



Pakistan – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 January 2014.

Any information on a Shia religious procession in Rawal Pindi on 15/11/2013 (associated with the Islamic month of Muharram). Was there violence, injuries, deaths, and burning of buildings? How did the violence start? Were 60+ men kidnapped? (Any word on what happened to them?)

A report from the English-language Pakistani newspaper Dawn states:

“Last year, a suicide bomber struck a procession in the heart of Rawalpindi while this year the city’s own residents were behind violent clashes on Friday between Deobandi activists and Shia mourners in Raja Bazaar that led to death of nine people and forced the government to impose curfew. By Saturday morning the city had been sealed off from Islamabad by containers and the imposition of curfew had ensured that most streets and roads remained empty and quiet. Only military and police personnel roamed the ghost town. All major roads within Rawalpindi were blocked by containers and markets remained closed.” (Dawn (17 November 2013) *Ashura clashes turn Pindi into ghost town*)

A report from Agence France Presse states:

“Pakistan called in its army Saturday to quell sectarian unrest in three cities, after nine people were killed and nearly 90 wounded in violent attacks across the country, according to officials. Authorities imposed a curfew in the city of Rawalpindi, where sectarian clashes on Friday left nine people dead and more than 60 injured, and spawned retaliatory violence in at least two other cities. Fighting erupted in the garrison-city, which neighbours the capital Islamabad, when a procession by Shiite Muslims to mark the most important day of the mourning month of Muharram coincided with a sermon at a nearby Sunni mosque.” (Agence France Presse (16 November 2013) *Pakistan calls troops after violence kills 10, injures dozens*)

A Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report states:

“A curfew is in place near the Pakistani capital after clashes during a religious procession left eight dead. The violence began when Shi’ite Muslims observing the holiday of Ashura went into a Sunni seminary and dragged out at least two people who they beat to death on the street. The Shi’a said the Sunnis had shouted insults at them. At least 34 others, many of them police, were injured trying to stop the violence in Rawalpindi, which is near Islamabad. Several shops near the seminary were also set on fire. Gunshots were also reported.” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (16 November 2013) *Curfew In Pakistan After Sectarian Clashes In Rawalpindi*)

A Voice of America News report states:

“Pakistani authorities have imposed a rare curfew in the garrison city of Rawalpindi next to the capital, Islamabad, after sectarian clashes during a Shi'ite religious commemoration killed at least eight Sunni Muslims. The violence erupted Friday when a procession of Shi'ites marking the most important day of the mourning month of Muharram coincided with a sermon at a nearby Sunni mosque. Angry Shi'ite protesters attacked the mosque and seminary, torching its building and an adjacent market.” (Voice of America News (16 November 2013) *Pakistan Imposes Curfew in Rawalpindi After Clashes*)

A report from the Chinese state press agency Xinhua states:

“Death toll rose to 10 in violence that broke out in Pakistan's garrison city of Rawalpindi near capital Islamabad on Friday evening, local media reported. The violence started around 5:00 p.m. (local time) after a group of miscreants attacked a mosque and a religious school in the Raja Bazar area of the city. The incident took place when Shiite mourners were taking out mourning processions on their route on the 10th of Muharram, the holy Muslim month. An eyewitness told local media that several participants in the procession started firing in the air when they reached near the mosque of their opponent group and chanted slogans against them. Later on, people started firing from rooftops of nearby buildings that triggered armed clashes, a resident said. At least three people were killed and 16 others injured after both groups exchanged firing and pelted stones at each other. Later, the angry mob opened fire at cloth market nearby the mosque before torching a couple of dozen shops in the market that killed seven people besides injuring many others.” (Xinhua (16 November 2013) *10 killed, 80 injured in violence near Pakistani capital*)

A BBC News report states:

“The violence erupted as Shia Muslims staged a procession marking the religious festival of Ashura. Dozens of people were injured and many shops set on fire in clashes between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the city. The curfew was briefly relaxed for three hours on Saturday but has now been re-imposed. Officials have not made clear when the curfew will be completely lifted. Security forces are patrolling the streets and entry points into Rawalpindi have been closed. Police say the aim of the curfew is to 'avert further violence' after Friday's violence. At least 35 people were injured, many with gunshot wounds, in clashes that occurred when a Shia procession coincided with a sermon at a nearby Sunni mosque. Dozens of shops and a seminary were set on fire.” (BBC News (16 November 2013) *Pakistan imposes curfew in Rawalpindi after clashes*)

A Pakistan Today report states:

“A curfew was in place in the city of Rawalpindi next to the capital after a clash between two groups in relation to the harassment of an Ashura procession in Rawalpindi's Raja Bazar area killed ten people. Shoaib Bin Aziz, an official with the Punjab government, said Saturday that residents were ordered to stay in their homes until further notice. Soldiers and police were patrolling the streets to impose the curfew. 'A curfew has been imposed in Rawalpindi city to avert further violence following the incidents on Friday,'

Waseem Ahmed, an official at the main police control room, told newsmen. 'The curfew will remain until midnight. The whole city has been closed down,' he said." (Pakistan Today (17 November 2013) *Curfew in place in Rawalpindi as violence claims ten lives*)

A report from the Peshawar-based newspaper The Frontier Post states:

"The clashes between the two groups erupted when a mourners' procession of Muharram 10 was on its way through Fawara Chowk in the town. A group of miscreants at 3:00pm reportedly snatched guns from police personnel deputed for security, and opened fire, sources said. The panic spread and the unknown miscreants set a portion of the cloth market in Raja Bazar on fire. The situation soon got worst and sensing the gravity of the situation, Chief Commissioner Rawalpindi and Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab had requested the authorities to impose a curfew." (The Frontier Post (17 November 2013) *Curfew extended as tension gripped Pindi; Deadly clashes claimed eight lives; Committee formed to probe incident; Interior Minister urges for restraint*)

An article published online by UK newspaper The Daily Mail states:

"So what happened? No one knows. What started off as a peaceful Ashura procession suddenly turned into a war of sects with people dying, even more injured and the destruction of shops in the local bazaar. The exact location of the police personnel who were categorically told to supervise the procession and avoid such a situation remains unclear. The army had to be called in to take control of the situation. While conspiracies and rumours surrounded the situation, the government responded by slapping a curfew on Rawalpindi and launching an investigation. But it was too late. The Shia-Sunni clashes in Rawalpindi had a spillover effect, causing riots in other areas such as Hungu and Kohat where curfews were also imposed. The problem is that curfews, while effective in bringing about some form of order, are not the solution. They should not have been imposed at all, had the government provided adequate security in Rawalpindi, which is a red zone of sorts since the Ashura procession was to cross a mosque known for its anti-Shia sentiment." (Daily Mail (21 November 2013) *The Lahore Log: Muharram massacre in Rawalpindi*)

A report from English-language Pakistani newspaper The Express Tribune states:

"The top cop of Rawalpindi claimed on Wednesday to have arrested 12 people including a policeman in connection with the Ashura violence in which 11 people died and several others were injured. The Ganj Mandi police produced the 12 accused in an Anti-Terrorism Court of Special Judge Chaudhry Habibur Rahman. The accused have been charged with besiege, going on rampage and arson attacks. The court sent the accused to Adiala Jail for identification parade. At a press conference, City Police Officer (CPO) Akhtar Umar Lalika, who is also acting regional police officer, said over 40 culprits have been identified and the police are working round the clock to arrest them." (The Express Tribune (28 November 2013) *Ashura violence: Police arrest 12 suspects*)

Reports of persons being kidnapped in Rawalpindi during the events of 15 November 2013 were not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit 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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