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Bangladesh: 22 Ahmadi families in danger

The lives of 22 Ahmadi families living in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, are in grave danger after members of the Islamist group International Khatme Nabuwat publicly threatened them with death today.

In an advert published in the Daily Inqilab today the group warned government authorities that "once loss of lives occur in this sensitive issue there is a possibility for the ongoing Anti-Qadianee (Ahmadi) movement to turn into a Qadianee-eliminating movement."

The advert comes out as the Islamist group announced its plans to march on the Ahmadiyya mosque in Ashkona, north Dhaka, tomorrow.

According to Amnesty International this is the latest in a series of attempts by Islamist groups to prevent the Ahmadis from openly practicing their beliefs.

"These kinds of attack have already caused the Ahmadis severe injuries and at least one death. How many more have to suffer before the government takes action?" said Abass Faiz, Amnesty International's South Asia Researcher.

Although security forces have in the past stopped the marchers from entering Ahmadiyya mosques, the government has failed to prevent Islamist groups from carrying out their campaign of hate speech and attacks against the Ahmadis.

Amnesty International is urging the Bangladeshi authorities to protect the Ahmadiyya community in Ashkona, to publicly denounce the threats against them and to bring those responsible for such incidents to justice.

Background Information

By targeting the Ahmadiyya community, Islamist groups are believed to be attempting to force the government to yield to their political demand for the introduction of more stringent Islamic law in Bangladesh. The groups are hoping to obtain mass support from poor and disenfranchised sections of society, whom they feel they could influence by appealing to their religious beliefs.

Over the past two years Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns about the safety of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh following documented abuses by Islamist groups including the killing

of an Ahmadi preacher, the illegal house arrest of Ahmadi villagers, street agitations against Ahmadis and the rising wave of "hate speech" and public rallies calling for the declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims. In January 2004, the Bangladeshi government initiated a ban on Ahmadiyya publications. The ban is currently suspended by the High Court.

Public Document

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