

Going gentle into that night! With silence of the lamb?

News and reflection sheet on recent incidents of violence against minorities

Pakistan by 2012 has become more intolerant in reality than average Pakistani believes. Media can only show part of this intolerance, a marginal part. Besides targeted attacks and organized violence under one excuse or the other, our daily life bears the expressions of this dangerous trend.

Militancy in situations like Karachi drives society to insecurity, further weaponization and crime. Though the political rhetoric is full of sermons on peace and harmony, yet the movers and people in the echelons of power believe it is too hard to confront militancy. Similarly the blasphemy laws are difficult to touch, at least at this point of time, elections around the corner, etc.

That only means that vulnerable groups such as minorities, women and children are doomed. It is a matter of chance if you survive or become target. The intolerance has been woven into social fabric gradually. It has economic incentive now, if not a sub-economic system of its own and threatens the values of a peaceful society.

The attack on Church in Mardan, Khyber Pukhtunkhwa received some media attention and but lot many incidents go unnoticed. The collection of news at hand has incidents from Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Islamabad, one wonders if life is any better for non-Muslims citizens in the rural area and small cities. What disturbs most is the growing trend of violence against weaker sections, receiving higher impunity.

The segments of Pakistani society have actively resisted brutalization of their society. We hope this news sheet will help people to identify where more dimensions that need to be focused.

Peter Jacob

Changing times and values

“When witnesses turned up in a court in Rawalpindi to testify against the cleric who had planted burnt pages of the Holy Quran in Rimsha’s house to implicate her in a blasphemy case, one was heartened and relieved.

It was too good to last. Three of the four witnesses are now reported to have turned hostile. And not without reason: the religious extremist lobby is so power full that anyone attempting to cross their path must know that it is fraught with danger-death, in most instances.



As two leading luminaries of Pakistan- a governor and a minister – learnt to their own peril not so long ago, for ‘daring’ to suggest that the blasphemy law be revisited to stop its abuse.

One of the slogans that was heard at the recent Namoos-e-Risalat rally held to protest the anti-prophet (PBUH) film...was, "Release Mumtaz Qadari". Qadari is on death row for murdering in cold blood, before numerous witnesses, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer. But in their warped view he has done no wrong, for it is perfectly legitimate to kill in the name of religion."

Rehana Hakim, Editor Monthly NEWSLINE, Karachi

Reaction to the film

The Pakistan Peoples' Party lead federal government in Pakistan declared September 21, 2012, 'the day for Love of the Prophet' to register their protest against the provocative film 'Innocence of Muslims'.

The nationwide-demonstrations started after the Jumma (Friday) prayers on the day, different religious, section outfits and political parties organized meetings and rallies, mosques became the centre of all such activities. Hundreds of thousands took to streets, pelting stones, looted valuables, setting building and vehicles ablaze, defying calls for peaceful protests. Clashes between police and protestors were reported five big cities of the country.

Although Christian, Hindu and Sikh communities expressed their solidarity with Muslim compatriots on this issue through several demonstrations, they became vulnerable to attack in this environment of chaos.

Attacks on Christian Hospital in Hyderabad

Two unidentified persons attacked and opened fires on St. Francis Xavier's Catholic Cathedral in Hyderabad on Sunday, September 16, 2012.



As soon as Mother Christina FCJ, a Maltese nun and in-charge of Lady Gram Hospital, Hyderabad reached at the gate of the Cathedral, unidentified men on motorbikes opened fire on the Church. Her driver Mr. Amir Ashiq, 30, received two bullets in his legs, however Mother Christina was unhurt. He was under medical treatment till report.

Nuns in protest before Press Club Karachi



Archbishop Joseph Coutts and Catholic Priests protesting before Press Club Karachi

The motorcyclists were carrying green flags and wore green head-bands, according to Mr. Ashiq who refused to lodge an FIR because of fear.

In another similar shooting on St. Elizabeth Hospital's gate in Hyderabad on September 18, 2012 the assailants reportedly warned, 'We will teach a lesson to the Christians', according to a security guard of the hospital at the time of the attack. St.

Elizabeth Hospital is run by the Catholic Church in Hyderabad.

The Church leadership closed down the Church-based institutions, schools and colleges in protest against these attacks for three days urging the authorities to provide security and protection to the Christians and religious minorities in the country. However the media remained totally silent about these attacks.

Attack on Hindu community in Karachi

An infuriated mob of 150 carrying rocks and sticks, attacked on Hindu Colony, Adam Goth located in the Gulshan-e-Maymar, Karachi. Chanting slogan of 'Allah-O-Akbar (God is great)' entered in the colony. They vandalized Hindu temple devoted to Shri Krishana Bhagwan, smashed statues of gods to the ground and then moved onto ripping the holy books. They also beat up the temple's caretaker.

The rioters stole valuables and gold adornment from the statues, entered nearby houses, snatching gold earrings and Mangal Sutars from newly married MS. Lakshmi and others women. Hurling stones at houses, they also injured a woman who was washing clothes. A boy Mr. Govinda and a man Mr. Tara Singh was also injured during the attack.

An FIR under section 295-A, 147, 148, 337 A1, 452, 380, and 427 of Pakistan Penal Code was registered against the cleric and eight other protestors by the police, on September 23, 2012.

Lahore

On 25th September a Christian school teacher in Lahore was threatened by a parent of his student after accusing him of committing blasphemy while teaching a lesson on Quran. He had to go in hiding along with his family on the instruction of his colleagues (details kept on request).

Life in Essanagri 2012

Located on the University Road, Essanagri (literal meaning; the settlement of Christ or Christians) in Karachi city, houses at least 50,000 inhabitants. The settlement of this largely Kachiabadi (unregulated settlement) started in the 1960s by the Christian menial laborer arriving from Punjab in search of lively hood. According to Ex-MPA Michael Javed, a lease had been secured by the Essanagri Housing Society. This populace of somewhat slum area faces many problems like; low literacy, poverty and drug usage. However there most acute issue these days is violence and crime which is widely believed to motivated by land grabbing and fueled by criminals operating on the ethnic lines.

With the phenomenon of encroachments by land mafia did not affect Essanagri until recently but ethnic politics coming into play along with criminal element joining the business, resulted in several attacks on Essanagri and loss of life as Christians in the locality try to resist the move.

Elements having political backing and parties i.e. MQM, ANP, PPP loyalists have shown no interest in preventing the onslaught that has continued for some months now.

Pathan groups living next to Essanagri, and owning general stores, display arms, threaten and beat Christians, even harass women sometimes.

Five persons have been killed by unknown criminal in August –September this year.

1. Faisal Masih - 29th August 2012
2. Yousaf Masih - 12th September 2012
3. Rafi Masih - 15th September 2012
4. Nasir Masih - 15th September 2012
5. Maana Masih - 22nd September 2012



Banners calling for mourning, unity against injustices and eulogizing the murdered persons in Essanagri

The people of Essanagri responded to this existential threat by holding protest, press conferences and building walls around the main entrances to the settlement. However there is need for urgent action on part of the government to handle this situation in Essanagri but also in Pahar Gang, another big settlement housing poor Christian that is facing similar issues.

Ryan Stanten accused of committing blasphemy

A 16 years old Christian boy Ryan Stanten, resident of SUI Southern Gas Colony on University Road, Karachi was charged of committing Blasphemy on October 10, 2012.

A few days before the incident Ryan received calls accusing him of sending blasphemous text message from his number. Ryan refused to accept this allegation, checked his mobile, there was no record of any blasphemous text message in the cell phone.

Ryan recalled that some days ago when he was on a ride in car with his Muslim friends to watch a cricket match, one of his friends had borrowed his mobile phone to make some calls. Ryan suspected that his friend could have sent that message(s) from his phone and deleted it after sending. He informed his mother, Mrs. Rubina Bryan about the whole story. They moved to some unknown place.

On 10th October, 2012 an enraged mob attacked Ryan's house and stole away the household items, jewelry, money. They brought some furniture to the road and set it on fire. Again without any investigation the Police lodged an FIR under section 7, 25 & 295/c of Pakistan Penal Code on the complaint of Mr. Khursheed Alam the Chief Manager, SSGC (Sui Southern Gas Company), which is the manger of the housing scheme for its employees. Rubina Bryn, Ryan's mother is employed in this company as a Superintendent and drew a handsome salary.

Shumaila: forcibly kidnapped and converted to Islam seeks justice

Shumaila Bibi, 24, a Christian factory worker, resident of Nishatabad, Faisalabad, was kidnapped by a Muslim family in the early morning about 6:00 a.m. on 24th of September while she was returning home after her night duty at Millat Textile Mills, located near her home. Shumaila said that when she came out of the factory gate Muhammad Javed Iqbal, 26, along with relatives, Muhammad Rehan and Muhammad Zafar armed with guns, were already there in a car.

Muhammad Javed Iqbal caught her hand and asked to get in car and forced her into the vehicle despite she resisted and cried for help. As it was early morning therefore only security guard of the factory came but Muhammd Javed Iqbal and his

brothers threatened of dire consequences against any intervention. Then they took her to their residence in Ghulam Muhammadabad, Faisalabad.

Next day, on 25th of September, Muhammad Javed Iqbal with his relatives took her at the office of Muhammad Tanveer Aslam, a lawyer. In office, they made her sign papers of marriage and an affidavit stating that she had converted to Islam.

She was held for days, suffering sexual abuse, threats and violence, she was made to record a statement to police saying that she had converted and married Muhammad Javed out of her will. She was also compelled to learn Quran and Islamic teachings, she used to spend two hours in a private Madrassa, run by a female teacher near Javed's house. On 5th of October Shumaila requested the Quran teacher, Parveen Bibi to let her go earlier and managed to escape. From Madrassa she reached her parent's home and told them about the ordeal.

The same night police raided her parent's home on the complaint of Muhammad Javed Iqbal for kidnapping his converted wife, but Shumaila was already sent to a secure place.

Muhammad Javed Iqbal filed an FIR under section 365 of PPC against Shumaila's father Mansha Masih, and brother in law, Shareef Masih, charging them of kidnapping his wife in Ghulam Muhammadabad police station. On the other hand, Mr. Mansha Masih, 68, cobbler by profession has filed a writ petition against Muhammad Javed Iqbal for harassment and kidnapping her daughter.

Shumaila told NCJP staff that she wanted to live with her parents and practice Christian faith. Muhammad Javed Iqbal helped her find job in MTM after the request of her Muslim co-worker Ms. Surrya Bibi, he visited our home occasionally to meet my elder brother on friendly terms. 'I used to call him brother but he offered to make friends. I refused and discouraged him. For this insult, he has ruined my life.'

Shumaila is living with her parents and she has escaped any maneuvering of legal procedures though she is still part of the police investigation, only because of her clear stand. However future and status will depend largely on whether the law enforcement machinery and the better sense of justice will prevail or not.