



Pakistan's Monthly Extremism Watch

Compiled by National Initiative against Organised Crime (NIOC)

Centre for Governance Research-Pakistan

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The current issue of Extremism Watch reports four news items concerning cases of blasphemy, treatment of Hindu minority, and enforcement of Islamic dress code by the Medical Superintendent Bahawal Victoria Hospital.

- Two cases of blasphemy highlight the fact that the law is invoked not just against the minorities but against the Muslims too. Also, not just against the male gender but against the female as well. Very rarely done but death sentence has been awarded to a woman convicted for blasphemy.
- Allegedly, a Hindu family has been tortured for fetching drinking water from a mosque and Police remained hesitant to act due to inference of a local political influential. It highlights, how these issues are persistent, especially in the areas of Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan and the adjoining areas of Sindh. This seems like a hotspot of religious, and anti-Hindu extremism.
- More worrisome is the enforcement of dress code for the hospital staff by an individual (MS) to 'preach Islam and reform the society'. Can the state allow this sort of vigilantism and enforcement of laws to the individuals, that is a crucial question, the society needs to address.

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Bahawal Victoria Hospital MS introduces 'women-centric' dress code



Newly appointed medical superintendent of the Bahawal Victoria Hospital (BVH) Dr Muhammad Younus Warraich has banned jeans in the hospital and made dupatta or scarf compulsory for the women medical officers (WMOs) and paramedics.

The step for introducing a dress code has reportedly been taken by the new head of the hospital to 'preach Islam and reform the society'.

A notification signed by Mr Warraich, under the titled DRESS CODE RULES IN B.V. HOSPITAL BAHAWALPUR PREMISES, has two categories of 'ALLOWED' and 'NOT ALLOWED'.

The latter gives the list of the dress that's not allowed in the hospital. It includes "jeans/tights (but only with knee length shirt), high-up trousers/capri above ankle, tight fitted clothes, see-through clothes, heavy /tacky bangles or rings, sleeveless/half sleeves clothes, heavy make-up (especially dark lipsticks), untied long hairs, high heels (making loud sounds and turning heads of everyone), extreme hairstyles (especially high buns like hump of camels), low neckline (front and back), nail paint on long nails, slippers and anklets (Pajaib)".

The "ALLOWED" category includes, "shalwar kameez or trousers with long shirts, dupatta/scarf, minimal jewellery like studs/tops, simple ring, or a chain with locket, sleeves below elbow, lab coat (compulsory in hospital premises), maternity gowns/suitable dresses (during antenatal period) and scrubs with long sleeves that can be folded for females".

It is noteworthy that code looks to be mostly women centric.

Talking to Dawn, Mr Warraich confirmed that lab coats and maternity gowns during operations had been made compulsory on the hospital premises along with dupatta/scarf with minimum jewellery for women medical officers. Explaining the move, he said the step had been taken to preach Islam, promote religious values and reform the society.

BOOKED: Uch Sharif police on Thursday registered a murder case against a gypsy man whose son and daughter-in-law, who had got married recently against the wishes of the families, were found dead at home two days back.

Chaman and Ulfat had tied the knot against the will of the families at Kabirwala in Khanewal district. Ulfat had run away from her home to marry Chaman as her family opposed her marriage. They later shifted to Mohalla Uch Bokhari of Uch Sharif and started living with Chaman's father, Faqir Muhammad alias Malang. They were afraid that Ulfat's family might kill them. They were found dead on Tuesday while Faqir went missing.

Ulfat's mother, Shehnaz Akhtar, reached Uch Sharif from Kabirwala on Thursday and police surprisingly registered a murder case against Faqir on her complaint.

In her complaint, Shehnaz said Chaman and Ulfat had got married on their own after running away from home. She alleged that Faqir, along with his accomplices, allegedly intoxicated the couple and strangled them with a string when they were unconscious.

Police, after a post-mortem at the Uch Sharif Rural Health Centre (RHC), handed over the bodies of the couple to Shehnaz who laid them to rest. Faqir is still missing.

Earlier, police thought the couple might have committed suicide. However, there was no obvious reason for the couple to kill themselves. No reason was given by the complainant as to why Faqir would kill his son even if he did not like his daughter-in-law. It's noteworthy that the couple was afraid that the girl's family might kill them for honour.

REMAND: Anti-Terrorist Court judge Nasir Hussain granted physical remand of 85 suspects arrested in the Bhong (Rahim Yar Khan) temple demolition case.

Rahim Yar Khan police transported the accused here and produced them before the ATC on Wednesday and Thursday.

The policemen told Dawn that police had yet to recover the Hindu sacred religious sculptures allegedly broken the attack. The ATC judge granted police physical remand of 10 days.

The court sources said the ATC released 10 suspects in the case as they were innocent.

IUB: The Islamia University Bahawalpur (IUB) and World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF-Pakistan) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for promotion of research and launching welfare projects.

The MoU was signed by IUB pro-VC Prof Dr Naveed Akhtar and WWF-Pakistan Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Hammad Naqi Khan. On the occasion, they said training courses and workshops for capacity building for the academics and researchers would be organised in addition to research projects.

Source: Dawn, September 3, 2021

Man booked for ‘blasphemy’

A man was booked on charge of allegedly burning pages of the Holy Quran at his house at Chak 403, Tandlianwala. Near Faisalabad.

The police registered a case against the suspect under section 295-B on the complaint of a prayer leader of local mosque, Qari Allah Bukhsh, of Chak 503-GB.

The complainant alleged that on hearing a noise, he came out of the mosque and saw a mob outside the house of the suspect.

He said on inquiry, he was told by people present there that the suspect burnt pages of the holy book in his house. Upon this, he said, he along with others entered the house and found “the information to be true”.

He said on seeing him (the complainant) and others, the suspect tried to escape, but was not allowed to flee by the mob.

Meanwhile, he said, the police that had already been informed of the incident, reached the spot and took the suspect into custody and also seized “burning pages of the holy book”.

The cleric alleged that in the past the suspect had been using “objectionable language” against the holy book and religious figures.

He claimed the suspect had been admonished for his views and remarks but to no avail.

Source: Dawn, September 5, 2021

Hindu family 'tortured' for getting water from mosque in Rahim Yar Khan



Obtaining water from a mosque tap landed a farm workers family from the Hindu community in trouble as some village landlords allegedly tortured and held them hostage for “violating the sanctity” of the place.

The incident took place a few days back when Alam Ram Bheel, a resident of Basti Kahoor Khan in the Rahimyar Khan city suburbs, was picking raw cotton (phutti) along with his other family members, including his wife, in a field of Chak 106-P. Ram said when the family went outside a nearby mosque to fetch drinking water from a tap, some local landlords and their men beat them. When the family was returning home after unloading the picked cotton, the landlords held them hostage at their dera (outhouse) and tortured them again.

Later, some Muslim residents of Basti Kahoor Khan got the Bheel family released.

Ram Bheel said the Airport police station did not register the case as the attackers were related to a local PTI parliamentarian.

Ram said he held a sit-in outside the police station, along with another clan member Peter Jhon Bheel to protest the highhandedness.

Also a member of the district peace committee, Peter Jhon Bheel told Dawn that they approached PTI MNA Javed Warriach who helped them lodge the FIR under sections 506, 154, 379, 148 and 149 of the Pakistan Penal Code on Friday last.

Jhon said he requested other members of the district peace committee to call an emergency meeting over the issue but they did not take him seriously.

PTI's south Punjab minority wing secretary general Yodhister Chohan told Dawn the incident was in his knowledge but due to the influence of a ruling party MP he preferred to stay away.

District Police Officer Asad Sarfraz said that he was looking into the matter.

Deputy Commissioner Dr Khuram Shehzad said he would meet Hindu minority elders on Monday (today) before taking any action.

He said after the Bhong temple issue, the district administration had received some complaints from the minority community which proved fake when investigated.

Answering a question about the 'inactive' peace committee, the DC claimed it was "fully functional".

Confirming the happening, Farooq Rind, a senior lawyer and former district bar president, said he also belonged to Basti Kahoor where the Bheels had been living for more than a century. He said most the clan members were farm workers and extremely poor.

Rind said the accused landlords were notorious for picking up fights with other villagers over petty issues. He promised free legal aid for the complainant family.

Source: Dawn, September 20, 2021

Woman gets death, fine for blasphemy in Lahore



A sessions court in Lahore handed down death penalty to a Muslim woman on blasphemy charge under section 295C of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

“It is proved beyond reasonable doubt that accused Salma Tanveer wrote and distributed the writings which are derogatory in respect of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and she failed to prove that her case falls in exception provided by section 84 of PPC,” rules Additional District & Sessions Judge Mansoor Ahmad Qureshi in his 22-page verdict.

The section 84 deals with the offences committed by a person of unsound mind.

Nishtar Colony police had registered the FIR on Sept 2, 2013 against the woman on the complaint of Qari Iftikhar Ahmad Raza, a prayer leader of a local mosque.

The woman, owner and principal of a private school, was accused of distributing photocopies of her writings wherein she denied the finality of prophethood and claimed her as a prophet.

The woman’s counsel, Mian Muhammad Ramzan, had argued that the suspect was of unsound mind at the time of occurrence. He said the magistrate concerned had ordered mental examination of the suspect which remained pending without any fault on the part of the suspect.

The defence counsel further argued that the comparison of writing from photocopies was not possible as tampering had been made in the photocopies of the alleged documents.

A state prosecutor, Sadia Arif, assisted by Advocate Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, the counsel for the complainant, submitted before the court that the prosecution proved its case on the basis of oral and documentary evidence.

She said the suspect failed to prove that at the time of writing and distributing blasphemous material she was incapable of knowing the nature of her act.

The prosecution presented 11 witnesses including the complainant and police officials.

The judge, after going through the statements of the witnesses and their cross examination, observed that the oral and material evidence proved beyond reasonable doubt that the suspect wrote and distributed the writings attributed to her.

The judge noted that a report of a medical board of the Punjab Institute of Mental Health termed the suspect fit to stand trial.

The judge remarked that the record showed that the woman was running her school single-handedly till her arrest. Therefore, the woman could not be stated to be suffering from legal insanity.

The judge further observed that it was evident that the suspect was not free from abnormality, otherwise, she would not have written and distributed such derogatory material.

“The question, however, that arises for consideration is whether in law such abnormality can be treated as sufficient to exculpate the accused for the serious crime committed by her, even though it falls short of legal insanity,” held the judge.

The judge ruled that the law in the country did not recognise such lesser forms of mental abnormality and the plea of diminished responsibility was not available as a defence in a criminal prosecution.

The verdict found beyond any doubt that the suspect woman wrote and distributed the derogatory writings and failed to prove that she suffered from mental illness.

“The convict Salma Tanveer is sentenced to death and fine Rs50,000 u/s 295-C PPC,” said the verdict.

Source: Dawn, September 28, 2021

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