

Pakistan's Ahmadis battle mob and state for identity

By AFP

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Even voicing the Muslim greeting "Peace be upon you" could see an Ahmadi thrown in prison for three years. PHOTO: AFP



ISLAMABAD: "Are these the people with bullets who took my papa away?" two-year-old Sabiha Ahmad asked her mother anxiously when *AFP* visited her family, members of Pakistan's persecuted Ahmadi minority, who are currently living in hiding.

The toddler's family has had little contact with anyone since they were forced to flee for their lives on November 20 when hundreds of people torched a factory in the eastern city of Jhelum after rumours spread workers were burning copies of the Holy Quran.

Sabiha's father Asif Shahzad was one of the employees — all Ahmadis, a minority group who are legally declared non-Muslims in Pakistan for their belief

in a prophet after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) — and that night the mob took him away.

“I begged them for the life of my wife and children and they freed them only after taking me to burn in the factory’s boiler,” he told AFP this week from where his family are hiding.



PHOTO: AFP

“It was my good luck that some kind-hearted Muslims helped me to escape,” he said. His wife Hafsa said she had almost accepted him dead.

“I never wanted to leave him but he said that he would join us if he survived, and I must save mine and our daughters’ lives,” the 24-year-old told *AFP* tearfully. Along with other Ahmadi families fleeing Jhelum that night, Hafsa managed to escape in a car her husband had arranged before he was torn away by the mob.

The driver, she said, was Muslim. “(He) treated me and the other ladies... as his daughters,” she said, navigating them through the mob to safety.



PHOTO: AFP

Hardline Islamic scholars denounce Ahmadis as heretics, describing their belief in a prophet after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as blasphemy — a hugely sensitive issue in Pakistan, where even unproven allegations stir mob lynchings and violence.

Blaze at Ahmadis' place of worship in London

The largest Ahmadi community in the world is in Pakistan, where they number about 500,000, and followers are frequently the target of blasphemy allegations by hardliners tacitly supported by what the community says are discriminatory laws.

Legislation framed in 1974 and 1984 under pressure from hardliners, bans Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslims and practising the rituals of Islam.

Even voicing the Muslim greeting “Peace be upon you” could see an Ahmadi thrown in prison for three years.

“Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan face daily harassment, intimidation and persecution on the basis of their religion,” Dennis Jong, the co-chair of a European Parliament body on religious tolerance, said in a press release this week slamming the factory attack.

The attacks, he said, “show the continued lack of protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms offered by the Pakistani government to the Ahmadis”.



PHOTO: AFP

In July 2014, an mob, in echoes of the attack in Jhelum, burnt three Ahmadis alive and torched their homes in another eastern city, Gujranwala in Punjab province.

“Locals hated us for our religion,” said Mubashira Jarri Allah, who was caught up in the violence.

“(They) torched our house after a false allegation of blasphemy. I lost my mother, two nieces and my unborn child,” she said. She was eight months pregnant at the time.

In May, tensions rose in the district of Chakwal, some 200 kilometres from the capital Islamabad, when the minarets and dome of an Ahmadi place of worship were demolished after a court ruled that it looked too much like a Muslim mosque.

Officials at the Jamat-e-Ahmadiya, an umbrella organisation of Ahmadi groups, say the state itself sponsors their persecution.

“We don’t even vote in elections because if we declare ourselves Muslims, we will be prosecuted,” said Saleem ud Din, a spokesperson for Jamat-e-Ahmaidya.

The state, for its part, says Ahmadis — like all minorities in Pakistan — are “constitutionally protected”.

“When legislation was formed about the Ahmadis, the law was passed after complete debate in the national assembly,” Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, federal religious affairs minister, told *AFP*.

“The Ahmadis were given full chance to raise their point of view... If the Ahmadi community has some concerns and fears, they must come and discuss that with us and we will address them.”

In Jhelum on November 20, the Ahmadi families believed they would be shown no mercy.

Witnesses said hundreds of people — mostly young men and followers of local Muslim clerics who rallied them with loudspeakers — torched the chipboard factory, which was owned by an Ahmadi.

They also burnt several houses and ransacked an Ahmadi place of worship.

Eighteen Ahmadi families are believed to have fled that night. “Even the best friends turned into the worst foes,” said Asif Shahzad.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1000013/pakistans-ahmadis-battle-mob-and-state-for-identity/>

The pariahs of Pakistan

By Farrukh Khan Pitafi

Published: November 27, 2015

[Ishtiaq Ahmed](#), author of hundreds of children's books, died this month. What struck me after hearing the news was the sheer number of admirers I came across on social media that day, some of them hyper-conservative and some ultra-liberal. I didn't know so many people even knew his works. I came across his novels in the late 1980s when I was trying to improve my written Urdu. A schoolmate, in a small town where my father was then stationed, gave me two of his books in exchange for the first few volumes of *The Hardy Boys* series. The late author had some interesting plot devices, which usually helped him in maintaining a loyal readership. But then he also laced his works with an unhealthy dose of paranoia, pseudo-history and geography, and a remarkable disdain for religious minorities. Chief among those who were at the receiving end of his disdain was the Ahmadi community, which in his infinite wisdom he preferred to call Jabani. In his world of intricate conspiracies, all non-Muslim countries, including America, Israel, Britain, Soviet Union, India, were all out to get us and Jabanis were their most useful tools.

While many of our good friends have probed school and madrassa curricula to understand the evolution of paranoia and intolerance in this country, I am sure nobody paid heed to missing links like this one. Children in this age of the internet, ebook readers and easily available audiobooks will perhaps not understand how difficult it was to find books back then that were considered appropriate for kids. Wary of romance and adult language in books, parents considered anything without it age-appropriate for their children. Nobody bothered to check what religious or political prejudices their children were being taught through these books.

Recently in a plush conference room in Islamabad, I was attending a workshop on minority rights. During the discussion, it struck me that we were all focusing on difficulties faced by Hindus, Christians, even Zoroastrians, and yet nobody had

even spared a thought for Ahmadis. After a stunned silence caused by the sudden rush of self-awareness, all participants agreed with me that the matter was considered such a taboo in our media and society that we had stopped even thinking about it.

I distinctly recall how segregated the children from this community were during our childhood. As soon as it became public knowledge that there was an Ahmadi child in our school or class, we were explicitly forbidden to play or even socialise with him/her. We grew up studying with children from Christian, Hindu and other minority communities. Yet the Ahmadis were the only ones we were forbidden to interact with. I have strong reason to believe that the motives behind it were not religious but social and political as Ziaul Haq's legacy compelled people to steer clear of such stigmas.

Recently, when the community came [under attack](#) in Jhelum, I could not help notice the lukewarm media response. One reason would be the ease with which clergymen can declare anyone a closet Ahmadi. A few might have feared a violent backlash. But the majority, I suspect, either don't care or else think that the community deserves the treatment it is being meted out. I recall a show hosted by a leading televangelist in which a cleric not only refused to believe that Muslims had anything to do with suicide bombings, but went on to claim that this was an Ahmadi conspiracy. That is the kind of mindset we are talking about. No one likes an underdog. In societies like ours, if not checked in time, political expediency makes persecution of underdogs a cultural norm, if not public sport. I am a firm believer in the separation of the church and state, but even I don't think that any change in the constitutional status of the community is politically possible. But to turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to a community's plight is no more an option.

And let me be honest. My intentions are far from altruistic. It is a fact that hate, denial and paranoia change you profoundly. They changed us because we were raised with some very telling prejudices. As a selfish parent, I want to shelter my

children from such negative programming. It took me a lifetime to break my programme and undo such a negative code. Perhaps, talking more openly about the matter would be a good start.

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<http://tribune.com.pk/story/999697/the-pariahs-of-pakistan/>

“The Mob Wanted to Lynch Them” | VOICES

Nov 2015

By [Rabia Mehmood](#)



Mob attacks factory owned by Ahmadi businessman over blasphemy allegations in Jehlum, Punjab | November 21, 2015

**Names have been changed where indicated to protect the identity of interviewees.*

November, 27, 2015 — It was pitch dark at 2:30am in the morning. The only sounds that *Imran** could hear were coming from the factory that was set ablaze a kilometer away, and the slogans against Imran and the rest of the Ahmadi community in Jehlum.

I was almost whispering, convincing my fellow Ahmadis to come out of hiding and show themselves to me, so that I could take them to a safe distance but there was no response, Imran told me over phone. However after repeated assurances, Ahmadi families hiding nearby revealed themselves to him.

Out of fear that I could be one of the mob who were hunting down Ahmadis in the area near Jehlum factory that every time I tried to call out to them, they would further hide downwards into the shrubs.

A few of the families who escaped from the factory during the mob attack had their toddlers hidden in their jackets. Ahmadi women can be identified by the distinct cut of their *burqa*, so they were asked to remove them and only cover heads with *dupattas*.

Imran is one of the Ahmadis who worked at the old chipboard factory, more than 4 decades old and owned by an Ahmadi businessman in Jehlum, Punjab. There are about 300 employees at the factory out of which Ahmadis are just ten percent, Imran claims.

At 5pm on November 21st, Imran was sitting in his office at the factory getting ready to leave for his living quarter across the road from the factory compound, when police personnel on motorbikes and a vehicle entered the factory. The policemen arrested the security in-charge of the factory who had an office at the entrance of the compound. Qamar Tahir, the head security officer at the factory, an Ahmadi by faith, was arrested on **blasphemy charges**, allegedly on a complaint from a factory staffer. Imran: *I am only telling you what I saw. That was the first time we had heard of any such thing as a blasphemy allegation against one of our own at the factory—it was a shock for us. The environment in the area surrounding the factory was not actively hostile towards Ahmadis. In recent years, there was a seminary built nearby which was a cause for some concern but nothing severe had happened to us, just regular everyday bigotry, which we're used to as Ahmadis.*

Police came with their minds made up that Qamar Tahir had burnt pages of the Holy Qur'an and thrown them in one the factory boilers. God forbid, why would he commit such a heinous act? We are practicing people, but the police pointed at Qamar Sahib saying that he had committed that act. On Tahir's arrest, his sons questioned the police, so police arrested them also. One of the boys is still a young teenager, less than 18-years-old. I saw that they were manhandling the boys, slapping them and pulling their hair, says Imran. After the arrests, police personnel arrived again at the factory twice, within a span of 30 to 45 minutes. On the last trip, the District Police Officer arrived and went to the boiler where the religious

scripture was allegedly thrown. The factory staffer who is allegedly behind the blasphemy charges was the one with the police, Imran says. *I did not see the DPO consulting any senior managers of our office. Instead, he went straight to the boiler with the complainant and then left.* Qamar's boys were later released.

That is when factory staffers saw men gathering outside the factory on motorbikes, and began to be alarmed. Imran and his Ahmadi colleagues quickly gathered and decided to leave the area. Within 45 minutes, Imran and a few families from the colony nearby which holds about eight homes of Ahmadi residents, had begun to organize an escape. Because Imran and some of the others did not have families, it was easy for them to leave the residential area. However, the youth were told by their elders to return to the area near the factory. The mob was at the brink of breaking down the factory gate, and loudspeakers had begun calls of protest and violent actions against Ahmadis. The young Ahmadi youth were needed to assist those hiding out and get them to safety.

It was a miracle how families inside the factory compound and those outside managed to gain some distance, as the hunt had started by the mob then.

The night had grown darker. The mob began to loot, and then, to set the factory on fire.



When the angry men moved towards our quarters, they were told by some non-Ahmadis to only target the living quarters of Ahmadis, I was told by my contact. They stole from our residences and then set them on fire. They had also started running in the direction of Ahmadis who had managed to flee with batons and torches.

Ahmadis hid in the fields behind small hills, in deepnallahs (canals), and in thorny shrubs, hungry and scared for hours. The subsequent rescue operation by the volunteers of the community – without any help from the law enforcement personnel – went on till 6am.

By 3am, I took some of the families, and through alternate routes, and once with the help security guards from another colony, I managed to take them to our cars on the main road, after which I had to help with ensuring that Ahmadi residents of Jehlum city leave the town also.

The police told Ahmadi volunteers guarding the community's worship places that leaving the premises was the only way of saving Ahmadi lives.

The Ahmadi volunteer at our mosques in Jehlum city were advised by the police to leave. They told our men that they could not guarantee safety of Ahmadis inside the mosque from the enraged mob, and assured them that mosques would be protected.

The arson attack at the factory, the incitement of violence against the community, the looting of valuables and a roadblock on the Grand Trunk road went till early hours of the morning too.

Within 24 hours of the arson attack on the factory, an area near Jehlum city, Kala Gujran, saw another wave of violent attack on Ahmadis. An active anti-Ahmadi hate campaign had been going on in that area for a while, the community says. But despite the presence of heavy contingent of law enforcement personnel, one of the places of worship could not be protected. When the enraged mob reached the said worship place, the police had to intervene and in a rare incident of fairness rescued three Ahmadi youth from inside the worship place.

The 25-year old-Imran is friends with those men, *My friend told me that the mob wanted to lynch them, so police told them that they are arresting us – the Ahmadis, and this is how they took us out.*

Now, almost 40 displaced Ahmadi families from the burnt factory, and Jehlum city and Kala Gujran are stranded and unsure of their return despite the start of a police investigation into the incident.

Internal displacement is not rare for Ahmadis of Pakistan. Many from Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber-Paskhtunkhwa and parts of Punjab have moved due to threats to their lives or due to the increasing vulnerability they feel living outside the town of Rabwah—the town with highest number of Pakistani Ahmadis living in an area.

Muhammad Boota and his fellow Ahmadis from Gujranwala still do not have a stable life, more than a year after the murders of his mother, two daughters and the unborn baby of his sister at the hands of a similarly violent mob in Gujranwala in July 2014. A violent mob wanted to burn the women and children alive inside their homes in the Arfat Colony area of Gujranwala as penance for alleged blasphemy by an Ahmadi youth. About 120 Ahmadi residents of Gujranwala fled their homes for safer locations after **murders** of innocent unarmed woman and children. Those who dared to come back and restart their lives are failing.

Boota: Some of my extended family have tried to resettle, but their previously smooth running businesses are not enough to get by now. Nobody is giving our boys jobs. When anyone enters into our stores for services, people in the area tell them to avoid doing business with Ahmadis. In fact, nobody is willing to buy my property, which is on a prime location.

Boota and his family are homeless. For them, living in Gujranwala is impossible but he cannot be so far away that he cannot follow up on the murder cases of his loved ones. There is also a constant pressure from the

cohorts and families of the five men who are in prison for the murder of Boota's mother and daughters.

After losing his children and his mother, Boota wanted due procedure to be carried out by the police and the courts. But the investigation for the murder cases was not initiated until well into 2015 — after the young man accused of blasphemy was acquitted. The message government officials were sending was clear: they would consider the murders of Boota's family justified if the young Ahmadi man had been found guilty of blasphemy.

The police would call us, take the side of the attackers and murderers, tell us we are small in number and those men could target us again, so the best solution was to forgive them the murders. Even now, the man Sadam, whose Facebook post and false allegation led to the arrest of the Ahmadi youth and murders of my family is out on bail.

Boota tells me that on November 22nd, a congregation at a banquet hall called Bhatti Marriage Hall in Gujranwala sang praises for Mumtaz Qadri, the killer of Punjab governor over a blasphemy allegation, and complimented the men arrested for the murder of his loved ones'; those arrested and charged with murder include Shia and Deobandi men.

I keep getting these messages that if we did not take our case back, our community will be targeted again in a more violent attack.

Now Muhammad Boota looks at the Jehlum attacks and his hopes diminish further because he sees persecution thriving in Punjab.

As for Imran, he never thought that the situation in Jehlum would escalate to the point where Ahmadis would have to flee. While there are no deaths or injuries from the Jehlum incidents so far, the trauma and fear is immense. A few years ago, Imran had witnessed a hate crime against an Ahmadi acquaintance in Punjab and had to take the bleeding man to the hospital after he was shot. *That physical violence was nothing compared to the utter fear of Jehlum. There is no comparison.*



After the unveiling of the National Action Plan in the country, there have been efforts to curb hate speech and arrests have been made. But the government has itself also demonized the Ahmadi community. Aside from anti-Ahmadi laws on the books, government officials recently banned religious literature of the community by **categorying** it as hate literature. Many Ahmadis continue to languish in jails on blasphemy and other faith-based allegations with little attention paid to their legal rights. While Ahmadis cannot assemble for religious purposes and are still forced by law to deny their religious identity, groups like *Aalmi Majlis-e-Khatm-e-Nabuwat* are free to incite violence against Ahmadis. The government does appear to be cracking down and arresting people over the factory fire and the mosque attacks in Jehlum, but for affected Ahmadis, life will never be the same.

Rabia Mehmood is a multimedia journalist and researcher based in Pakistan with interest in religious persecution, gender and human rights. Mehmood has been the IWMF Elizabeth Neuffer Fellow at MIT. She tweets at @rabail26

<http://www.tanqeed.org/2015/11/the-mob-wanted-to-lynch-them-voices/>

Footprints: Fires of hatred

MIRZA KHURRAM SHAHZAD



Rescue workers sift through the smouldering remains of the Pakistan Chipboard Factory in Jhelum. It was set ablaze by a mob on Nov 20 over blasphemy allegations.—Photo by writer

JHELUM: Sunday mornings in Jhelum are usually slow, but today an uneasy quiet pervades. For the Pakistan Chipboard Factory, located by the Grand Trunk (GT) Road, doomsday already occurred on Friday (Nov 20).

The decades-old facility has been turned into a vast heap of ashes and charred structures by an arson attack launched by a crazed mob. The crowd gathered in the wake of announcements made from mosques' loudspeakers, calling on people to burn the facility down after one of its employees was arrested over allegations of blasphemy. What they didn't burn down, they looted.

The main gate has been pulled down and the guard-post is burnt. The path leading into the premises is partially blocked by the melted and overturned hulks of two cars. At the reception, the computer monitors have been hacked into pieces, fragments of them strewn all over the floor.

Chipboard sheets manufactured just before the attack have been reduced to a smouldering mound in the main production area, still emitting smoke, which

rescue staff are trying to douse with sprays of water. In the main factory building, too, machines are broken and half burnt.

The compound also contained the residences of the factory owner, senior staff and servants' quarters. These have all been ransacked and destroyed, their walls broken down, the cars parked in the porches now ash.

In a veranda, flower pots are shattered and shards of glass cover every surface. A sofa-swing is still hanging, badly blackened. In the drawing rooms, carpets and furniture have been destroyed and in kitchens, meals — half-cooked and half-eaten — are laid out. Fine china crockery sets have been smashed to pieces and the refrigerators are burnt-out wrecks. Floors, walls and ceilings — all are damaged and the pungent smell of incinerated materials hangs over everything.

The boiler, which used to keep the factory running through burning material such as scrap and old books, has itself been burnt. The material being used as fuel at the time of the attack is still there: paper, newspapers, magazines, books in Arabic, which rescue workers are collecting.

Some yards away, in front of the factory's hall, a building had been furnished with soft carpets to serve as a place of worship for the Ahmadi owners and the factory employees. The windows of this building have been broken also, and the carpets are now covered with glass shards. Three books are still lying on a reading table, though, and a bookshelf still hangs on the wall.

As the rescue workers go about their work to quell the embers, a convoy of police vehicles arrives. From a glittering black car disembarks the Rawalpindi Regional Police Officer (RPO), Muhammad Wisal Fakhar Sultan Raja — clearly upset and even frightened. Moments later, Inspector General of the Police, Punjab, Mushtaq Sukhera, arrives in another convoy. The RPO and rescue officials give him a tour of the factory premises and the damaged houses.

As he leaves, a patrol contingent of the army takes over at the main gate. There, a few men and women are huddled in the corner, confused and worried, the women with tears in their eyes.

“We work and live here in this factory,” says Muhammad Kaswar, adding that his wife worked in the house of the factory owner. “We have come here to take our belongings; we left everything and ran for our lives when the attack took place. We were trapped inside the factory when the mob gathered and were rescued by the

police.” Shamun Masih and his wife Samina Shamun, who also worked in the owner’s house, nod in agreement.

A few kilometres east of the torched factory, in the congested Kala Gujran area of Jhelum city, dozens of armed soldiers and policemen stand guard in front of an Ahmadi place of worship. But the place has now been inscribed with the title of ‘Masjid Allah Wali’ and displays the slogan ‘Khatm-e-Nabuwat Zindabad’.

“These were written by the protesters who briefly took over this place yesterday and offered their prayers here,” says Malik Basharat Jameel, a native of the area. “They took three motorcycles, two generators, some furniture and files out from this building and set it all on fire.”

The authorities promise to act against the culprits.

“Those responsible for this arson will face the music,” says Zulfiqar Ahmad Ghumman, the Jhelum District Coordination Officer.

But Nasir Butt, a local journalist, believes the police were responsible for the chaos.

“The police failed to apply a strategy to counter religious unrest,” he says. “Surprisingly, the second attack occurred after the RPO himself had arrived here to control the situation. The police simply vanished when the crowd arrived.”

Sami Zuberi, a senior journalist in Islamabad, believes that the government machinery has been proved incapable of being able to handle such sensitive issues.

“We have been facing blasphemy cases and retaliatory protests and ransacking for decades now, but the authorities have been unable to tackle them. They need to be sensitised about it,” he says.

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The unmistakable hypocrisy

By Mehr Tarar

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November 23, 2015: New Delhi, India; Ramnath Goenka Express Excellence in Journalism Awards; [Aamir Khan](#) in conversation with Anant Goenka, *Indian Express*. As the outrage over the Indian superstar's alleged 'disloyalty' and 'ingratitude' to his motherland, and his 'intolerable' audacity to speak up about the "growing intolerance" in India snowballed into ugliness on social and mainstream media, the reactions were myriad. And most of them disproportionate to the scope of statements made by Khan, one of the ambassadors of the Incredible India campaign, who while showing concern over certain manifestations of intolerance in the recent past, deemed his wife's idea to leave India "disastrous". The how-dare-he-when-India-has-given-him-so-much outrage culminated in protests outside his house, burning of his effigies, and the coup de grace, a police complaint against him at a police station in Delhi.

In solidarity with the 'fellow Muslim' Aamir Khan, many Pakistanis on Twitter made the hashtag [#IStandWithAamirKhan](#) become one of the top trends in Pakistan.

November 20, 2015: Jhelum, Pakistan; an industrial unit, Pakistan Chipboard, and its adjacent residential area. Owner: an Ahmadi. A mob of enraged 'Muslims' [sloganeered](#), [stone-pelted](#) and set the factory on fire on the allegation of desecration of the verses of the Holy Quran by a worker of the factory. The frenzied mob and its methodical unleashing of horror on a peaceful community were enabled and incited by some local clerics who exhorted people to rise and fight the 'blasphemous Qadianis', who were 'defiling' their faith. The police appeared helpless, the army was called in, and although no loss of life was reported, the factory was completely torched. The next day, the same mob of 'vigilantes' attacked an Ahmadi place of worship. After 'cleaning' the place — ransacking, torching of property — these so-called Muslims offered namaz, feeling jubilant and vindicated about having done the 'right' thing.

In solidarity with the ‘fellow Pakistanis’, many on Twitter expressed their dismay in the usual bland tsk-tsk’ing over the persecution of minorities, but there was no #IStandWithAhmadis hashtag. The hypocrisy is unmistakable. This hypocrisy is a blatant expression of selective outrage, of sidelining the real issue, of subverting of truth, of escaping responsibility. This hypocrisy is the seal on the classification of ‘us versus them’.

It is about the constitutional isolation of some five million Pakistani citizens bracketed as Ahmadis, demeaned and persecuted as “Qadiani”. The 1972 Second Amendment, under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, paved the way for atrocities to be the fate of anyone who went by the title Ahmadi. It is about Ziaul Haq’s addition of clauses 295B and 295C to our statute books. It is about Ordinance XX that stipulates three-year sentences for Ahmadis caught in the act of identifying themselves as Muslims.

The constitutional and legal separation of Ahmadis from mainstream society is a black stain on the social and moral fibre of our society, a society that is in the process of ‘cleansing’ itself of those who are not Muslim, or are not the right kind of Muslim. While the hearts of Pakistanis break for the injustices faced by Muslims in Indian-occupied Kashmir, victims of Israeli terror in Palestine, dead Syrian children, bleeding Iraqis and suffering Libyans, there is a macabre silence over the persecution of their own. While the number of Pakistani Hindus has dwindled steadily over the years, Hazaras have migrated to other countries to save their lives, Christians have become second-rate citizens in their own country, Parsis have assumed invisibility to escape unsavoury attention, and Shias have been victims of terror attacks, Pakistani Muslims unite in their condemnation of atrocities against Muslims globally. The hypocrisy is unmistakable.

The so-called defenders of religion, I ask you. Before throwing the first stone, look within yourself. Who has made you the guardian of faith? Who has authorised you to persecute those who fold their hands to God differently? Who

has allowed you to destroy lives, end lives? Who has given you the power to become the vigilante of faith, something deeply personal that is between an individual and the Creator? Who are you?

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<http://tribune.com.pk/story/999060/the-unmistakable-hypocrisy/>

A surfeit of anger

By [Chris Cork](#)

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There are weeks when my adopted home makes me seethe with undischarged rage. That rage which I internalise would probably power a small town if a way could be found to tap it. This has been one of those weeks.

Fuelling the nuclear pile in the last week has been the attack on and destruction of most of a [factory in Jhelum](#) that was owned by an Ahmadi family. The buildings on-site were reported to be 70 per cent destroyed. An Ahmadi place of worship was occupied and vandalised. Houses in the nearby Ahmadi community were quickly vacated as their occupants fled. The civil power had lost control and the army was called in to restore order. Yet again an alleged blasphemy lay at the heart of the disturbances which were stoked, indeed incited, by local clerics. In an unusually swift move the local administration arrested as many as 35 people on the following day though significantly none of the clerics that triggered the incident in the first place. Whether any of those arrested ever get to trial is a moot point, but it has to be said that it is unlikely.

And why so angry Mr Cork? Because in over 20 years of living and working and observing life in Pakistan I have never ever seen anybody successfully prosecuted for an attack on a minority group no matter what their adherence. There is a fundamental hypocrisy at the very heart of the state that is perpetuated by successive governments no matter what their flavour. One conclusion that may be reached is that a long-term goal of the state is the eventual cleansing of the country of all but the dominant sect. There... it is said. No government is ever going to be upfront about that, but as an extremist mindset continues to seep into the national bedrock and pollute the water table it is a conclusion that is at least tenable.

Secondly this week it is a hypocrisy wrapped up in what is a potentially good news story. Pakistan has lagged behind when it comes to availing the advantages of the global ecommerce boom. Specifically Paypal, Amazon and Ebay have been unable to operate here, principally because appropriate safeguards regarding security were not in place. That is going to change according to a statement by Anusha Rehman, Minister of State for IT and Telecom. Pakistan has now completed the necessary regulatory arrangements which are a prerequisite to global technology companies getting access and trading here. It is now on the White List of the Financial Action Task Force — and let trading commence. Not just yet, but soon. Probably soon. In the future. Well one and a half cheers for Ms Rehman, who in comprehension of matters IT has been likened to being as much use as a chocolate teapot.

Why so churlish Mr Cork? YouTube is the answer to that one. Ah... and the hypocrisy here is? Anybody who cares to dig around on the Amazon site will find any amount of sectarian publications and assorted hate material, and you would be amazed just what you can buy for yourself on Ebay that would bring palpitations to all but the most hardened liberal (... 'hardened liberal'... food for thought) in Pakistan and provoke considerable civil unrest if delivered into the hands of those that deal in religious crack.

To open the door to the giants of ecommerce is a Pandora's box. There will be undoubted benefits to the economy and an expanding middle class will have two more places to spend their disposable income, all good news. Yet to allow ecommerce to thrive within a regulatory framework and to continue to block YouTube is both paradox and hypocrisy. Presumably the sacerdotal caste is prepared to turn one of its multiple blind eyes to whatever temptations may lie ahead, and it must be assumed that there has been back-channel discussion with them before any announcement was made. The quid-pro-quo is conceivably leaving the YouTube ban in place, thus satisfying — and appeasing — those that have the state firmly by the throat and are busy with the process of cleansing referred to in the opening paragraphs.

Perhaps we should pool our collective angers and solve the national power crisis at a stroke. Toodle-pip!

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<http://tribune.com.pk/story/998387/a-surfeit-of-anger/>

Humanity clouded by hypocrisy

NOVEMBER 24, 2015 BY ALI AFZAL SAHI

Minorities in Pakistan: a case of marginalisation

The white crescent and star bordered by the green in the Pakistani flag has waned over time and rightly so; have our actions ever been in alignment to the pledge made to the people of the crescent and star (the minorities)? Sadly, the answer to this vexed question is a blunt no. While we are staunch believers of our principles of morality, what we fail to understand is that this morality is somewhat a product of our distorted sense of righteousness. However, beneath the veneer of our self-proclaimed righteousness is a reality inescapable: the hypocrisy of our society. Just how two-faced we are is vividly apparent in the way we treat our minority community. The minorities have always borne the brunt of sectarian violence and discrimination and during the entire course of events we have not been able to choose for ourselves the right sentiment about peace and freedom. We do vouch for being a patriotic, patient and peace-loving nation; however, we have never been able to live up to the true meaning of these notions. When Pakistan was created, we pledged to confer upon the minorities' equal treatment as that of the Muslims; we vowed to protect and shelter them. Sadly, the reality is far from these flowery promises made at the time of need.

However, our history is laden with bloody instances of honour killings and sectarian violence, enough to swiftly set back any positive development that we might be proud of. Pakistan has long been stigmatised of the menace of stereotyping religious communities and marginalising them in the name of majority's interpretation of religion. In addition, the recent perilous trend of "mob justice" is really worrisome and should be dealt with priority. While reading the newspaper yesterday, I came across the news "mob sets Jhelum factory ablaze over blasphemy allegations". Not to my surprise, the factory owner was an Ahmadi. Without delving into the religious aspect of these debates, one must, at the very least, condemn the atrocity. As per the reports, several people were in the building while it was set on fire. It seems as if history is repeating itself; the acceptance of the Ahmadi community is still a hazy dream we all wish would come true.

The 1970s witnessed the worst examples of sectarian violence in Pakistan that led to the widespread violence against Shia and Ahmadi communities in the country. Children were butchered, graves destroyed, women raped and killed and men slaughtered in the most inhumane ways imaginable. The unlettered and benighted constituted a major faction of those who supported and perpetrated this savagery towards the minorities. The elites and the liberals chose to raise their voices in favour of protecting these communities in order to uphold the very promises Pakistan was established on. However, no action was taken to actually stop the violence.

The situation might have decreased by a notch in the physical sense of violence; however, the verbal abuses and attacks are ever increasing, with emphasis on hurting the sentiments of the minorities on every occasion possible. Is this really the dream we set out to achieve in order to stand strong as one united front, as one nation, Pakistan? What are the requirements that a minority should fulfill to escape the social tyranny at the hands of incognizant people? We have seen countless examples of Christian and Shia communities bribing their way into protecting their lives.

In certain instances, minorities have also been forced to forge their names in order to camouflage themselves with the majority populations so that they may be treated with equality and given opportunities as other people of their caliber. However, it should have been our responsibility to prevent the situation from escalating to such an unprecedented mess. Even if we consider them to be wrong in their practice of religion and social life, these acts cannot be warranted under the guise of religion. Just like we expect the West and our "hostile neighbour" to safeguard the interests and sanctity of life and property of the Muslims, others expecting the same attitude from us towards our minorities, is fully justified. Failing to meet such expectations just indicates our deep-rooted hypocrisy.

As strange as it may sound, Ahmadis have never been a part of any notorious plan of exacting revenge for the persecution that they have suffered at the hands of bigots, yet we, the majority, have always tainted this community with allegations of blasphemy and hence cornered it. This country was built on the foundations of a promise, which spoke for religious and social egalitarianism. It is time that this promise is duly paid heed to and that this trust which binds the varying sects in our society, is honoured. Ahmadis deserve to be fought for and protected. It's time we raise our voice towards injustice and dedicate our time and energy as well as our

tweets and Facebook statuses to start a campaign against the perpetrators of these heinous crimes. Or would this underprivileged community have to become Syrian, French or Burmese to get noticed for suffering such a monstrosity?

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/11/24/comment/humanity-clouded-by-hypocrisy/>

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO LIVE

0 COMMENT

NOV 28 2015 BY AFP



Aamir Qureshi—AFP

PAKISTAN'S AHMADIS FACE PERSECUTION, THREATS FROM LOCAL MOBS AND THE STATE.

“Are these the people with bullets who took my papa away?” two-year-old Sabiha Ahmad asked her mother anxiously when AFP visited her family, members of Pakistan’s persecuted Ahmadi minority, who are currently living in hiding.

The toddler’s family has had little contact with anyone since they were forced to flee for their lives on Nov. 20 when hundreds of people torched a factory in Jhelum after rumors spread workers were burning copies of the Quran.

Sabiha’s father Asif Shahzad was one of the Ahmadi employees—a minority group who are legally declared non-Muslims in Pakistan in 1974—and that night the mob took him away.

“I begged them for the life of my wife and children and they freed them only after taking me to burn in the factory’s boiler,” he told AFP this week from where his family is hiding. “It was my good luck that some kind-hearted Muslims helped me to escape,” he said.

His wife Hafsa said she had almost accepted him dead. “I never wanted to leave him but he said that he would join us if he survived, and I must save mine and our daughters’ lives,” the 24-year-old told AFP tearfully.

Along with other Ahmadi families fleeing Jhelum that night, Hafsa managed to escape in a car her husband had arranged before he was torn away by the mob. The driver, she said, was Muslim. “[He] treated me and the other ladies... as his daughters,” she said, navigating them through the mob to safety.

Hardline Islamic scholars denounce Ahmadis as heretics, describing their beliefs as blasphemy—a hugely sensitive issue in Pakistan, where even unproven allegations stir mob lynchings and violence. The largest Ahmadi community in the world is in Pakistan, where they number about 500,000, and followers are frequently the target of blasphemy allegations by hardliners tacitly supported by what the community says are discriminatory laws.

Legislation framed in 1974 and 1984 under pressure from hardliners, bans Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslims and practicing the rituals of Islam. Even voicing the Muslim greeting “Peace be upon you” could see an Ahmadi thrown in prison for three years.

“Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan face daily harassment, intimidation and persecution on the basis of their religion,” Dennis Jong, the co-chair of a European Parliament body on religious tolerance, said in a press release this week slamming the factory attack. The attacks, he said, “show the continued lack of protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms offered by the Pakistani government to the Ahmadis.”

In July 2014, a mob, in echoes of the attack in Jhelum, burnt three Ahmadis alive and torched their homes in Gujranwala in Punjab province. “Locals hated us for our religion,” said Mubashira Jarri Allah, who was caught up in the violence. “[They] torched our house after a false allegation of blasphemy. I lost my mother, two nieces and my unborn child,” she said. She was eight months pregnant at the time.

In May, tensions rose in the district of Chakwal when the minarets and dome of an Ahmadi place of worship were demolished after a court ruled that it looked too much like a Muslim mosque.

Officials at the Jamat-e-Ahmadiya, an umbrella organization of Ahmadi groups, say the state itself sponsors their persecution. “We don’t even vote in elections because if we declare ourselves Muslims, we will be prosecuted,” said Saleemud Din, a spokesman for Jamat-e-Ahmaidya.

The state, for its part, says Ahmadis—like all minorities in Pakistan—are “constitutionally protected.”

“When legislation was formed about the Ahmadis, the law was passed after complete debate in the National Assembly,” says Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, federal religious affairs minister. “The Ahmadis were given full chance to raise their point of view... If the Ahmadi community has some concerns and fears, they must come and discuss that with us and we will address them.”

In Jhelum on Nov. 20, the Ahmadi families believed they would be shown no mercy. Witnesses said hundreds of people—mostly young men and followers of local Muslim clerics who rallied them with loudspeakers—torched the chipboard factory, which was owned by an Ahmadi.

They also burnt several houses and ransacked an Ahmadi place of worship. Eighteen Ahmadi families are believed to have fled that night. “Even the best friends turned into the worst foes,” said Asif Shah

<http://newsweekpakistan.com/fighting-for-the-right-to-live/>

JHELUM RIOTERS ARRESTED

0 COMMENT

 NOV 25 2015  BY AFP

Asif Hassan—AFP

AROUND 35 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO CUSTODY OVER LAST WEEK'S SECTARIAN VIOLENCE.

Police have arrested up to 35 people over sectarian riots in Jhelum, which reportedly forced members of the minority Ahamdi community to flee their homes, authorities said on Tuesday.

The unrest began Friday when an angry mob in the city torched a factory after one of its employees, a member of the persecuted Ahmadi sect, was accused of committing blasphemy by burning pages of the Quran.

On Saturday, protesters ransacked an Ahmadi mosque in the congested Kala Gujran area of the city and set fire to some Ahmadi homes. "Police have arrested up to 35 people in connection with the violence," said district police chief Mujahid Akbar.

Akbar said that police were hunting up to 70 other people who incited others and indulged in violence. Paramilitary Rangers were called in to quell the violence and remain deployed in the area, he added.

According to local councilor Muhammad Asif, around 18 Ahmadi families had left their homes for protection. Ahmadis are legally declared 'non-Muslims' in Pakistan and frequently persecuted.

Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Pakistan, an Islamic republic of some 200 million, where even unproven allegations frequently stir mob violence and lynchings. Eleven Ahmadis were murdered for their faith in 2014 and authorities have failed to apprehend any of the killers, highlighting growing intolerance toward the sect.

<http://newsweekpakistan.com/jhelum-rioters-arrested/>

Manufacturing intolerance

Waqar Gillani

November 29, 2015

Mob violence after provocative announcements from local mosques on allegations of blasphemy... Sounds familiar? It's a factory in Jhelum this time



Scenes of vandalism in the chipboard factory in Jhelum. Photos by Rahat Dar

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Five days after the torching down of the chipboard factory and looting of workers' houses and offices, about four kilometres from Jhelum on G.T. Road, by a violent mob, the smoke was still billowing from its warehouse and fire-fighting vehicles were still at work.

On November 20, some workers of the chipboard factory, owned by a local from the Ahmadi community, alleged that the factory's security officer Qamar Ahmad Tahir (also an Ahmadi) had burnt copies of the Holy Quran in the furnace.

According to the First Information Report (FIR), complainant Basharat Husain, a driver with the factory for almost four years, saw that paper trash packed in sacks came on a vehicle and the security in-charge ordered two workers to burn it in the furnace. While it was being thrown in the furnace, the workers noticed Quranic pages in it. The situation led to an argument and the police had to be called in. Following which the FIR was lodged.

By evening, announcements were made from local mosques that the owner and the workers had burnt the Quran. Soon, outrage spread in the nearby villages. Following this, people not only from the vicinity but nearby villages gathered as a mob and set ablaze the chipboard factory. The houses and the offices of the factory were destroyed, looted and burnt.

The government managed to block the news on national television channels. The factory is under the control of administration ever since and the media has not been allowed to visit the area, thus blocking any kind of coverage that could expose the horrifying scenes of loot, plunder and burning of the factory.

“We saw people looting the offices and residences. They were igniting fire with air freshener sprays and taking away valuables including laptops along with them,” says a local administrator who was injured while stopping the mob. “It was an awful scene but our priority was to save people stuck inside. An Ahmadi young man was injured while snatching a child from the mob’s custody and escaped from the rear side.”

A day later, the situation became volatile again after another angry mob in Kala Gojran, a nearby town about a kilometre from the factory, attacked the Ahmadi worship place (the Constitution of Pakistan forbids the Ahmadis from calling their place of worship as ‘Masjid’) and set ablaze the valuables there.

A video available with *TNS* shows people setting things on fire in the worship place with a policeman standing quietly and watching rather than taking any action. Almost 24 hours after the whole episode, the Punjab Chief Minister ordered to take action against the culprits.

“Police received a call on Rescue 15 around 4.30pm about the alleged blasphemy. We quickly took the material in custody and arrested the accused. Later, by 7.30 pm we heard around 1,500 people from nearby villages had gathered at the main road and were planning to attack the factory with batons in their hands,” District Police Officer Mujahid Akbar tells *TNS*.

“I did not know the factory was owned by an Ahmadi. After receiving information about the protest, I went with some policemen to the spot but the situation was violent and our first priority was to save people present in the factory,” he says, adding, “We rescued around 15 people from the factory including women and children from the rear side and then started dealing with the protestors.”



The DPO says announcements were made in the nearby villages urging people to gather outside the factory and possibility of any mischief cannot be ignored. He says the police have identified around 70 people involved in the attack and many of them have been arrested. “A case of terrorism has been lodged against them.”

The police also called Pakistan Army from the nearby Jhelum Cantt on the evening of November 20. Interestingly, Jhelum, one of the smallest districts of Punjab, has only 450 operational force for its 11 police stations, says the DPO. “Of these, on that particular day, 150 police personnel were on another assignment in Chakwal district.” He didn’t say that the next day the chief minister Punjab was supposed to be in Chakwal.

The situation in the three villages, from where the police says the mob came, has remained tense the whole week. In Kala Gojran, three vehicles of Pakistan Rangers were guarding the damaged worship place.

The locals in the villages declined to talk on the issue. “It is very unjust and unfair. A few Ahmadi families have been living in this area for many decades and there has never been any issue before,” says Dilawar Hussain, a 60-year-old man who lives in the same street. “The protesters were in huge number and the police did not take any action.”

In the village Raathian, adjacent to the factory where a sizeable number of workers from this factory live, was total empty. Many houses were locked while the others were reluctant to open the doors despite repeated knocks.

“People have fled away as the police are raiding the houses for the past three days,” an old woman tells *TNS* from a rooftop.

Salimuddin, spokesperson of Ahmadiyya community, says, “It was an attempt to burn innocent Ahmadis alive over the vicious allegation of blasphemy of the Holy Quran. No Ahmadi can ever contemplate the slightest disrespect to the Holy Quran.” He suspects mischief behind this incident to persecute the community.

“Thereafter, without any further enquiry, announcements were made on loudspeakers in mosques and a violent mob was formed to attack the factory. The fire has destroyed 70 per cent of the factory while eight vehicles parked inside were also set on fire,” says Salimuddin.

He demands fair investigations into both the incidents — the allegation of blasphemy and the attack on the factory. He says the person accused of blasphemy is arrested and now the police should apprehend all people and mullahs involved in the attacks and make sure they are also sentenced rather than freed.



Members of the Ahmadiyya community suspect that the incident was ‘systemically run’ in term of sequence of incidents. Last year in July, during Ramzan, three Ahmadi females were burnt alive by an enraged mob over baseless allegation of blasphemy of the Holy Ka’aba in Gujranwala.

Subsequent investigations proved the allegation entirely false and a result of personal animosity.

Mob violence after provocative announcements from local mosques on mere allegations of blasphemy has become a dangerous trend amid cowardly and delayed actions by the law enforcement agencies. This vandalism intensifies when allegations are levelled against people belonging to religious minorities in particular.

I.A. Rehman, Secretary General Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, sees a set pattern in these incidents for the past many years. “People use these allegations to settle personal scores, persecute marginalised sections and for certain vested interests,” he says. “The state seems to have failed in stopping this vandalism. And now the police have failed to an extent that they have had to call the army or paramilitary troops to control such situations.”

Rehman says with the passage of time an environment has been created and people can react to such allegations even on hearsay. “Until and unless the state changes its policies to improve the level of tolerance and change its orientation regarding religion, things will not start turning better.”

<http://tns.thenews.com.pk/manufacturing-intolerance/#.VlpqONlrJkg>

Identity crisis for Pakistan's Ahmadis: Battle with mob and state

November 28, 2015, 5:56 pm/ 3 Comments

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Sabiha's father Asif Shahzad was one of the employees — all Ahmadis, a minority group who are legally declared non-Muslims in Pakistan for their belief in a prophet after Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) — and that night the mob took him away.

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The attacks, he said, “show the continued lack of protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms offered by the Pakistani government to the Ahmadis”.

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“Locals hated us for our religion,” said Mubashira Jarri Allah, who was caught up in the violence.

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In May, tensions rose in the district of Chakwal, some 200 kilometres from the capital Islamabad, when the minarets and dome of an Ahmadi place of worship were demolished after a court ruled that it looked too much like a Muslim mosque.

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“We don’t even vote in elections because if we declare ourselves Muslims, we will be prosecuted,” said Saleem ud Din, a spokesperson for Jamat-e-Ahmaidya.

The state, for its part, says Ahmadis — like all minorities in Pakistan — are “constitutionally protected”.

“When legislation was formed about the Ahmadis, the law was passed after complete debate in the national assembly,” Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, federal religious affairs minister, told AFP.

“The Ahmadis were given full chance to raise their point of view... If the Ahmadi community has some concerns and fears, they must come and discuss that with us and we will address them.” In Jhelum on November 20, the Ahmadi families believed they would be shown no mercy.

Witnesses said hundreds of people — mostly young men and followers of local Muslim clerics who rallied them with loudspeakers — torched the chipboard factory, which was owned by an Ahmadi.

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<http://nation.com.pk/national/28-Nov-2015/identity-crisis-for-pakistan-s-ahmadis-battle-with-mob-and-state>

Justifying the mob

Hussain H Zaidi

- Saturday, November 28, 2015 -

Every now and then a band of self-styled guardians of the faith in the country go berserk and take to arson or homicide to punish an allegedly blasphemous act.

The latest of such deplorable incidents came about recently in Jhelum, where a mob set on fire a factory and a place of worship belonging to the Ahmadi community on the suspicion of alleged blasphemy. What accounts for such behaviour, which is at once self-righteous and violent?

An attempt to answer this question warrants a brief analysis of mob or collective behaviour.

As a rule, collective behaviour is dramatic, unpredictable and frightening. The starting point is the development of a common sentiment towards an object of hatred – a person, a cultural or religious symbol, or a physical asset owned by the group at the receiving end. As American psychologist Gordon Allport puts it, collective behaviour involves a bunch of people doing what they previously wanted to do but for which they lacked the occasion and the support of like-minded associates.

Once the object of attack has been identified and emotions have been aroused to a high pitch, the crowd goes all out against it. Any interference, discussion and dissent from the course of action are disallowed. Mob behaviour possesses three overriding characteristics: it is more-or-less unanimous, it is intense, and it is different from conventional behaviour.

The mob feels it is placed in a special situation created by perceived violation of some vital norm – alleged blasphemy or cow slaughter (in the context of India) for instance – in which a special moral code applies. The demands of the situation are felt to be so strong as to dissolve normal restraints. Loot, plunder, taking a life or even massacre may be considered justified in view of the ‘enormity’ of the situation.

Thus while to an outsider a violent mob may appear to have clearly gone over the line, for the perpetrators their response is perfectly logical – an extraordinary response to an extraordinary situation. Not only that, they draw immense satisfaction from their acts.

The mob is imbued with a sense of its own power and impunity. It believes that the aim – causing maximum possible loss in terms of life or property belonging to the other side – will be accomplished. It is also convinced that its actions will go unchecked or unpunished, which accounts for the ruthlessness.

American psychologist Neil Smelser has outlined some critical conditions for the development of mob behaviour. These include: (a) the social structure must be peculiarly conducive to the behaviour in question; (b) a group of people must experience strain; (c) a distinctive type of belief must be present to interpret the situation; (d) there must be a precipitating event; (e) the group must be mobilised for action on the basis of the belief (reference: Encyclopaedia Britannica). Mob behaviour is thus an expression of both cultural conflict and organisational failure. It lays bare chasms present in society. That's why the action at the same time earns approval and disapproval, admiration and condemnation. One side regards the perpetrators of the mob as heroes serving a 'noble' cause; for the other they are despicable villains.

The behaviour also signifies failure of both formal and informal methods of social control. At times, for ethnic or ideological reasons, law-enforcement authorities are sympathetic to the mob and thus wink at, or even facilitate, mob violence.

With this brief analysis of mob behaviour, it is not difficult to understand why minority communities are repeatedly targeted in the name of religion. The incidents taking place in Jhelum and other places, such as Kot Radha Kishan, where a mob burnt to death a Christian couple also for allegedly desecrating the Holy Quran, bring out the divisions existing in our society over the status that minorities are entitled to.

In thrall of a rigid, monolithic interpretation of Islam, a large and growing section of society looks down upon the members of minority communities as second-rate citizens, who should not move about or profess and practise their faith freely. Similar views are held about Muslims belonging to a different sect. Textbooks and other literature carry hate material branding minorities as enemies of Islam and charging them with having polluted the land of the pure. With such an intolerant view having gained firm ground in society, all that the hate-mongers need is an incident – real or made-up – to incite and unleash a familiar but dangerous chain of events. Attacks on minorities are presented as a religious cause and thus an obligation. In many cases calls are made from mosques to attack alleged perpetrators of an allegedly blasphemous act.

Such calls appeal to ordinary people, who are already under strain for one reason or another and need some outlet to vent their anger. It's not necessary for the cause of the strain and the object of anger to be the same. All that's needed is a convenient target. Minority communities are, by and large, a sitting duck. It is also

not difficult for those inciting to portray the plight of the people as a curse of God caused by deviation from the righteous path.

People taking the law into their hands and assuming at once the role of judge, jury and executioner – mob justice as it is sometimes called – is dangerous. It clashes with the principle of rule of law, which is the lifeblood of the body politic. It's not for a mob but for formal public institutions to prosecute, convict and punish an offender. The mob is neither a reliable judge of what is fair; nor is it interested in doing justice per se. It is only actuated by the desire to take revenge from a convenient target for allegedly mischievous actions.

Not only does mob justice signify the weakening of the formal methods of social control, it also erodes the faith of the people in the government's ability or willingness to protect their life, property and religious symbols – the very *raison d'être* of the state. This makes public authority even weaker. Mob justice assumes even more threatening proportions when it is prompted, and justified, by an appeal to faith.

As the Supreme Court's highly acclaimed judgement which upheld the conviction of Mumtaz Qadri noted, no one is justified in taking the law into their own hands and killing an alleged offender regardless of the nature of the offence. Let the law take its course.

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<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-353881-Justifying-the-mob>