



## **Pakistan's Monthly Extremism Watch**

*Compiled by National Initiative against Organised Crime (NIOC)*

### **May 2021**

- During the month of May, three very consequential events have been covered. The Dawn article 'Rejected Curricula Advice' not only highlights how deep extremism is entrenched in the country but also how difficult it is to create even a minor difference in the prevailing situation. It is evident from how even the state institutions denounced the one-man commission report suggesting some changes in the curriculum to promote tolerance.
- According to The Express Tribune article, the TLP accused govt of 'deceit. In its review petition in the court, it very vehemently claims to be a "peaceful, lawful and law-abiding political body and claims to never have involved in creating anarchy in the country through any kind of intimidation". They term the ban on TLP as "malevolent and susceptible to cause prejudice to the rights and liberty guaranteed by the Constitution. They considered it as their duty to save and secure Pakistan for the bright future of the Ummah. This is despite the murderous attacks by them on police in the recent demonstrations.

- A mob attack on a police station in Islamabad, yet again reminds us of the rising trend of mob justice and defiance of the lawful CJS in the very well protected capital of the country to lynch a man detained on a charge of blasphemy. It manifests the extremist's fervour and the state's extreme pliability to the extent of even not been able to effectively protect its law enforcement institutions.

- **Rejected curricula advice**
- **In review plea against ban, TLP accuses govt of 'deceit'**
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## **Rejected curricula advice**

Muhammad Amir Rana

THE reaction to the one-member Shoab Suddle Commission report, which recommended that content on Islamic teachings and history be only carried in Islamic Studies textbooks was not unexpected. The report came at a time when the protests of the now banned Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan was underway, and the state could not afford an upsurge in emotions.

The Council of Islamic Ideology and the National Commission on Minorities both denounced the report. However, it was on the directives of the governor of Punjab that the Department of Human Rights and Minorities Affairs withdrew the notification to implement the recommendations of the Supreme Court-appointed commission.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan had formed the one-member commission in 2014 to implement the judgement of the justice Tassaduq Jilani-led bench for the protection of minorities' rights. According to the judgement, the federal government was required to set up a task force for developing a strategy on religious tolerance, revisiting the curriculum for the promotion of a culture of tolerance, establishing a special quota for minorities in the federal and provincial services, acting against hate speech, and establishing a special force for the protection of places of worship of minorities.

Since then, Dr Suddle has been handling this multidimensional task. In the process of developing the recommendations on curriculum reforms, he consulted all relevant stakeholders from the power corridors, law enforcement, civil society and religious minority groups. Nor are the recommendations new, as one can find in them a reflection of the recommendations of multiple human rights bodies in the country. The government and state institutions may not pay attention to the recommendations for reasons of a possible backlash from religious groups and their allies in the media. Even previous federal and provincial governments had withdrawn curriculum changes whenever the clergy objected. The curriculum has become an area of influence for the clergy in Pakistan, and governments are often seen to accede to their demands in this.

Unfortunately, because of the state's negligence, religious extremism has become a regular feature of Pakistan's educational curricula for the past 40 years. For the state, the core purpose of education is to disseminate vague state ideologies as part of its nation-building project. The intellectual development of the citizens has never been the goal.

The textbooks promote narrow worldviews often at the cost of other faiths. The teaching of religion is not a problem in itself, but the way the majority faith is projected and imposed as the sole religious identity in Pakistan is highly challenging and one of the causes of radicalism that we see in a country that is home to diverse peoples, cultures, languages and belief systems.

The government is chiefly concerning itself with the curriculum of public-sector education; both the madressahs and the private education sector resist if the government tries to touch their curricula. Overall, public-sector education in Pakistan is facing a number of challenges and it has reached a level where diagnosis has become difficult. At one end, the madressah sector is encroaching on public-education spaces and at the other, the private-education sector is eyeing the public sector's educational infrastructure. Apart from employment concerns for its graduates, the madressahs have ideological motives. Islamic Studies and many other faculties of humanities in the public sector are dominated by madressah graduates. Largely, the private sector is the ultimate beneficiary of the poor quality found in public-education institutions. Now the private sector wants to capture the physical infrastructure of public institutions.

The same motives have been identified as being behind the removal of the chairman of the Higher Education Commission, who was resisting an ill-conceived programme of public-private partnerships, which was a means of facilitating the grabbing of university lands. A powerful education mafia wants the leftovers of public education in the country while proposing lucrative but non-transparent actions to the government.

The madressahs and the private-education sector have a common aim to destroy public education in the country; the former has ideological and economic motives, and the latter eyes wants profits. This is interesting because the government is supporting both the madressah and private sector in the name of reform. Some scholars lament that the state has privatised education. They assert that education is a fundamental right of the citizens, and the state has privatised the people's fundamental rights. On the other hand, madressahs have also

mushroomed, adding to the perception that the state has abandoned its responsibility of providing education to the country's children. While overall public education remains in tatters, the madressah sector, in contrast, has seen constant expansion over the last two decades. Government estimates put the number of madressahs at 35,000 with only 9,500 (about 27 per cent) of them registered with the madressah educational boards. Exam attendance figures show that some 275,000 students studied in madressahs registered with Tanzeematul Madaaris, and over 175,000 were enrolled in madressahs registered with different Wafaqul Madaaris.

The private sector has eroded and discredited public schools and is now eyeing higher education institutes. The government too is experimenting with public education and has come up with a plan to enforce a unified educational curriculum across the country. Called the Single National Curriculum, the new educational plan is premised on the idea that teaching more religion will produce better citizens, though Pakistan's experience shows that such a practice has only produced extremism in society. Nevertheless, the plan seeks to inject more religious content into the curricula. Though the SNC is currently being rolled out in phases, there is still no transparency. Based on the details available, some leading academicians believe that under the SNC, the government is planning to impose madressah education on non-madressah students. If this is the case then who will pay attention to Dr Suddle's recommendations? This will only serve as another reminder about the sorry state of the education system in the country.

Source: Dawn, May 2nd, 2021

## In review plea against ban, TLP accuses govt of 'deceit'

Rizwan Shehzad



**ISLAMABAD:** Days after being declared a banned outfit, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) on Sunday denied the charges levelled against it and accused the PTI-led government of “deceit” while dealing with it throughout the negotiations between the two sides.

The allegations have emerged on the heels of a resolution passed by the European Parliament seeking a review of the GSP Plus status granted to Pakistan.

The resolution expressed concerns over the increasing blasphemy accusations in Pakistan, the countrywide violent protests last month and the tabling of a TLP-dictated resolution by an MNA of the ruling PTI in the National Assembly that sought a debate on the expulsion of French ambassador over the publication of blasphemous caricatures in his country.

The Express Tribune “The government while dealing with the party [TLP] throughout acted with deceit, deception and chicanery,” Iftikhar Ahmed Malik and Ihsan Ali Arif, the lawyers representing the hard-line group, stated in a review application.

The plea was filed with the interior secretary against the ban imposed on the TLP by the federal cabinet under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997 for countrywide rioting.

Apparently taking advantage of the frequent practice of quashing cases against TLP leaders leading to zero convictions since the group's 2017 protests, the lawyers argued that the grounds mentioned in the notification for listing their client among banned outfits were “quite vague and unfounded beyond the ground realities and against the norms of natural justice”.

“There is no denying the fact that neither TLP nor anyone of its office-bearer has ever been involved in any terrorism activity, as evident from the June 2019 report of the interior ministry to the Election Commission of Pakistan,” the application read. “It is enough to make the notification not sustainable in the eyes of law,” it added.

“Any party leader or worker of the party has never been convicted for causing grievous bodily harm, hurt or death to the personnel of law enforcement agencies in the past nor ever attacked on civilians and officials in any manner whatsoever.”

The lawyers contended that the TLP was the fourth largest party of the country and the third largest in Punjab duly registered with the Election Commission of Pakistan since May 2017.

“The party has a right to assemble peacefully on the issues of Namooos-e-Risalat, its charter, Islam, Ummah and ideology of Pakistan,” the review plea read.

Contrary to what the nation has witnessed so far, the lawyers maintained that the TLP was a “peaceful, lawful and law-abiding political body which believes in political ethics and legal activities to achieve its goal and never involved in creating anarchy in the country through any kind of intimidation”.

They added that the TLP was “loyal to the country and its ideology”.

The TLP lawyers have also taken religious cover in its defence, saying the group represented the majority population of the country called “Ahle Sunnat Berelvi” which, historically, has never been involved in creating any hurdles, threatening, abusing, vandalising and ransacking any private or public property, nor ever blocked ambulances and health supplies.

Therefore, they added, the question of creating sense of fear and insecurity in the society did not arise.

“In fact, the public at large supports the ideology of the party.”

Calling the government notification a result of miscarriage of justice based on surmise and conjectures, the lawyers maintained that the material that the government relied upon was “vague and void having no legal sanctity”.

“In fact, the government treated the party in an undemocratic and inhuman way,” they wrote in the application.

In addition, the lawyers have provided the interior ministry with a 64 GB USB containing the “true material in which the officials of law enforcement agencies [can be seen] assaulting and killing innocent people illegally and unlawfully”.

They said the government had committed material irregularities, failed to perceive the true perspectives of law and facts and issued the notification without the applicability of the judicial mind.

Technically, the lawyers stated, there was no cavil to the proposition that falling in the category envisaged in the Section 11A (Organisations concerned in terrorism) of the ATA was a “condition precedent for invoking the provisions of Section 11B (Proscription of organisations)”.

The provisions of Section 11B of ATA could only be invoked if the provisions of Section 11A were in existence, they contended.

“In the absence of the terms of Section 11A, the party could not be declared to be involved in activities prejudicial to ideology, interest, security, unity, solidarity, peace and integrity of Pakistan.”

The TLP has prayed that the notification of April 15 be reviewed and withdrawn immediately being “malevolent and susceptible to cause prejudice to the rights and liberty guaranteed by the Constitution to save the law and fair play”.

“Pakistan is going through a very critical and sensitive situation. It is our duty to save and secure Pakistan for the bright future of the Ummah,” it read.

Source: The Express Tribune, May 03, 2021

# Mob attacks police station in capital

Munawar Azeem



A mob attacked a police station in the capital on Monday night in an attempt to lynch a man detained on a charge of blasphemy. — AFP/File

**ISLAMABAD: A mob attacked a police station in the capital on Monday night in an attempt to lynch a man detained on a charge of blasphemy.**

Senior police officers told Dawn that dozens of villagers wielding batons and iron rods attacked the Golra police station, asking the police for the custody of the suspect held for investigation into a complaint lodged against him on a blasphemy charge.

Acting on the complaint when law enforcers brought the suspect to the police station, scores of people gathered at its gate that the personnel had locked to keep the angry villagers outside. However, they managed to enter the police station after overpowering the guards.

The officials said they started damaging the offices of moharrar, investigating officers and the station house officer (SHO).

During the attack, the policemen tried to protect themselves as well as the suspect by locking themselves up in the lock-up and other rooms. They then sought help from a police contingent.



Upon getting information, police reinforcement, including personnel of counterterrorism department, anti-terrorist squad and anti-riot unit reached the spot and rescued the staff.

They resorted to excessive teargas shelling and baton-charged the protesting villagers who also put up resistance. However, after over an hour-long effort, the police succeeded to disperse them and get the police station vacated.

It was not confirmed till the filing of this report late into night how many policemen were injured in the attack.

While there was a complete blackout in the police station and its vicinity, the police shifted the man suspected of committing blasphemy to an undisclosed location under strict security.

The police cordoned off the locality and various police teams were patrolling the area on foot while all routes leading to the police station were sealed. ATS, CTD and ARU contingents were deployed at all the sealing points.

Assistant Inspector General of Police Mohammad Usman Tipu said there was information about the attack on the Golra police station, but “let things get clear and we will share details”.

Source: Dawn, May 18th, 2021

# Mob attack

IN yet another display of vigilante justice that has, unfortunately, become a regular feature of national life, a highly charged mob attacked a police station in the federal capital on Monday. Armed with batons and iron rods, the angry crowd surrounded the Golra police station and broke into the premises, damaging the offices of the moharrir, investigation officers and the station house officer. The law-enforcement officials tried to protect themselves by locking themselves up but had to seek help from another police contingent that included personnel of the anti-terrorist squad, the anti-riot unit and the counterterrorism department. It took a heavy police contingent an hour of tear-gas shelling and baton-charge before the charged crowd could be dispersed. The protesters wanted the custody of a suspect who was under investigation for a blasphemy-related complaint. Increasingly, there is a tendency to ignore the fact that the fora to probe any offence are the law enforcers and the courts, and not a violent mob. What incidents such as these show is a deep distrust of the judicial system. Even if someone is under investigation and in police custody, the vigilantes want to administer their own barbaric form of 'justice'.

It is unfortunate that no action has been taken to curb such behaviour and thinking — the consequences of not addressing the regressive ways of society. Mob justice is not limited to cases of alleged blasphemy. Mobs have beaten an alleged teen robber to death in Karachi (2019) and lynched two brothers in Sialkot under the very nose of police officials (2010), and ransacked a traffic police picket in Rawalpindi (2017). Not only do these incidents expose the weakness of the state and its inability to impose its writ and win the confidence of the public through good governance, they also expose the failings of our weak judicial system that often tends to favour the rich and powerful rather than protect the vulnerable. The country needs fair and transparent rule of law, and it needs it urgently.

Source: Editorial in Dawn, May 20th, 2021

### **About NIOC:**

National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) is the first-ever initiative against Organized Crime in Pakistan, which was launched in November 2019. It is led by a group of committed professionals and experts with law enforcement, media and other public service backgrounds. Through developing an empirical evidence-base and conducting hands-on consultations, NIOC aims to build community resilience and influence public policy to combat organized crime including terror financing, drug trafficking, human trafficking and cybercrime. With a complex governance structure having multiple layers of stakeholders, the criminal justice system and law enforcement apparatus require better coordination and capacity building. NIOC tries to identify the gaps and suggest improvements in the Criminal Justice System (CJS).



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