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Bangladesh: Ahmadiyya Community Under Attack

Amnesty International is deeply concerned for the safety of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh following threats by Islamist groups to attack Ahmadi places of worship during today's Friday prayers.

"The Government of Bangladesh must take decisive action against anti-Ahmadi agitators who have continued to attack members of the Ahmadiyya community. These groups have been allowed to attack Ahmadis with impunity", Amnesty International said.

Last Friday the groups attacked an Ahmadi place of worship in Brahmanbaria as a result of which at least 11 Ahmadis received serious injuries. Islamist groups have now threatened to carry out the attacks more frequently and without prior notice. They have named Ahmadi places of worship as the targets of their attacks every Friday during noon prayer time.

Places of worship in Narayangonj and Nakhhalpara are of special concern. In Nakhhalpara, flyers have been distributed calling for a culmination of a year long anti-Ahmadi campaign in a 'celebration' that will create 'mass explosion' and mark the completion of this campaign.

Announcements have been made in Narayangonj that attacks against the Ahmadiyya community will take place in the run up to Eid ul Fitr which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Amnesty International calls on the Government of Bangladesh to publicly condemn such acts of violence. They should also take diligent steps to ensure that members of the Ahmadiyya community are protected. Full security must be provided around all places of Ahmadi worship in Nakhhalpara, Narayangonj and Brahmanbaria which have been threatened with attack on 5 November 2004.

The organization also calls upon the Government of Bangladesh to launch a prompt and independent investigation into the attack in Brahmanbaria on 29 October 2004.

Background

Members of the "Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat", a religious community which considers itself a sect of Islam, have been the target of a campaign of hate speech organized by a number of Islamist groups in the country in recent months. Islamist groups are believed to be targeting the Ahmadiyya community in an attempt to force the government to declare them "non-Muslims".

In the past year, Amnesty International has documented abuses by anti-Ahmadi groups including the killing of an Ahmadi preacher, the "excommunication" and illegal house arrest of Ahmadi villagers, a ban on Ahmadiyya publications, street processions against Ahmadis and the rising wave of hate speech in

public rallies which incite acts of violence against the Ahmadis. When warned in advance, the government has acted to prevent the mobs supporting the Islamist groups from entering Ahmadi mosques, however, it has failed to bring to justice those committing human rights abuses against Ahmadis.

Public Document

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