



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

*National Initiative against Organised Crime (NIOC)*

### **June 2021**

The month of June remained very eventful in terms of reporting on extremism. Eleven articles/news items are reported in this edition of Pakistan Monthly Extremism Watch. Topics, such as causal factors of extremism, criminal justice response in recent incidents, and some major incidents in Pakistan and Canada are covered and discussed.

The rising levels of Islamophobia has been highlighted in the context of recent attack on a Muslim family in Canada. While countries like Germany, France, the UK and the US have long been reporting hate-based crimes against Muslims, but Norway, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are added now in the list of countries considered hostile for Muslims. After the horrific, heart-wrenching event of the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand, the premeditated killing of four members of a family of Pakistani origin in Canada has added to the concerns of Muslims the world over. The feeling of being 'out-populated' is being diagnosed as a major cause for the terrorist acts and is being encouraged through social media.

Five news items from within Pakistan indicate instance of maltreatment of minorities and the oft overlooked incidents of alleged forced conversions and marriages and wrong convictions by the trial courts.

Killing of two police officers protecting polio workers; a cleric threatening Malala of suicide attack; obstructing a funeral of an Ahmadi; and wrong conviction of a Christian couple in the first place speaks about how extremism is unfortunately entrenched in our system and how the criminal justice system response is sluggish.

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## **Past policies blamed for radicalisation of society**

Saleem Shahid

Speakers at a workshop on Wednesday held policies of the past decades responsible for the growing radicalisation of society.

Organised by the Islamabad-based think tank, Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), the two-day educational and training workshop was part of a nationwide programme aimed at promotion of interfaith harmony among the youths.

The speakers said that in the contemporary environment, members of minority religious groups found it hard to live in peace with equal rights and dignity. Even constitutional safeguards and other legal protections have done little to ensure equality of citizenship for all, they added.

Social researcher and author of the book *Radicalisation in Pakistan* Safdar Hussain Sial said the discrimination against religious minorities is widespread and systematic and includes economic exclusion. He said the minorities often lack equal access to employment opportunities which is a key factor behind the immense economic disparity across different religious groups in Pakistan. In certain cases, members of minority communities are denied critical identity or citizenship documents which, among other things, cut them off from the job market, Mr Sial said.

He said the anti-minority sentiments were further aggravated by the weaponization of certain laws such as those criminalising blasphemy or targeting a particular religious group. The blasphemy law had been misused against the non-Muslim and Muslim communities alike, leading to many incidents of mob violence, Mr Sial said, adding that in such a scenario the role of youths in creating a more tolerant and peaceful society was crucial.

Security analyst and Director of PIPS Mohammad Amir Rana revealed that around 65,000 Rohingya Muslims had been living in desperate conditions in Karachi for decades.

Stressing the significance of citizenship, Mr Rana said depriving an individual of citizenship was depriving him of fundamental rights and basic social services such as health and education. The Rohingya community continued to languish as stateless people in Pakistan, he added.

University students from across Balochistan participated in the workshop and exchanged thoughts around the theme of interfaith harmony. The participants were also given a quick training in effective use of social media tools by senior journalist and social media activist Sabookh Syed. The Pakistani youths could use the power of social media to support peace and harmony and oppose discrimination against minorities, he said.

Source: Dawn, June 3, 2021

## LHC acquits Christian couple in blasphemy case

Rana Bilal



Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta were sentenced to death by a court in Toba Tek Singh in 2014. — AFP/File

**The Lahore High Court (LHC) acquitted a Christian couple who were sentenced to death more than seven years ago for committing blasphemy.**

Shafqat Emmanuel, the watchman of a school in Toba Tek Singh district's Gojra, and his wife Shagufta Masih were arrested in July 2013 under Section 295-C [use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him)] of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) on the charge of sending blasphemous text messages to the complainants, shopkeeper Malik Mohammad Hussain and Gojra tehsil bar's former president Anwar Mansoor Goraya.

In April 2014, the couple were sentenced to death for blasphemy and fined Rs100,000 each by an additional district and sessions judge in Toba Tek Singh.

The couple, who denied the charge against them, had subsequently filed an appeal against their conviction in the LHC. They were represented in the legal proceedings by Advocate Saiful Mulook, while the complainants were represented by Advocate Chaudhry Ghulam Mustafa.

After hearing arguments from both sides, a two-member bench of the LHC overturned the couple's conviction, paving the way for their release. The court's detailed judgement is currently awaited.

In April this year, the European Parliament had adopted a resolution calling for a review of the GSP+ status granted to Pakistan in view of an "alarming" increase in the use of blasphemy accusations in the country, among other concerns.

The resolution expressed particular concern regarding the case of Shafqat and Shagufta, saying "The evidence on which the couple were convicted can be considered deeply flawed."

It had noted that the couple had allegedly been in an argument with the accuser not long before the accusations were made.

The resolution, which was passed overwhelmingly — 662 to 3 — with 26 not voting, had also stated that the couple's appeal had been "postponed multiple times".

Human rights groups say blasphemy laws are often misused to persecute minorities or even against Muslims to settle personal rivalries. Such accusations can end up in lynching or street vigilantism.

Around 80 people are known to be imprisoned in the country on such charges — half of whom face life in prison or the death penalty — according to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Source: Dawn, June 3, 2021

## Agreement reached over burials in Sheikhpura village after mob obstructs Ahmadi funeral



Videos shared on social media showed a crowd of locals gathered at the graveyard during the Ahmadi woman's funeral. —

An agreement was reached regarding the burial of members of the Ahmadi community between local ulema and the district administration in Punjab's Sheikhpura district on Wednesday, days after a mob allegedly tried to prevent the burial of an Ahmadi woman.

The June 5 incident, which took place in a village near Safdarabad in Sheikhpura, was first highlighted on social media, with citizens and celebrities urging authorities to take action against those preventing the burial.

After days of tension between the two groups over the issue, which also saw some people resort to aerial firing, negotiations were held on Wednesday involving religious leaders from both sides, and the Sheikhpura deputy commissioner and district police.

It was decided after the talks that "legal action will be taken against the people who took the law into their hands by brandishing weapons," said a statement issued by the spokesperson for Sheikhpura district police, Wajid Abbas. It added that as per the agreement, members of the Ahmadi community would bury their deceased in pre-determined sites.

Speaking to Dawn.com, Abbas said that the incident took place on June 5 after some locals opposed the burial of the Ahmadi woman in the area of the local graveyard that they claimed belonged to them.

He added that there was no desecration of graves in the incident as had been reported on social media, and that the two sides had reached an agreement.

According to Sadr Anjuman Ahmadiyya spokesperson Aamir Mehmood, the incident took place in Chak 79 of Sheikhpura district. He alleged that some villagers had also made announcements at mosques in the area to not allow the burial of the deceased woman.

"The villagers tried to stop the burial but the woman was laid to rest," he said. He said that the villagers tried to stop the burial even though one portion of the graveyard had been designated for Ahmadis. "The land was allotted to the Ahmadi community," he said.

When the incident was brought to the notice of Azhar Mashwani — the Punjab chief minister's focal person for digital media — he said that the "longstanding issue of the graveyard" had been resolved.

He said that according to the report from the district administration, two different areas had been demarcated for both the communities after an agreement between the elders in the presence of the local administration.



"Police and the administration reached as soon as the incident was reported," he said. When asked about what action was being taken against the perpetrators, Mashwani said that legal proceedings were linked with the complainant's application.

"Apparently they have withdrawn application/complaint after mutual agreement of both communities and resolution of the issue," he said.

The episode involving the mob's obstruction of the funeral prompted criticism on social media.

Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims in Pakistan through a constitutional amendment passed on September 7, 1974, during the tenure of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

This measure was later followed with Gen Ziaul Haq making it a punishable offence for Ahmadis to call themselves Muslim or to refer to their faith as Islam.

Last year saw an uptick in the number of attacks targeting members of the community in Pakistan.

In November, an Ahmadi doctor was shot dead while his father and two uncles were injured after a teenage boy opened fire on them in their home in Punjab's Nankana Sahib district.

An Ahmadi professor was shot dead in a targeted attack in Peshawar, allegedly over his religious beliefs, in October.

In July, an American national, Tahir Naseem, was shot dead by a teenager in a Peshawar courtroom. It later turned out that the deceased had reportedly left the Ahmadi community.

Source: Dawn, June 09, 2021



# Ontario attack

**IT is the stuff of nightmares. A Pakistani family that had moved to Canada apparently to build a better life was mowed down by a hate-filled, sick mind as they went out for their evening walk in the city of London, Ontario. This gruesome crime has sent shockwaves across Canada as well as Pakistan for its sheer barbarity. Four members of the Afzaal family lost their lives in this clearly Islamophobic attack, while a child survivor is receiving treatment.**

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has rightly termed it a “terrorist act” while a local police official says the family was targeted “because of their Islamic faith”. The attack in Ontario highlights the growing toxic nexus between Islamophobia and white supremacy in Western states, and the need for foreign governments to check this dangerous trend before more valuable lives are lost.

In many Western states, far-right groups and individuals have begun to assert themselves violently. Perhaps the bloodiest example of this was witnessed in the New Zealand city of Christchurch in 2019, when an Australian extremist went on a murderous rampage targeting some of the city’s mosques. Earlier, in 2017, Canada had witnessed an outrage when a white supremacist had targeted a Quebec City mosque. Moreover, hate crimes targeting Asian-Americans have multiplied in the US during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, while in March, US intelligence chiefs raised the alarm over possible domestic mass-casualty attacks against civilians by white supremacists.

There are different reasons for the growth of white extremism and terrorism. Much of this has been fuelled by conspiracy theories such as the ‘great replacement’ idea which roughly states that immigrants, particularly Muslims and people of colour, will ‘replace’ native Caucasians and Europeans. This hateful rhetoric has found many takers as immigrants move to the West in considerable numbers and in many cases, after years of hard work, establish themselves successfully in their new homes. For the far right, these immigrants are the perfect targets, as they are blamed for taking local jobs during periods of economic stagnation and ‘sully’ the local culture due to their faith and practices.

The response of the Canadian government has been admirable, as Mr Trudeau and senior members of the country’s political establishment have rushed to the site of the tragedy to console Muslim citizens and condemn this act of terrorism. In many ways, this mirrors New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern’s impressive handling of the Christchurch tragedy. Leaders of Muslim states, including Pakistan, should learn lessons from their foreign counterparts on how to treat minorities with respect and compassion, particularly after terrorist attacks. The child survivor of this outrage must be provided the mental and emotional care he needs after witnessing such massive trauma. Western states need to do some serious soul-searching to

counter the twin ogres of Islamophobia and white supremacist terrorism before more damage is done.

Source: Dawn, June 10, 2021

# Cleric, who threatened Malala of suicide attack, arrested

Ramzan Seemab



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai poses for photographs during the Education and Development G7 Ministers Summit in Paris, France, July 5, 2019.

**A cleric from Nowshera district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), who threatened the world's youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai with a suicide attack during a speech, has been arrested by Lakki Marwat police.**

Complainant SHO Wasim Sajjad, in an FIR registered against the cleric at Pizo police station in Lakki Marwat, stated that Mufti Sardar Ali Haqqani delivered a speech at Speen Jumat, Wahid Ghari in Peshawar.

He said that the video of the speech was widely circulated on social media in which he could be seen standing armed on the stage and asking people to take the law into their own hands and carry out a suicide attack on Malala Yousafzai.

“He [the cleric] could be heard saying that he would carry out a suicide attack on Malala when she visits Pakistan. This highly enraged people,” read the FIR. Haqqani was booked under 16 MPO and 7ATA.

Police officials told The Express Tribune that the cleric was present in Pizo when he was arrested Tuesday night and booked for inciting hatred.

They said that the cleric earlier probably escaped to his hometown Nowshera to avoid the arrest when the video went viral and was widely condemned.

The suspect had also previously mocked Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) in another video after which he was arrested by Nowshera police.

Later, the cleric released a video, asking people to follow the coronavirus SOPs.

Source: The Express Tribune, June 09, 2021

# Violence against Muslims

**That hatred against Islam and its followers in the West has assumed terroristic proportions is not debatable. While countries like Germany, France, the UK and the US have long been reporting hate-based crimes against Muslims, those that are considered no-crime zones — like Norway, Australia, New Zealand and Canada — are now not safe for Muslims. At a time when the horrific, heart-wrenching memories of the Christchurch massacre had yet to fade from the senses, the premeditated killing of four members of a family of Pakistani origin in Canada has added to the concerns of Muslims the world over.**

The family loved to walk — and socialise. They would walk almost every evening. But their outing on the previous Sunday turned out to be their last. While this Canadian-Pakistani family of five was waiting to cross a street in the London neighbourhood of Ontario in Canada, a truck driver, 20, intentionally ran over them just because they were Muslims. Nine-year-old Faez Afzaal is the only survivor of this act of Islamophobia, though with serious, non-life-threatening injuries. Faez lost his whole family — his father Syed Afzaal, 46; his wife, Madiha Salman, 44; his sister Yumnah Afzaal , 15; and his 74-year-old grandmother.

True that Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, has acknowledged it to be a “terrorist” act and made it loud and clear that “Islamophobia has no place in any of our communities”. It’s appreciable that the local police have no hesitation in describing the incident as a “planned, premeditated act motivated by hate” and that the mayor has called it an “act of mass murder, perpetrated against Muslims. Pretty timely as well is the UN secretary general’s reaction that carries a call for all to “stand united against Islamophobia and all forms of hatred, now more than ever”.

However, all this has failed to stop the rising trend of Islamophobic attacks in the Western world. It’s now time to take some concrete action. There is now need for the world to adopt laws binding on the global population, apart from devising social mechanisms, to stop this growing violence against the followers of Islam. The Muslim Ummah too needs to take serious steps to bring the issue on the top of the world agenda.

Source: The Express Tribune, June 10, 2021

## 2 policemen on polio duty gunned down

Hidayatur Rehman Hoti



Shahkir, Syed Raza Ali.

### **Two policemen were gunned down while on polio duty in Mardan district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P).**

Talking to The Express Tribune District Police Officer (DPO) Dr Zahid said that two policemen were returning from polio security duty at around 2 O'clock in the afternoon when they were attacked by unidentified terrorists. He said that both had been shot in the head and soon after the attack a manhunt had been launched in the area.

Palo Dheri village, where the incident took place in Rustam, borders with Buner and is considered a difficult mountainous area. It is already infamous as in the past several large scale operations were carried out against militants in the area in which police, security forces and terrorists sustained heavy losses.

The unfortunate policemen have been identified as Syed Raza Ali and Shahkir. The bodies were first discovered by the local residents who informed police about it. A large contingent of police reached the area and shifted the bodies to hospital but they had already breathed their last.

Police said that both the constables were residents of Bakhshali village in Mardan. Their last rites were performed at Mardan Police Lines attended by IGP, DPO and other high-ranking officials. The dead bodies were then sent to their ancestral villages where they were laid to rest.

Talking to media IGP Sanaullah Abassi said that policemen were killed but the lives of polio workers were saved. He said that there was a threat alert too and they were acting cautiously too.

“An attack of this nature in Mardan Division has taken place after a year. One year ago in Swabi polio workers were targeted. We are also trying to crack down on the remaining miscreants in the area who have escaped the previous operations. We are working hard to this end,” he said, adding that a crackdown in K-P was in full swing and two terrorists had been killed in Bannu.

Source: The Express Tribune, June 10, 2021

## Gujranwala Christian man seeks justice for minor daughter allegedly converted and married

Imran Gabol



A local court allowed the girl to go with her purported husband after she recorded a statement in his support. —

**The father of a Christian girl who was allegedly kidnapped, converted to Islam and forcibly married to a middle-aged man in Ferozewala area of Gujranwala is seeking justice for his family.**

Shahid Gill, who is a tailor from Arif Town, said his neighbour, S\*, offered to hire his 13-year-old daughter as a salesgirl at his makeup accessories shop. However, Gill refused to send his daughter to work at S's shop.

He said that S, who is Muslim, continued to ask for help in his business, and because of his (Gill's) poor background, he subsequently allowed his daughter to work at his neighbour's store.

Gill told Dawn.com that on May 20, he found his daughter absent at home and was informed by some neighbours that the girl was seen going somewhere on a pickup truck with S and some other men and women.

He said he lodged a kidnapping complaint in Ferozewala police station and a case was registered on May 29 against S and seven others.



Investigation Officer SI Liaqat told Dawn.com that two of the suspects were taken into custody but the girl later appeared before a local court where her statement was recorded under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The girl submitted in the court that she had left her house willingly to convert to Islam and later contract marriage with S, according to the police officer.

He said the court had allowed the girl to go with her purported husband and ordered the police to quash the case, following which police had implemented the court order.

However, the girl's father, Gill, said his daughter is 13-and-a-half years old and therefore the court should not have accepted her statement of converting and marrying willingly.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 states that a marriage cannot be registered of a "child" — meaning a male who is under 18 years of age, and a female who is under 16 years of age.

A birth certificate of the girl issued by the Punjab government and shared by her family showed that she was born on October 17, 2007, meaning she is 13 as of now.

Gill told Dawn.com that after hearing his concerns, the judge had said he would go with the girl's statement.

He said S was already married and had four children including three daughters and a son.

The complainant alleged that his daughter was lured and converted and married against her will and that she might have done this under duress.

He demanded of the authorities to confirm his daughter's age from the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) and provide them justice.

Gill said he had also submitted another application to police to hold an inquiry into the matter.

Minority rights organisation Center for Social Justice (CSJ) had said last year that more than 160 questionable conversions of women and underage girls from religious minorities in the country had been reported in the media between 2013 and 2020.

According to CSJ data, around 52 per cent of the incidents of alleged forced conversions had occurred in Punjab, 44pc in Sindh, 1.23pc each in the federal area and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while one case (0.62pc) was reported from Balochistan.

The Associated Press had reported in December that nearly 1,000 girls from religious minorities are forced to convert to Islam in the country each year, largely to pave the way for marriages that are under the legal age and non-consensual. It quoted human rights activists as saying that the practice had accelerated during lockdowns against the coronavirus, when girls were out of school and more visible, bride traffickers were more active on the internet and families were more in debt.

Following the publication of the report, Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry had stated that there were no "institutionalised" forced conversions in Pakistan.

He said that probes into the allegations of forced conversions revealed that most of them were "fictitious, politically motivated or based on the mala fide intention of our detractors to malign Pakistan in the international community".

Source: Dawn, June 15, 2021

## SMOKERS' CORNER: Pandering to Extremists

Nadeem F. Paracha



**The Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan constitutes just one percent of the country's population. Yet, almost every other day, social media sites are flooded with photos, videos and information highlighting the discrimination that this community has continued to suffer ever since its status was constitutionally reduced to that of a non-Muslim 'minority' in what became the 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan.'**

This happened in 1974, just a year after a new constitution was adopted by the parliament.

Even though the country's first constitution passed by a constituent assembly in 1956 had also declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic, the name was changed to just 'Pakistan' when, in 1958, Gen Ayub Khan overthrew the government in a military coup. A new constitution passed in 1962 expanded the name to 'Republic of Pakistan.' However, it was soon changed back to 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan.' But interestingly, it kept appearing as Republic of Pakistan in state and government documents. This changed when the official name was reinforced in the 1973 constitution.

It is important to know this. In 1974, when anti-Ahmadiyya riots broke out, Islamist parties demanded that the 'Ahmadiyya question' and/or their status as a Muslim sect be discussed in the National Assembly. In his book, *Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Pakistan*, the constitutional expert Rafi

Raza writes that PM Bhutto refused to let the assembly discuss the issue because the parliament was not a place to debate theological matters.

But the Islamist parties retorted that since the country was now an Islamic Republic, its elected members had every right to discuss matters of religion. In 2013, while researching the 1974 ouster of the Ahmadiyya community from the fold of Islam through the 2nd Constitutional Amendment, I noticed that, till the late 1980s, not much was written about the issue. Even to this day, when comparatively more debates take place on the matter, it seems that most speakers still have a somewhat limited knowledge of the issue.

As Umer Farooq, in his essay for the Pak Institute of Peace Studies, and Ali Usman Qasmi, in his 2014 book *Politics of Religious Exclusion*, demonstrate, the 2nd Amendment did not criminalise the Ahmadiyya from continuing to practise their beliefs or call themselves Muslim. This was actually criminalised a decade later, in April 1984, through an ordinance (Ordinance XX) issued by the Gen Zia dictatorship. It forbade the Ahmadiyya from calling themselves Muslim. They were also disallowed to call their places of worship as mosques or practise Islamic rituals.

My research shows that incidents of violence, against the Ahmadiyya, that had suddenly peaked just before the 1974 amendment, drastically dropped after the Ahmadiyya were declared as a religious minority. But the research also shows a gradual increase in violence against the community only after Ordinance XX was introduced. By then, the state too had become a party to the violence.

Acts such as attacks on Ahmadiyya places of worship and graveyards top the list after 1984. But then there is also the question of how, in 1974, a parliament that just had a handful of members from Islamist parties — whereas the majority of parliamentarians were from overtly secular and quasi-secular outfits — agreed to enact a constitutional amendment that was tabled and debated through an entirely theological point of view?

The origin of what led to the amendment is well known. A clash between Ahmadiyya youth and members of the student-wing of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) in the Punjab city of Rabwah triggered the wrath of Islamist parties, whose anti-Ahmadiyya movement in 1953 had been crushed by the military.

When the Islamist parties began to protest more vehemently on the streets, Bhutto asked a judge to head an inquiry commission to investigate the Rabwah incident. According to Umer Farooq, as violence in Punjab gained momentum, Bhutto began to see it as a conspiracy against his government.



During this period, India had tested a nuclear device. Farooq writes that Bhutto was of the view that the anti-Ahmadiyya issue was constructed by his enemies at home and abroad to undermine his planned response to the Indian nuclear test. Bhutto also accused the leader of the left-wing National Awami Party (NAP), Wali Khan, of being part of the plot because Wali had met the Afghan President Sardar Daud, who was a passionate advocate of Pashtunistan.

In June 1974, as the Bhutto regime continued to warn that the anti-Ahmadiyya riots were a plot to destabilise Pakistan through Islamist parties, Shia groups too began to demand the ouster of the Ahmadiyya from Islam. When the intensity of the violence increased, opposition parties, both Islamist and secular, began accusing Bhutto of trying to “put the matter in cold storage.”

The June 4, 1974 issue of Dawn quotes an angry Bhutto asking the opposition, “Are we to allow cannibalism among the citizens of the country?” However, eventually, Bhutto decided to allow the parliament to debate the matter and suggested that a resolution against the community be passed. But the Islamist parties insisted that the Ahmadiyya should be constitutionally declared non-Muslim.

Some of the most heated debates on the matter in the parliament were held during in-camera sessions, and their minutes are not available. Even the inquiry report of the Rabwah incident conducted by the appointed judge is still classified. Findings of the parliament committee that interviewed religious scholars, including those from the Ahmadiyya community, too remain under wraps. Why?

Raza writes that some contents of the report were leaked to the parliamentarians. And it is this that sealed the fate of the Ahmadiyya. No other source mentions this, though. The opposition was able to table a bill to amend the Constitution and turn the Ahmadiyya into a minority.

Bhutto allowed his party’s members in the parliament ‘to vote (for or against) the bill according their own conscience.’ On September 17, 1974, the bill was passed with an overwhelming majority by a parliament with a handful of Islamist members. Most members of the left-wing NAP

and the ruling 'socialist' Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) also voted for the amendment. The 1984 Ordinance XX was, however, issued by a reactionary dictatorship. The rest is a history of persecution, discrimination and mob attacks, now even between recognised sects and sub-sects.

A weak opposition had cornered a majority regime through a tricky theological issue. The government tried to usurp the issue in a bid to neutralise the opposition. Instead, the move strengthened the government's opponents. The amendment and then the 1984 ordinance flung open a Pandora's box, from which bigotry and violence have continued to spew.

Source: Dawn, EOS, June 20, 2021

# The roots of hate

Zarrar Khuhro

THE brutal murder of a Pakistani-origin family in the city of London, Ontario, by 20-year-old Nathaniel Veltman caused a wave of outrage in Canada. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau openly condemned it as an act of terror and thousands rallied to pay respects to the slain members of the family and to pray for the health of nine-year old Fayez, the sole survivor of this hate crime. There is no doubt this was a genuine outpouring of revulsion at the crime, and of sympathy for those so brutally slain.

But beneath the surface is a miasma, the odour of which leaked out even during this time of tragedy.

Soon after the attack, a TikTok video was uploaded in which a man records three Muslim women walking down the road. As they stroll down the sidewalk, the man is heard saying: "Where's Nathaniel Veltman when you need him?" Then a truck passes by and the man exclaims: "Buddy, you missed them. Back up," before bursting into laughter.

In another video, a man named Craig Harrison said "he was surprised it [the attack] hasn't happened sooner", adding that "Canadians are rightfully getting upset about being out-populated in their own country by people from different cultures who don't respect Western values". Harrison, who has a criminal history that includes racially motivated attacks, was once the mayoral candidate for Georgetown, Ontario.

The reference to being 'out-populated' is a popular theme in modern neo-Nazi and white supremacist thought, and revolves around the belief that white people are being 'outbred' by other races in the West, and that this is both part of and a precursor to what they call the 'Great Replacement'. This was also the title of the manifesto published by Brenton Tarrant, the terrorist who massacred 51 worshippers at a Christchurch mosque in New Zealand in 2019.

As investigations continue, one question that will be asked is 'where was Nathaniel Veltman radicalised?' And one can safely surmise that perhaps more so than his immediate 'real-world' social circles, he was introduced to and indoctrinated by white supremacy online. That was the case with Alexander Bissonnette, who shot and killed six people at a Quebec City mosque in 2017, and was known to be a right-wing troll in online spaces.

How poisonous is this online discourse? In an analysis for the Globe and Mail, Amarnath Amarasingam and Jacob Davey write that in 2020 they examined close to 2,500 accounts, channels and groups on various social media platforms that disseminated extremist right-wing propaganda, producing "nearly four million pieces of individual content", that were spread far and wide.

These groups, they concluded, were resistant to attempts to de-platform them and were incredibly resilient and determined in their effort to “drive hatred against minority communities and polarise Canadian society”.

More, despite their ideological differences, these groups converge on their shared hatred from immigrants, and in particular, their hate for Muslims. And they are increasing in both number and appeal.

Much like a plant needs suitable soil and conditions in order to be able to thrive, so too does the seed of hate need an enabling environment to be able to bloom into a bloody harvest. Across the Western world, we have seen a steady rise in right-wing ideology to the extent that many of the talking points of what was once the extremist fringe have become part of mainstream political discourse, which in turn legitimises the views of the (once) far right, bringing them closer to the centre and thus to wider acceptability. This, in turn, drives more and more people into their ranks, and by and large they avoid the label of ‘terrorist’ even when they carry out politically motivated attacks, simply because the diffused nature of the white supremacist movement means that individuals may not subscribe to, or be members of, specific organisations.

Canada is no exception; In Canada, as in much of the West, Muslims remain the most common target of online hate, outstripping any other group and the attacks are increasingly moving from online spaces to real life. This isn’t taking place in a vacuum: a 2020 report on Islamophobia in Canada submitted to the UN revealed that 46 per cent of Canadians have an ‘unfavourable’ view of Islam — more than for any other group. More than half of the people living in Ontario felt that Muslim doctrines ‘promote violence’ while 42pc of Canadians think that discrimination against Muslims is ‘mainly their fault’.

The report also points out the role of the media in creating this environment, noting that while negative stories about Muslims abound in Canadian media, attacks on Muslims receive relatively less coverage; the Quebec mosque shooting for “five minutes of airtime” on CBC the night it occurred while the 2017 London Borough attacks in the UK were covered for hours with live commentary. No wonder, then, that for too many Nathaniel Veltman is not someone to condemn, but to emulate.

Source: Dawn, June 21, 2021



## Sargodha ATC sentences man to death for killing bank manager over blasphemy allegations

Imran Gabol



An anti-terrorism court in Sargodha sentenced on Wednesday a man to death after finding him guilty of murdering his employer over blasphemy allegations last year. —

An anti-terrorism court in Sargodha on Wednesday sentenced a man to death after finding him guilty of murdering his employer over blasphemy allegations last year.

The convict, Ahmed Nawaz, who was posted as a security guard at the National Bank of Pakistan branch in Quaidabad tehsil of Punjab's Khushab district, had shot dead the branch manager, Malik Imran Hanif, in November last year.

The guard had subsequently claimed to have killed Hanif over committing blasphemy, with a video circulating on social media in which he could be heard saying that the deceased manager had "insulted the prophet".

Other videos shared on Twitter showed the guard being greeted by a crowd of supporters after killing the manager. The security guard and the mob then raised slogans as they walked on the street.

The suspect was then joined by leaders of a religious group, all of whom raised slogans and addressed supporters from the rooftop of the Quaidabad Police Station. Police personnel could be seen standing nearby, recording videos.

In another video, a maternal uncle of the deceased manager had said that the security guard had shot dead Hanif due to a personal issue. He had also denied the suspect's claim that Hanif had insulted any prophet.

Police had later arrested Nawaz and charged him for the murder under the anti-terrorism law. At the time, Khushab District Police Officer (DPO) retired Capt Tariq Wilayat had told Dawn.com that the security guard and the manager had been quarrelling for some time. The guard was reportedly fired a few months ago; he was subsequently rehired and had an argument with Hanif a few days ago, the officer had said.

On Wednesday, the ATC found Nawaz guilty under Sections 302 (Punishment of qatl-i-amd) and 353 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) of the Pakistan Penal Code as well as Section 7 (Punishment for acts of terrorism) of the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

Additionally, the court sentenced the convict to two years' additional punishment, besides imposing two fines of Rs500,000 and Rs100,000, respectively.

Source: Dawn, June 30, 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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