

No country for minorities: ‘National Action Plan has failed’

By [Rana Tanveer](#) Published: May 21, 2016

The conference was organised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in collaboration with the European Union. PHOTO: AFP
LAHORE: The National Action Plan—formulated to eradicate terrorism—has failed to curb religious extremism and hate speech, speakers at a conference organised on Friday observed. They made the remarks while speaking at the second day of Faith-Based Violence, Illegal Occupation and Destruction of Places of Worship. The speakers said while the use of loudspeakers had been somewhat regulated, hate speech was being delivered and provocative material was being published.

Syed Muhammad Ashraf, representing the Shia community of Balochistan, said the implementation of the NAP had proven to be inconsequential. He said hate material remained in circulation and recordings of provocative anti-Shia speeches could be easily obtained. Ashraf said while the media covered some sectarian elements, no space was afforded to Shias. He said Shias could not even imagine enjoying the liberties a common Baloch took for granted.

Ashraf said Shias had been forced to shut shop altogether or close businesses before nightfall. Had the NAP been implemented in letter and spirit, he said, the situation should have taken a turn for the better for Shias of the province.

Karachi-based Hindu Mangla Sharma said minorities had not been consulted when it came to the NAP’s formulation. She said religious parties organised at least one rally per month in Karachi. She said provocative speeches were delivered at such events with impunity. Ideally, Sharma said, the NAP should have served as a check on such events.

She said attempts to expunge hate material from the curriculum had proved to be in vain. Sharma said that while Jinnah’s August 11 speech was included in the

Sindh syllabus it remained devoid of chapters on individuals from minorities. She said political parties should strive to assimilate minorities by having them contest elections on general seats.

Jamaat-i-Ahmadiyya representative Amir Mehmood said the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign continued unabated. Mehmood said while district authorities had swung into action with regard to anti-Ahmadiyya paraphernalia across Hafeez Centre the move had led to every shop at the plaza sporting such material in reaction. He said the Muttahida Ulema Board (MUB)—ostensibly constituted to curb hate material—had banned books on Ahmadiyyat. He said MUB chairman Fazle Rahim Ashrafi was a regular feature at anti-Ahmadiyya conferences. Mehmood wondered how he could justify his appointment as the board’s chairman in view of this. He said that while there was a need for such a board, it should ideally be composed of impartial individuals.

Sikh representative Kalyan Singh said while the NAP was yet to be implemented in letter and spirit its introduction had made somewhat of a difference. He said the use of loudspeakers had been regularised following its formulation. Singh said no one had had the temerity to deliver an anti-Sikh speech following the introduction of the NAP in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P). He said this used to happen before.

Advocate Nadim Anthony spoke about how the law had routinely failed minorities. He said Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani had delivered a landmark judgement on June 19, 2014 regarding protection of minorities. Anthony said the judgement was yet to be implemented. The conference was organised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in collaboration with the European Union (EU).

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Faith-based violence used by groups to mask economic motives behind crimes

By [Rana Tanveer](#)

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LAHORE: The so-called faith-based violence is in most cases a grab used by certain groups to mask economic motives behind their crimes, speakers at a two-day consultation organised by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Thursday said. The consultation was titled Faith-Based Violence, Illegal Occupation and Destruction of Places of Worship.

“Minority communities are marginalised by masquerading personal matters as religious issues,” said Jalila Haider, a representative of We the Human.

“This has resulted in arson in neighbourhoods, target killings and displacement of scores of families,” she said.

Haider was representing the Hazara community from Quetta. She discussed faith-based discrimination in Balochistan.

“Ever since Kalbhashan Yadav, a RAW agent, was arrested from Quetta, the Hazara community has been suffering because of the language they speak. Law enforcement personnel associate any Persian speaker with Iran.”

She said every society should take responsibility for mistakes made in the past. “Hazaras sided with the state when Ahmadis were declared non-Muslim. On behalf of my community, I would like to apologise to representatives of Jamaat-i-Ahmadyia present at the conference for this mistake,” she said. Ali Ahmed Jan, a representative of Ismaili community from Gilgit, supported her views. “Money matters are depicted as religious conflicts,” he said. He said inclusive education

could pave the way for a tolerant society. “The curriculum should be reviewed and revised,” he said.

Amir Mehmood, a representative from the Ahmadi community, said his community had been distrusted since the inception of Pakistan. “Because of the segregation imposed by the state, Ahmadis have been unable to participate in the political processes. We cannot even protest our humiliation.” “We cannot call our place of worship a mosque or greet people in the traditional manner,” he said.

Mangla Sharma, a representative of the Hindu community, said before General Ziaul Haq’s rule, the status of her community was not as bad as it was today.

“I could take Islamiat classes with my Muslim friends at school,” she said.

“But in 1980s, the regime used religion to prolong its rule apparently without any thought of its consequences for future generations of this country,” she said.

In his keynote address, HRCP general secretary IA Rehman said after the Partition of 1947, temples and gurdawaras were used as refugee camps.

“They were not returned to their custodians,” he said.

He said many temples were razed following the demolition of Babri Masjid in India. He said there should be a mechanism to collect information about attacks or encroachments on religious places of minorities. He said the state should protect minorities. Journalist Ejaz Haider, Mubarik Ahmed, rights activists Peter Jacob, Joseph Francis, Mehboob Ahmed, Sayed Muhammad Ashraf, Naeemul Haq, Cecil S Chaudhry and Aroon Kumar Kundnani also spoke on the occasion.

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The murder of an Ahmadi

Preparing for the worst

Muslims divide over how to respond to a sectarian killing

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THERE are few signs of life at the Stockwell Green mosque in south London at the moment. The gates are padlocked and the telephones have been disconnected. And some hope it will stay that way.

For the mosque is at the centre of a dispute within Britain's Muslim community over how it should respond to the murder of a Muslim shopkeeper in Glasgow on March 24th. The killing was particularly shocking because the victim, Asad Shah, was a member of the pacifist Ahmadiya sect, and his assailant was a Sunni Muslim from Bradford. The Ahmadiya have long been harassed and discriminated against by mainstream Muslims in Pakistan and Indonesia, and this has often turned to violence. But this was the first time it had happened in Britain.

The weeks since have led to some self-examination among Muslims. But to prevent another atrocity, outsiders say the bigotry that might have contributed to it now has to be tackled head-on, beginning with the Stockwell mosque.

The Ahmadi consider themselves Muslims, but differ from the Sunni and Shia because they believe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a 19th-century Indian who founded their tradition, was a latter-day prophet. In many Muslims' eyes, this makes them blasphemers. Pakistan's Ahmadis, of whom there may be 4m, were declared to be non-Muslims by the government in 1974; in effect, their faith has been criminalised. There are about 25,000 Ahmadis in Britain, which has become something of a refuge from the violence of Pakistan.

Yet it is now clear that the sectarianism of Pakistan has pursued them to Britain, particularly in the form of the Khatme Nubuwwat movement, with which the Stockwell Green mosque is associated. The purpose of the movement (meaning "finality of the Prophethood"), which one official says started in Britain in 1983, is to refute the claims of the Ahmadiya, and to

inform all Muslims that they are in fact “traitors to Islam”, as the Khatme Nubuwwat Academy’s website reminds everyone. The same website helpfully lists all the fatwas against the Ahmadi in Urdu, English and Arabic. Readers learn that the “dangerous” Ahmadiya (called by a derogatory term) are a “destructive” sect with a “filthy agenda” that helps Zionism. Muslims are urged not to have anything to do with them.

One imam at the academy, a modest place in east London, argues that all this is merely “academic”, a learned refutation of Ahmadiya doctrine. However, after the death of Mr Shah the Ahmadi are asking whether this sort of propaganda is brainwashing young Muslims and inciting them to violence. The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has been criticised in the past for not acting to counter it. This is partly because it does not recognise the Ahmadis as Muslims either; but it has condemned Mr Shah’s murder, and insists that the Ahmadis can be argued against “without vilifying or demonising them”. To this end, it has suspended the Stockwell Green mosque’s membership of the MCB and has set up a panel to investigate whether it was inciting hatred. Leaflets calling for the killing of Ahmadis if they did not convert to mainstream Islam were found in the mosque after the murder of Mr Shah.

This response is too lame for some, however. One activist, Sadaf Ahmed, has launched a petition for the government to conduct an official investigation into the activities of Khatme Nubuwwat. She points out that the group’s speakers travel freely to Britain to vilify the Ahmadis. Qari Hanif Qureshi, a hate preacher who called for the death of Salmaan Taseer, an ex-governor of Punjab who challenged Pakistan’s blasphemy laws and was murdered for it in 2011, spoke on May 4th at Luton mosque. Ms Ahmed argues that “If we replace the word Ahmadi in any of the Khatme Nubuwwat’s speeches or literature with Jew or Muslim or Hindu, we’d be disgusted at their hateful rhetoric.”

Many Ahmadis are concerned that too much casual denigration—posters in shops urging Muslims to “beware” of them, for instance—goes unpunished in the name of free speech. They fear that if the authorities, both Muslim and secular, don’t crack down now, then tolerance of such intolerance will simply lead to more murders.

<http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21699176-muslims-divide-over-how-respond-sectarian-killing-preparing-worst>