

Pakistan's Monthly Extremism Watch

Compiled by National Initiative against Organised Crime (NIOC)

Centre for Governance Research-Pakistan

October 2021

- Three themes concerning extremism reverberated this month. The most scary was the use of barbaric violence by a proscribed religious organization in Lahore. against the police. Reportedly, three policemen were martyred and innumerable injured seriously, whose gory images were displayed on social media, making mockery of the state. It is not the first time that police have suffered such a ruthless violence. The serious part is that mostly things go towards negotiations and sacrifices of the policemen are taken as part of the process, hence a bargaining chip. Seldom, have we seen that mob violence cases are vigorously pursued in courts for securing convictions. Helplessness of the state was also visible and confusion too. Political leadership and the police command must realize that, with the short-term solutions we are used to, the worst is yet to come.
- Again law against forced conversions has been effectively blocked by the religious elements. Similar bills have been rejected in 2016 and 2019. While, it is also true that these conversions are seldom voluntary. These conversions can involve abduction, rape, violence, human trafficking and extortion. The religious affairs ministry apparently did not consult minority representatives while reviewing the bill, while the Council of Islamic Ideology invited the cleric accused of enacting forced conversions in Sindh.
- A Hindu female was refused to be buried in a Muslim graveyard, although, earlier it was a usual practice in the area. In Kotri a Hindu Temple was desecrated. All the events narrated above undermines the writ of the state and highlight its inability to guarantee citizens' protection and freedom. Non-Muslim religious minorities are so vulnerable that a university in Multan refused to admit a Qadiani student. Situation is such that, there is a long way to go that differences in Pakistan will be accepted, tolerated and protected.

In this Issue

- **Intolerance grows**
- **Hindu woman's burial denied in Muslim graveyard**
- **Three policemen martyred, several injured in clash with TLP protesters in Lahore**
- **Kotri temple plundered**
- **Persecuting the already persecuted': LHC sets aside BZU order suspending admission of Ahmadi student**

Intolerance grows

Huma Yusuf

PAKISTAN'S social and moral trajectory is alarming. The rejection of a bill aimed at stemming forced religious conversions by a parliamentary committee convened to address the issue is the latest in a line of dismaying developments highlighting Pakistan's deepening schisms and intolerance.

There are mumbles about why the bill was rejected: the proposed age limit on conversions; and the call for a 90-day cool-off period to consider the decision before proceeding. But the real reason is that the current social, religious and political environment in the country has become so oppressive that a meaningful act of inclusion is deemed inconceivable.

The religious affairs minister reportedly said that the 'environment is unfavourable' for such a law, and implied it would generate resentment that would make minorities more vulnerable. The law minister also cautioned that the legislation would be 'dangerous', implying violent retaliation.

This is a good example of the 'Talibanisation' of Pakistan of which we were forewarned over the past decade. The fact that government representatives are resigned to a status quo in which minority rights are not worthy of upholding should be problematic for everyone.

A key problem is that the term 'forced conversion' glosses over what's really at stake. Reportedly, some 1,000 girls from religious minorities, primarily Hindus, are forced to convert each year. These conversions can involve abduction, rape, violence, human trafficking and extortion. They also enrich clerics who receive payments for solemnising such marriages, corrupt police officials who take bribes instead of investigating, and magistrates who look the other way. By rejecting the bill, our lawmakers are condoning these other activities. How does this serve Islam?

There is already a law prohibiting forced marriage, and making the marriage of minors and non-Muslim women punishable with imprisonment. But it remains unenforced, which is why a bespoke bill on forced conversions was proposed.

Sadly, religious minorities' desperation to protect their own is not being heeded. Many religious and political stakeholders deny that forced marriages occur. Or they wave off the issue as a quirk of three districts in Sindh, and not worth of being addressed through national legislation. Similar bills have been rejected in 2016 and 2019. Disdain for minorities has also been entrenched in the current process. The religious affairs ministry apparently did not consult minority representatives while reviewing the bill, while the Council of Islamic Ideology invited the cleric accused of enacting forced conversions in Sindh for a briefing.

Most readers from the religious mainstream will gloss over these words, thinking they have little direct relevance. But the way a state treats its minorities is ultimately reflective of how it will treat all its citizens. All Pakistanis should be concerned by the callousness.

Minority rights ensure respect for distinct identities, whether along religious, ethnic, linguistic, gender or any other lines. The goal is to ensure that difference is tolerated and protected. Where minority protections work well, groups can engage and collaborate with each other no matter what distinguishes them. Managing religious pluralism, or any other minority identity, creates the right social and judicial environment, governance and frameworks to ensure that all differences can be negotiated, leading to more social resilience.

Minority inclusion also ensures that marginalised groups do not react to majority pressure by ramping up efforts to preserve and protect their identity in a way that breeds passionate defence and potentially fuels armed conflict. In Pakistan, this trend has been apparent among non-dominant Muslim sects but is even more relevant in the context of ethnolinguistic identity. The state's weak response to inclusion since its inception has set the stage for constant hostile confrontation.

The failure to pass this bill also undermines the writ of the state and highlights its inability to guarantee citizens' protection and freedom. Non-Muslim religious minorities are vulnerable enough that their maltreatment does not produce destabilising results. But their predicament shapes how other minorities view the state and their expectations of lawmakers, with more serious consequences.

In democracies, majority rule is constrained in order to protect minority rights — all minority rights. Ultimately, the goal is to make sure the majority cannot oppress those with dissenting or contrarian views. When unchecked and uncompelled to accommodate minority or marginal positions, the majority becomes authoritarian in a way that erodes everyone's rights. Religious minorities are already struggling to keep their loved ones safe, and to preserve the dignity and sanctity of their faith. Do you want to be in the same position some day?

Source: Dawn, October 18th, 2021

Hindu woman's burial denied in Muslim graveyard

Sameer Mandhro



Dozens of people reportedly stopped Hindus from burying a body in a Muslim graveyard in Thull town of district Jacobabad, though both the communities have shared the facility for years, locals said. The incident took place on Wednesday when the Hindu Oodh community members came to the town's main cemetery to enter the remains of Nazi wife of Kevo Mal.

Thull-based journalist, Zahid Gul Mastoi told The Express Tribune that the minority community people were harassed and were asked to take back the body.

"The body was lying in the open ground for about three hours," he said.

The Oodh community staged a protest outside the graveyard and demanded the Muslim residents to allow them to bury the body.

"Hindu men and women were requesting Muslims but no one was listening to them," Mastoi said.

He said that police reached the spot after a few hours and dispersed Muslim residents and helped Hindus to bury the body.

"It was first such incident in Thull," he added.

The area residents said that the graveyard has been used by both the communities for years.

According to Mukesh Meghwar, a Hindu activist, these issues were being reported for last 10 years.

“Hindus, especially those from the lower castes, do not have separate graveyards anywhere in Sindh,” he said. “We have a small portion in almost every small and major town of the province,” he added.

Meghwar reminded that grave of Bhoro Bheel was dug out in Badin in 2013.

“That was the first such kind of incident,” he said. He said that the fear prevails among Hindus when such incidents are reported.

“Where should they bury their bodies without a graveyard,” he questioned.

Source: The Express Tribune, October 22nd, 2021.

3 policemen martyred, several injured in clash with TLP protesters in Lahore

Imran Gabol



Police fire teargas shells on TLP supporters during a march towards capital Islamabad from Lahore on October 22

Three policemen were martyred and several others injured in clashes with workers of the proscribed Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in Lahore.

In a statement, Lahore DIG (Operation) Spokesperson Mazhar Hussain identified two of the slain officials as Ayub and Khalid. The identity of the third official has not yet been ascertained, but a statement from the provincial chief minister stated that three policemen were martyred.

- Three policemen martyred, several others injured
- TLP leaders claim at least 500 workers injured, several killed
- Internet services suspended in several areas in Lahore
- TLP reverts to original position; will not negotiate with govt until chief Saad Rizvi is released
- Protesters plan to start march to Islamabad at dawn

Hussain said that several others were also injured and taken to the hospital in critical condition. "Protesters also hurled petrol bombs on officials," he said, adding that officials tried to prevent them from vandalising and damaging public property.

"The angry mob also used sticks and pelted stones," he said, adding that officials were showing restraint despite the violence.

Meanwhile, Lahore police spokesman Arif Rana told Reuters that officials fired teargas after the TLP supporters attacked a police checkpoint.

They had clashed with the police at several places in the city, he said. "They had assured us that they will remain peaceful but they turned violent," he told Reuters.

A TLP media coordinator, Saddam Bukhari, said the police attacked the peaceful rally that was on its way to Islamabad.

In a separate statement, a spokesperson for the banned group said that workers had endured the "worst shelling in history" and were "attacked from all sides" near the Mao College Pul. By late Friday night, the protesters had managed to reach Azadi Chowk, where they staged a sit-in for the night. The group's leaders said they plan to leave for Islamabad at dawn.

The spokesperson claimed that at least 500 workers had been seriously wounded while several had died.

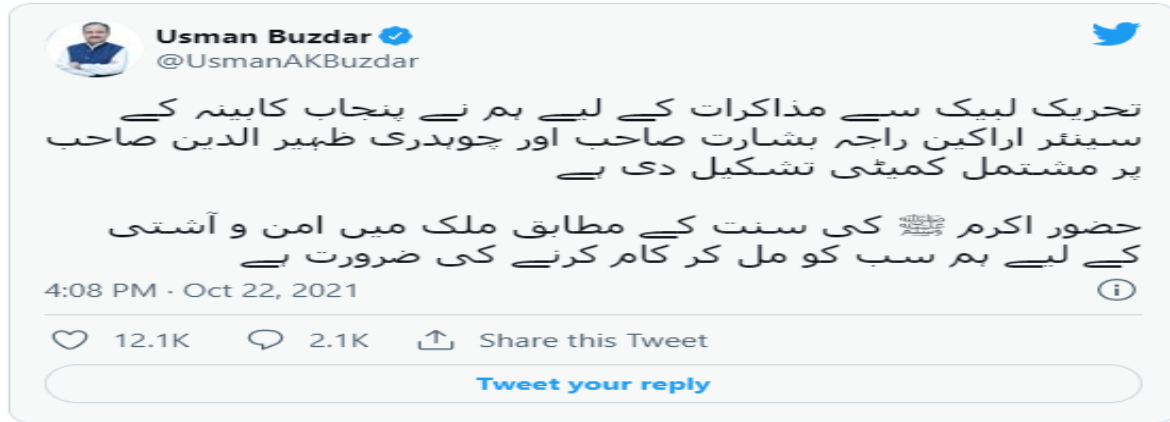
Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar offered condolences and prayed for the deceased officials. He assured their families that the provincial government stood with them in their time of grief.

The chief minister also directed officials to take strict action against those responsible for the incident. "Rule of law must be ensured at all costs," he said, warning that no one would be allowed to take the law into their hands.

He also directed officials to ensure the best possible medical facilities for the injured policemen.

Punjab govt forms committee for talks

Shortly after 4pm on Friday, the Punjab CM announced that a committee comprising provincial Law Minister Raja Basharat and Prosecution Minister Chaudhry Zaheeruddin had been formed to negotiate with the proscribed group.



The chief minister said that according to the Sunnah of Holy Prophet (PBUH), "we all need to work together for peace and harmony in the country".

However, as the violence erupted in Lahore, a statement issued by the proscribed group said that negotiations would not happen till TLP chief Saad Hussain Rizvi is released.

"They called us for talks, but attacked our workers from the back," a statement by the group's spokesperson said. He claimed that "thousands" were seriously injured and many had bullet injuries.

"Now, only the TLP chief will lead the negotiations," the spokesperson said.

The statement reiterated what the group had earlier demanded of the government.

However, on Thursday, TLP leader Pir Ajmal Qadri had appeared to delink the march from the release of its incarcerated leader, Saad Hussain Rizvi, and said the purpose of the move was "respect for the Holy Prophet (PBUH)".

Addressing a charged crowd at a protest site in Lahore, Qadri had said that a "peaceful" procession would begin after Friday prayers. "If any hurdles are created, the party also has a Plan B to thwart any official attempts," he had said.

Arrangements in Lahore

Meanwhile, Lahore Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Muntazir Mehdi said in a statement that traffic flow was as per usual on all entry and exit points of the city as well as on Ferozepur Road, Jail Road, Wahdat Road, Mall Road and Canal Road.

He said that traffic also remained unaffected in Chungi Amar Sadhu, Thokar Niaz Baig, Chung and Mohlanwal areas, as well as on GT Road.

However, roads connecting Babu Sabu to Scheme Morr and Scheme Morr to Yateem Khana Chowk have been closed for traffic, while a protest by blind persons is under way at Secretariat Chowk, he said.

Citizens can contact the 15 helpline for more information, he added.

The government also suspended internet and mobile phone services in the TLP strongholds of Samanabad, Sherakot, Nawankot, Gulshan-i-Ravi, Sabzazar and Iqbal Town. However, citizens were also facing mobile network issues in other parts of the city.

In a notification issued on Friday, the interior ministry also ordered the suspension of internet services within a 5-kilometre radius of Data Sahib, Shahdara and New and Old Ravi Bridge areas. The notification stated that the services would remain suspended till further orders.

Arrangements in Islamabad

In a statement, a spokesperson for the Islamabad Traffic Police said traffic was diverted from Rawalpindi's System Road and Ninth Avenue and advised residents who wanted to go to Pindi via the Faizabad Interchange — which has been blocked during TLP protests in the past as well — or Ninth Avenue to use the IJP Road instead.

"Diversion has been placed for both sides of traffic at Murree Road, Faizul Islam stop, from and to Faizabad. Alternatively, traffic going from Islamabad to Murree Road, Rawalpindi, is diverted to Islamabad Highway.

"Diversion has been placed for both sides of traffic from Express Chowk to D-Chowk at Jinnah Avenue. Alternatively, Nadra Chowk and Ayub Chowk can be used for entry and exit to the Red Zone," according to the statement.

In addition, diversion has been placed for traffic from Islamabad Highway to IJP Rd at Sohan Stop. The traffic is diverted instead to Faisal Avenue, the statement added.

The metro bus service was suspended in Rawalpindi but was running from the stop on IJP Road to the Pakistan Secretariat, the spokesperson said.

Police sources said 24 TLP workers were arrested ahead of the march while officers who were on leave were called back to duty.

Senior police officers earlier told Dawn that about three dozen containers had been arranged to put on different roads, including Islamabad Expressway, to stop the TLP from entering the capital or staging a sit-in at Faizabad Interchange.

The containers were being brought to the Faizabad Interchange and put on the roads at midnight. Besides, well-equipped police personnel were deployed in and around the interchange.

Police were also deputed at the entry point of the capital at Tarnol, Rawat and Bhara Kahu. Moreover, containers were arranged to block the roads at these three points but a final direction was awaited from the higher authorities.

Over 2,000 police officials are being deployed at the main points, including the entry points, to counter the TLP's march, the officers said.

The police lines headquarters released 1,500 anti-riot gear kits for the contingents to be deployed.

Arrangements in Rawalpindi

Meanwhile, the Rawalpindi Traffic Police completed arrangements to deal with the long march. In a statement, it said Murree Road and Rawal Road have been closed for commuters while Old Airport Road and Mall Road are open.

Additional policemen have been posted at the High Court Chowk and Mall Road to ensure the smooth flow of traffic, it said.

The district administration sealed Gawalmandi, Saddar Road and Kamran Market areas.

Protests in Lahore

The TLP had resumed protests in Lahore earlier this week by staging a massive sit-in on Multan Road near its headquarters at Masjid Rehmatul-lil-Aalemeen.

Hundreds of activists and workers of the proscribed TLP participated in the sit-in to put pressure on the Punjab government for the release of its chief. Rizvi is detained by the Punjab government since April 12 for "maintenance of public order (MPO)". He was initially detained for three months and then again under the Anti-Terrorist Act on July 10. A federal review board is scheduled to take up the government's reference against him on Oct 23.

A division bench of the LHC is yet to be constituted to hear an appeal of the government against a decision of a single bench that had set aside the detention of the TLP leader. The Supreme Court had on Oct 12 suspended the operations of the single bench's order and remanded the case for a fresh decision by a division bench. A day earlier, the Punjab police allegedly detained over 1,000 activists and workers of the TLP during a crackdown that was intensified across the province after the group announced the long march.

Dozens of fourth schedulers of the proscribed group were also among those taken into custody from all 36 districts of the province besides at least 40 in Lahore, an official privy to the development told Dawn.

Source: Dawn, October 22, 2021

Hindu temple desecrated in Kotri

Sameer Mandhro



A historical Hindu temple located at the bank of Indus River in Kotri was allegedly desecrated by unidentified people.

Law enforcement agencies personnel came to the scene soon after the news of the incident went viral on social media. An FIR of the incident was lodged at the Kotri police station against the unknown miscreants.

Local residents told The Express Tribune that unidentified person entered the temple premises and vandalised the statues of their deities after midnight.

The Hindu residents of Kotri have expressed grief and disgust over the continuous attacks on their sacred places in the province known for its values of tolerance and assimilation.

Sindh Minister for Minorities Affairs Giyan Chand Essarani reacting to the attack asked the law enforcing agencies to beef up the security around all the Hindu temples ahead of Diwali festival.

Sharing details of the incidents Dr Bhawan Kumar, a resident of the area told The Express Tribune that the unknown persons entered the temple premises where holy statues were placed in a glass frame. He said that the statues were disrespected and desecrated.

Dr Tekchand, another elder said the unknown person took away artificial jewellery and money from the temple. "This is not the first incident," he pointed out. He said that same kind of incident was reported six months back another temple located in the same vicinity.

The Hindus said that there are three historical temples located at the Indus River bank, including Shiva Mandir, Hanoman Mandir and Devi Mata Jo Mandir.

"People from different areas visit these temples regularly," Dr Kumar said. "These are pre-partition temples," he added.

He informed that there were around 200 Hindu families living around these temples. "We all Muslims and Hindus are living side by side as brothers for centuries," he said. "There is no issue but a few people want to create fissures among us," he added. "It hurts us a lot when people disrespect our sacred places," Dr Kumar commented.

"This incident created some uncomfortable situation for residents living around the temples," Dr Tekchand said.

Taking notice of the incident, Essarani asked Jamshoro SSP and other officials to investigate the incident and deploy proper security for the visitors coming to temples ahead of Diwali.

Essarani said that the Hindu community was busy in preparation of their religious festival Diwali festival but the incident has dampened their spirits.

Not in name of Islam

Besides the political leadership of the country, the religious circles too are against excesses against the minorities. One of the top schools of Islamic learning, Jamia Binoria Al-Aalmia, (Binoria International University), had censured the desecration of a Hindu temple in Rahim Yar Khan district of Punjab earlier this year.

"The attack on Rahim Yar Khan Temple is condemnable. Islam does not allow harming the worship place of any religion," said the varsity administrator Mufti Noman Naeem.

Source: The Express Tribune, October 29th, 2021.

Persecuting the already persecuted': LHC sets aside BZU order suspending admission of Ahmadi student

Rana Bilal



A file photo of the Lahore High Court building.

The Lahore High Court set aside Bahauddin Zakariya University's (BZU) order to suspend the admission of a student belonging to the Ahmadi community, terming the varsity's move as "persecution".

Umer Taimur Tahir was enrolled in the Pharm-D programme on a minority quota at the BZU in September. However, the university had on Oct 11 suspended his admission without informing him, according to the court order, and without giving reasons for doing so.

The university had also claimed at the time that the matter was being contested in the LHC, a claim that was "gratuitous, unwarranted and untrue", according to the court.

The student, in a petition with the high court, had challenged the varsity's move to suspend his admission, saying he was "treated as an object and not a human being".

"Some event which is not discernible from the record and about which the petitioner has no information or knowledge allegedly took place by virtue of which his admission has been suspended without informing him, without hearing him, without providing any reason for the same," Tahir's petition read.

In his order, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, Justice Muhammad Shan Gul noted that the student's suspension "amounts to persecuting the already persecuted!"

He said the varsity's decision depicted scant regard for students along with "a conscious disregard for minority rights".

The court also ordered the vice-chancellor to inquire into the matter and find out why the petitioner had been singled out "for such callous and insensitive treatment".

Justice Gul pointed out that Article 36 of the Constitution provided for safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of minorities. "Even this right contained in Article 22 and the principle of the policy contained in Article 36 of the Constitution clearly protect the petitioner from such attacks," the judge remarked.

The court ordered that the student's petition, along with the copy of the court order, should be sent to the vice-chancellor "so he could take a paternalistic view in the matter and ensure that the petitioner is not dealt a marked hand."

Source: Dawn, October 29, 2021

About CGR

CGR is a forum for studies and debate on strategic and tactical issues related with good governance and the rule of law. It is a non-governmental civil society advocacy Centre dedicated to reforms in the justice and governance sectors.

As an independent think tank, CGR sets its own agenda, publishing and disseminating its findings regularly for national and global audience. Using an interdisciplinary approach, CGR brings together rule of law, justice and governance experts, researchers and internationally renowned professionals to animate its debate and research activities.

CGR aims to stand out as one of rare Pakistani think tanks to position itself at the very heart of debate on governance and justice issues.



CGR
CENTRE for
GOVERNANCE
RESEARCH
PAKISTAN



www.cgr.com.pk



[CgrPakistan](https://www.facebook.com/CgrPakistan)



[CgrPakistan](https://twitter.com/CgrPakistan)