



12.9.16

## PAKISTAN | Nine Ahmadis Charged After Raid

Four Ahmadis were arrested Dec. 5 on charges of “hate speech” related to the publication of their community magazine, while five were charged under anti-Ahmadi laws and anti-terrorism laws, after the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya community in Rabwah, near Lahore, was raided by the Punjab Counter Terrorism Department.

During the 30-minute raid, up to 16 armed policemen and 12 plain-clothed officers forced their way through the main entrance of the Ahmadiyya headquarters and into the office of the Directorate of Literature and Publications. The staff was ordered to sit down or lie on the ground and a laptop belonging to the Director of Publications was seized along with two mobile phones, five computers, a printer, another laptop and some books, despite the police not having a warrant

Three employees were arrested; Malik Sabah ul Zafar and Amir Faheem, who are missionaries, and Zahid Majeed, a computer operator. The police disabled the CCTV system and assaulted a worker called Rana Irfan Ahmad, who was taken to hospital for treatment. At Zia-ul-Islam press offices, employee Idrees Ahmad was assaulted and arrested, while paper, ink, film and other materials were seized. The offices were then sealed.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has learned that the Ahmadiyya monthly magazine, Tehrek-e-Jadid, which is only distributed among the Ahmadiyya community, was banned in December 2014. The Lahore High Court had granted a stay order on June 2015.

The Ahmadiyya community is one of the most widely persecuted religious minority groups in Pakistan. The Ahmadis were declared as non-Muslims by an amendment to the constitution in 1974. In 1984, Ordinance XX (20) was introduced to the Pakistan Penal Code, which criminalizes Ahmadi Muslims for practicing Islam or “posing as a Muslim.”

On Dec. 5, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif announced that the National Centre for Physics at the Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad would be renamed after an Ahmadi, Professor Abdus Salam, who won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1979, in a rare acknowledgement of the contribution of the Ahmadiyya community to the nation.

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of CSW, said, "This shocking, violent raid on the Ahmadiyya headquarters highlights the extent of harassment that the Ahmadiyya community is subjected to at the hands of state authorities. We note with concern that increasingly, anti-terrorism laws are being used in cases which have no links to terrorist activity. We urge the government of Pakistan to drop the charges against these men without condition or delay and we further call on for the repeal of anti-Ahmadiyya legislation and for Ahmadis to be granted their rights to fully practice and propagate their faith, as guaranteed in the constitution of Pakistan."