sale of these books.

The case Investigation Officer behaved as if he had hit a bonanza. His endeavor was to broaden the easy investigation to implicate many others e.g. the authors etc. – some of them are dead since long.

Pakistani state claims to be involved in its 'war on terror'. This raid involved the personnel of CTD, the Elite Force, the police personnel and required the time and effort of state prosecutors and magistrates and judges for weeks, even months - all this to punish Shakoor Bhai, an innocent elder who would not consider harming a lamb; he himself is one.

If the provincial and federal authorities are really serious about war on terror and over implementation of the National Action Plan, they will have to face harder adversaries than harmless Shakoor Bhai who earns his bread peacefully and honestly in the open bazaar of Rabwah. Justice Khawaja of the Supreme Court remarked last year in court that the National Action Plan was a trick played upon people; it had become a joke.

We are of considered opinion that this operation was undertaken in religious prejudice and for its facility to add to the fabrication of figures to show pursuit of the NAP in the Punjab.

Now that the sentences have been announced it is for consideration that two most harmless individuals have been put behind bars for years, while the government finds no case against mulla Abdul Aziz of the Lal Masjid even to book him.

It should be reasserted for the benefit of the concerned authorities that Jamaat Ahmadiyya despite the maltreatment it received from the state and the society in Pakistan has not undertaken even a single act of terror, in the last four decades.