

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 33/17/00

UA 352/00

Fear for

PAKISTANThe Ahmadiyya community

Amnesty International is extremely concerned that Pakistan's Ahmadiyya religious minority are at risk of violent attack, after 10 Ahmadis were unlawfully killed in Punjab province during the past two weeks.

Gunmen shot dead five members of the Ahmadiyya community on 30 October, as they left their mosque after early morning prayers in Ghatialian village, near Sialkot. Among the dead was a 16-year-old boy. Ten others were injured. No one is known to have been arrested in connection with the attack.

Another five Ahmadis, including two children, were murdered in their mosque in Sargodha on 10 November. Very early that morning a *mullah* (Islamic religious leader) led a crowd through the streets shouting anti-Ahmadi slogans. As the crowd approached the Ahmadi mosque, the people sheltering inside telephoned the police for protection. The crowd broke into the mosque and attacked and killed four Ahmadis, mutilating their bodies with axes. They then ransacked the building and set it on fire. Another of those injured in the attack, a 14-year-old schoolboy, later died of his injuries. The police arrived after the attack was over.

These attacks followed months of tension over religious issues in these villages, but the local authorities and the police did nothing to protect the Ahmadis or prevent these attacks.

Amnesty International has appealed to successive governments of Pakistan to abolish blasphemy laws, which effectively criminalize any exercise of the right to freedom of religion. We have also asked the authorities to protect Ahmadis against attack and to ensure that killings of Ahmadis are investigated and the perpetrators punished. We are particularly concerned that the government's consistent failure to investigate attacks and killings of members of religious minorities will encourage further human rights abuses against such groups.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ahmadis are considered heretical by orthodox Muslims in Pakistan, but see themselves as Muslim. The Ahmadiyya community was declared non-Muslim in 1974, and a number of laws were subsequently passed which made it a criminal offence for Ahmadis to profess, practice or preach their faith. Dozens of Ahmadis have been charged with religious offences, including calling for prayers, preaching their faith or calling their place of worship a "mosque". Several have been charged with blasphemy under section 295C of the Pakistani penal code, which carries a mandatory death penalty. This year in Sialkot district alone, criminal cases based on religion were brought against 23 Ahmadis.

Police investigation of some 20 killings of Ahmadis over the past seven years have been slow or non-existent. Not one of the perpetrators has been brought to justice.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- urging that immediate measures be taken to protect the Ahmadiyya community from further attacks;

- urging that all killings and attacks upon the Ahmadiyya community are fully investigated and the perpetrators punished;
- appealing to the authorities to abolish all relevant laws which criminalize acts constituting the exercise of the right to freedom of religion.

APPEALS TO:

General Pervez Musharraf
Chief Executive
National Security Council
General Block, Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Telegrams:General Pervex Musharraf, Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax: + 92 51 922 4768 (Fax numbers can be very difficult to reach. Please keep trying)

Salutation:Dear Chief Executive

COPIES TO:

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Moin-ud-din Haider
Minister for Interior, Narcotics Control and Capital Administration and
Development Decisions
Ministry of Interior and Narcotics
Control Block R, Pakistan Secretariat
Islamabad, Pakistan

Fax:+ 92 51 9213780 (Fax numbers can be very difficult to reach. Please keep trying)

Salutation: Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Pakistan accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 December 2000.