[**So many blind spots**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1556976/so-many-blind-spots)

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**GOVERNMENTS are known to have their blind spots, that is, areas of governance and issues that they don’t want to address rationally and realistically and thus create grave problems for themselves. A good government would wish to have as few blind spots, or none at all. Pakistan does not fall in the latter category and betrays a tendency to increase its blind spots.**

Take the curious formation of the National Commission on Minorities announced some days ago. Everything related to this sensitive matter is controversial and wrong. The proposed commission is a national human rights institution, and Rule 16(1)(l) of the Rules of Business 1973, under which the cabinet gave its approval does not apply to the formation of an NHRI.

The commission has been formed vide a notification of the ministry of religious affairs whereas an NHRI can only be set up under an act of parliament, in the manner the National Commission on Human Rights and the National Commission on the Status of Women were created. There is no knowing whether the commission is in accord with the Paris Principles of 1991, which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1993, and without which an NHRI cannot be accredited to the UN system. These principles define the status and powers of an NHRI.

Further, this is the only commission that has been announced without any accompanying statement about its powers and functions. The commission’s six official members include five representatives of federal ministries and the chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology. The 12 non-official members include two Muslims, both from Lahore, three Hindus, including a gentleman who will head the commission, three Christians, two Sikhs, one Parsi and one Kalash. There is no explanation why there are only two women among 12 non-official members. With due respect to all the members, how were they selected and by whom? What was the criterion of selection? Were any stakeholders consulted?

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**Then there is this matter that in the first summary there was a seat for an Ahmadi but it was dropped in the second summary. Why? An Ahmadi was to be taken as a non-Muslim and not as a Muslim. The Ahmadis could have declined the honour and as happens in the case of Ahmadis’ representation in legislatures they could have been represented by a spurious coin.**

Finally, the cabinet seems to have been misled into subverting the Supreme Court initiative to implement its 2004 verdict which calls for the creation of a Council for Minority Affairs, though Dr Suddle’s draft bill needs to be improved in consultation with the stakeholders.

The main problem seems to be that the minorities’ destiny has been placed in the hands of the religious affairs ministry that had strangulated the earlier minority rights commission created many years ago. As an autonomous body, the minorities’ commission will be answerable only to parliament and the facilitating agency can be either the Cabinet Division or the ministry of law or the ministry of human rights.

**We have been considerably encouraged by the federal science minister’s disclosure that the present government is more democratic than all its predecessors, which incidentally includes the Jinnah-Liaquat government. We are also heartened by the fact that this government is very strong as it is on the same page as the armed forces. The people can legitimately expect such a strong and democratic authority to at least remove the posters at shops in Lahore that order Ahmadis and Shias to embrace Islam before entering sacred premises.**

Another matter consigned to a blind spot is the state of media personnel’s insecurity. The ministry of information has earned some credit by promising monetary relief to media houses in acute distress, and one hopes its actions will match its pledge, but it has completely ignored the Freedom Network’s report about attacks on mediapersons during the period from May 2019 to April 2020.

The scorecard of violence against the media during these 12 months shows 91 attacks on mediapersons including the murder of seven journalists and a blogger, “signifying a climate of escalating intimidation and harassment that is adversely affecting the freedom of expression and access to information”. The report also refers to the tightening of screws on the media in Pakistan through various means of censorship.

This report presents such a grim plight of the media that no responsible government can ignore it. Islamabad’s failure even to issue its customary denial lends support to the authenticity of the report’s contents. Surely the government realises the fact that a country where journalism is a most hazardous calling loses its capacity for good governance, social justice, and promotion of a sane society. The government must find the courage to address the media’s tribulations.

The government’s silence over the murder of Sajid Husain in Sweden has not added to its credit. All governments care for their nationals when they are in foreign lands. There is nothing on record that Sajid Husain had been deprived of his citizenship. He deserved more sympathy than the convicts in Arab prisons whose return the government had strenuously negotiated. Failure to institute a serious probe into the murder of Sajid Husain will mean that a Baloch defender of his people’s rights has a right to live neither in Pakistan nor abroad.

Tailpiece: The minister for religious affairs seems to have been unjustly criticised for seeking an early, and without charge, return of 50 Pakistanis from the US. If the kindhearted minister comes to know of some Pakistanis in distress abroad, is it not his duty to come to their aid? And is he the only one amongst the patrons of Pakistani citizens to seek a small concession for some people known to him?

Headline of the week: “Chaudhries are our own people, nothing will happen to them” — Sheikh Rashid.

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# Psychology of Religious Intolerance in Pakistan

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Religious intolerance, or sometimes touted as religious extremism, is not a new phenomenon in the
social and political dominion of the South and West Asia. Rooted in the general hatred towards “the
others” and flourished through sectarian dividend, the theological intelligentsia has been calling the
shots for this intolerance over the centuries. In such a conflict ridden and religiously sensitive region,
Muslims of sub-continent started their struggle for separate nation state under the premise of the “Two
Nation Theory”.

**Thus, when on the eve of 14 August Pakistan came into being, the religious elite and
devoted masses were already deeply entrenched in the founding design and principles of the country.
Be it the Shia-Sunni conflict or the legality of Qadiyani faith, the general sentiments of populace and the
well-established interests of the pious leaders have always proved to be the sword of Damocles for the
legislator. Over the time, there has been a significant reduction in the intensity of Shia-Sunni dividend
particularly due to active participation of foreign support and local law enforcement agencies’ efforts to
curtail the issue. However, the issue with Qadiyani admittance or ejection from the Islam has continued
to be the uphill task for policy makers.**

**On 29th of April, 2020 the PM Imran Khan gave his consent to the inclusion of the Ahmedis in the
Minorities Commission of Pakistan. This move has seemed to irk the religious sentiments of plethora of
masses as the social media was hit with the waves of several trends; demanding not only the roll-back of
recent legislation but also the upfront persecution of the Qadiyani community. This perfectly exhibits
the sensitivity and the insecurity of Muslims when it comes to Religious matters.**

**The background of the issue lies in the second amendment to the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan which
has clearly declared Qadiyani as non-Muslims citizen of Pakistan. But, the issue still remains at large due**

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/610630/psychology-of-religious-intolerance-in-pakistan/>