



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

**Pakistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Tuesday 15 August 2017**

**Treatment of Ahmadi including: nationwide; in Chenab Nagar/Rabwah; available state protection; closure of mosques/places of worship; discriminatory legislation vis-à-vis recognition as Muslims; & usage of blasphemy legislation**

In December 2016 the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* states in a report that:

“The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has expressed grave concern over the deteriorating treatment of Ahmadi citizens both at the hands of those tasked with security as well as the zealots. It has demanded a thorough investigation into a raid in Rabwah and attack on an Ahmadi worship place in Chakwal” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (14 December 2016) *HRCP demands probe into Rabwah raid, assault on Ahmadi worship place*).

A report released by *Amnesty International* in December 2016 notes:

“It is illegal under Sections 298-B and 298-C for the Ahmadiyya community to propagate their faith openly, distribute material relating to their religion, and identify themselves as Muslims” (Amnesty International (21 December 2016) *“As Good as Dead”: The Impact of the Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan*, p.22).

A report issued in 2017 by *Freedom House* reviewing events of the preceding year notes that:

“The most specific discriminatory legislation has been directed at the Ahmadi community, who are prohibited from asserting themselves as Muslims” (Freedom House (2017) *Freedom in the World 2017, Pakistan*).

The *United States Department of State* released a report in March 2017 reviewing events of 2016, which included stating:

“Police often failed to protect members of religious minorities--including Christians, Ahmadiyya Muslims, Shi'a Muslims, and Hindus--from attacks” (United States Department of State (3 March 2017) *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Pakistan*).

A report released in May 2017 by the *Human Rights Commission of Pakistan* commenting on events of 2016 states that:

“2016 proved to be another harsh year for the Ahmadis. Four Ahmadis were killed because of their faith and their place of worship in Chakwal was attacked and set on fire during the year” (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (210 May 2017) *State of Human Rights in 2016 [Chapter III Fundamental freedoms - Freedom of thought, conscience and religion]*

This document also points out that:

“Persecution of Ahmadis at the hands of state continued with more ferocity in 2016” (ibid).

A compilation of COI sources issued in January 2017 by the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* points out that:

“Sources indicate that Rabwah [state of Punjab, Pakistan] has been the Ahmadis' headquarters [or spiritual centre...since 1948 when the religious group moved from Qadian [state of Punjab, India]...after the partition with India in 1947...According to sources, Rabwah is called Chenab Nagar by Pakistani authorities...” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (11 January 2017) *Pakistan: Religious and ethnic groups in Rabwah, including population size and regional distribution; availability of employment and housing for Ahmadis; situation of Ahmadis, including social discrimination (2015-2016)*).

This document also states that:

“...Ahmadis in Rabwah...enjoy considerable freedom and prosperity...compared with other cities of Pakistan, Rabwah allows a great level of freedom to the Ahmadis to organize themselves, and carry out their religious activities peacefully...sources report that Ahmadis are not permitted to hold religious conferences in Rabwah...and that peaceful gatherings by the religious group are not permitted by authorities...” (ibid).

In March 2017 a paper released by the *UNHCR* notes:

“Pursuant to a constitutional amendment in 1974, Ahmadis were declared a 'non-Muslim' minority, and consequently are prohibited from belonging to the Muslim religious community in Pakistan...In 1984, former President Zia ul-Haq introduced Sections 298B and 298C into the Penal Code through Ordinance No. XX....Pursuant to Section 298B, Ahmadis' use of epithets, descriptions and titles reserved for certain holy personages and places constitutes an offence punishable with imprisonment for up to three years and a fine...Section 298C prohibits an Ahmadi from "directly or indirectly" "pos[ing]" as a Muslim, from "call[ing], or refer[ing] to, his faith as Islam", and from "preach[ing] or propoagat[ing] his faith"...These sections impose discriminatory measures: Ahmadis are prohibited from practising their religion, from worshiping in private or in public, from any form of religious instruction and from publishing or disseminating their religious materials...” (UNHCR (17 March 2017) *Eligibility Guidelines for Assessing the International Protection Needs of Members of Religious Minorities from Pakistan*).

This report also points out that:

“The anti-Ahmadi and blasphemy laws are reportedly often used by State authorities as well as by members of society to target and harass followers of, and converts to, the Ahmadi faith” (ibid).

It is also stated in this document that:

“Ahmadi individuals face discrimination as a result of State-sanctioned measures which impose limitations on the civil and political rights of Ahmadi individuals” (ibid).

This report also notes:

“Although pursuant to section 298B(1) of the Penal Code Ahmadis are forbidden from calling their places of worship mosques, there are reportedly no formal restrictions on establishing places of worship...In practice, however, local authorities reportedly often refuse Ahmadis permission to build places of worship, and existing ones are at times closed, destroyed, desecrated or illegally expropriated, with the authorities reportedly often supporting such acts or being complicit in them...”(ibid).

This document also notes that:

“State authorities are reported to frequently fail to provide adequate protection to Ahmadi individuals (see also Section IV, Situation of Religious Minorities in Pakistan)...Crimes and acts of violence against Ahmadis are reportedly not consistently investigated and perpetrators of such crimes are reportedly rarely brought to justice...Intimidation tactics and pressure on authorities from Islamic fundamentalist groups reportedly contribute to the unwillingness of the State to intervene in, investigate, or to prosecute religious violence or crimes” (ibid).

This report also points out that:

“Repressive and discriminatory legislation coupled with State-sanctioned discriminatory practices have reportedly fostered a culture of religious intolerance and impunity...” (ibid).

A report issued in April 2017 by *Reuters* points out that:

“Ahmadis are members of a sect which regards itself as Islamic but who are not allowed to call themselves Muslim under Pakistan's blasphemy laws. They have been frequent targets of militant attacks” (Reuters (8 April 2017) *Pakistani police say 10 militants killed in gun battle in Lahore*).

A report released in April 2017 by the *Asian Human Rights Commission* states that:

“Since 1974, when Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims, the country has witnessed a systematic cleansing, and a political, social, and economic ostracization of Ahmadis” (Asian Human Rights Commission (13 April 2017) *Pakistan: Stop crusade against Ahmadiyya community*).

The *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom* in April 2017 states in a report that:

“An estimated two to four million Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims, but Pakistani law does not recognize them as such” (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (26 April 2017) *United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Annual Report 2017: Pakistan*).

This report also notes that:

“Ahmadis are subject to severe legal restrictions, and suffer from officially sanctioned discrimination. September 2016 marked the 42nd anniversary of Pakistan's second amendment to its constitution that declared Ahmadis to be "non-Muslims." Additionally, Penal Code section 298 makes it criminal for Ahmadis to refer to themselves as Muslims; preach, propagate, or disseminate materials on their faith; or

refer to their houses of worship as mosques. They also are prohibited from voting” (ibid).

It is also stated in this document that:

“Ahmadis frequently face societal discrimination, harassment, and physical attacks, sometimes resulting in murder” (ibid).

A document issued in May 2017 by the *Asian Human Rights Commission* states:

“In the last 60 days, five Ahmadis, including a woman professor were shot dead. One person was shot and injured in a calculated manner in order to eliminate Ahmadis from the country. For many decades the Ahmadi places of worship (mosques), houses, cemeteries, clinics and educational institutions were attacked and many professionals murdered” (Asian Human Rights Commission (9 May 2017) *Pakistan: Four Ahmadis gun down with impunity during the first five months of 2017*).

In June 2017 the *United Nations Committee Against Torture* states in a report that:

“The Committee is concerned about reports of violence against and inadequate efforts by the State party’s authorities to protect vulnerable individuals, particularly members of Shia, Christian and Ahmadiyya communities and individuals accused of blasphemy, from violence by non-State actors” (United Nations Committee Against Torture (1 June 2017) *Concluding observations on the initial report of Pakistan*, p.9).

In July 2017 *Amnesty International* points out in a report that:

“Ahmadis and Christians have been attacked and killed following a mere allegation of blasphemy...” (Amnesty International (10 July 2017) *Pakistan: Widespread human rights violations continue (Submission for the UN Universal Periodic Review)*).

In July 2017 a document issued by the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* states that:

“The Committee is concerned at the blasphemy laws, including Sections 295 and 298 of the Criminal Code of Pakistan, that carry severe penalties, including the mandatory death penalty (Section 295(c)), and reportedly have a discriminatory effect particularly on Ahmadi persons (Section 298(b)(c))...” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (27 July 2017) *Human Rights Committee: Concluding observations on the initial report of Pakistan (Advance Unedited Version)*).

A report issued in August 2017 by the *European Asylum Support Office* points out that:

“...Ahmadis continue to be targeted by militant extremists...” (European Asylum Support Office (August 2017) *Pakistan Security Situation*, p.17).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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