

# SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

84th Session (March–April 2026)

## Review of the State Report of Pakistan

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International Human Rights Committee (IHRC) (<https://hrcommittee.org/>)

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**Classification:** Non-Governmental Organisation Submission (Rule 73, Rules of Procedure of the Committee against Torture)

### I. INTRODUCTION

This report is submitted jointly by CAP Liberté de Conscience and the International Human Rights Committee (IHRC) to the Committee against Torture (the Committee) in advance of its 84th session, for the purpose of informing the examination of Pakistan's compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Convention).

The report focuses on the systematic persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan. Drawing on incident reports and press releases documented by the IHRC throughout 2024 and 2025, the submitting organisations contend that State-sponsored religious discrimination has evolved into a fully-fledged apparatus of exclusion bearing the hallmarks of a system akin to apartheid.

The legal framework — specifically the Second Amendment to the Constitution (1974) and Ordinance XX (1984), in conjunction with sections 295-B and 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) — has created an environment in which Ahmadis are systematically denied basic civil and religious rights. The submitting organisations further contend that these discriminatory laws are not merely restrictive in nature but actively facilitate an environment in which torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (CIDT) can occur with impunity.

This submission specifically examines:

- The custodial death of Dr. Tahir Mahmood, following torture and the denial of adequate medical care;
- The arbitrary detention and life sentencing of Mr. Mubarak Ahmad Sani for acts of peaceful religious devotion, including Quranic memorisation;
- State complicity in mob violence and attacks on places of worship, including in Rabwah and Piro Chak;
- An impartial assessment of the systematic desecration of Ahmadiyya graves under the scope of the Convention; and
- The sustained pattern of targeted assassinations of Ahmadi civilians throughout 2024 and 2025, carried out with apparent impunity and without adequate State response.
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The submitting organisations respectfully urge the Committee to raise the concerns documented herein with the State party and to call for immediate, concrete, and verifiable remedial action.

## II. LEGAL ANALYSIS UNDER THE CONVENTION

### 1. Articles 1 and 16: Torture and Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment

#### *A. The Custodial Death of Dr. Tahir Mahmood*

According to an incident report documented by the IHRC on 12 May 2025, Dr. Tahir Mahmood, a 71-year-old Ahmadi Muslim, died in custody on 11 May 2025 in Malir, Karachi.

**Background:** Dr. Mahmood was arrested and imprisoned for the peaceful act of offering Friday prayers. He was charged under sections 295 and 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code — laws that have been weaponised specifically against members of the Ahmadiyya community.

**Torture (Article 1 CAT):** The evidence indicates that Dr. Mahmood was subjected to severe physical and mental suffering intentionally inflicted by State agents and actors operating with their acquiescence.

**Judicial Complicity:** On 12 March 2025, during his bail hearing, the courtroom was invaded by affiliates of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) — including lawyers and clerics — who physically attacked Dr. Mahmood in full view of law enforcement officers. The presiding judge allegedly denied bail "as per expectations" amidst these hostilities. The submitting organisations note that the failure of the judiciary to ensure the physical safety of a detainee during legal proceedings, and its apparent deference to extremist pressure, constitutes a grave violation of the State's non-derogable obligations under the Convention.

**Police Custody:** Following the hearing, Dr. Mahmood was transferred to police custody, where ill-treatment continued. Witnesses report that he was interrogated and beaten for refusing to renounce his faith.

**Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (Article 16):** Dr. Mahmood developed severe health complications, including oral blisters, pronounced weakness, and an inability to eat or drink. Despite exhibiting clear signs of acute medical distress, he was denied proper medical treatment. His death was the direct result of this combination of physical torture and the degrading denial of medical care.

**Conclusion:** The intentional infliction of severe pain and suffering upon Dr. Mahmood to punish him for his religious identity, compounded by the deliberate denial of medical care, constitutes a clear violation of Article 1 (Torture) and Article 16 (CIDT) of the Convention. The submitting organisations further submit that the State's failure to prevent the attack within the courtroom, and its failure to provide emergency medical care whilst Dr. Mahmood remained in State custody, engage the State's responsibility under Article 2(1) of the Convention, which requires the adoption of effective measures to prevent torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.

### 2. Article 2: Obligations to Prevent and Prohibit Acts of Torture

#### *A. State Failure to Protect: Escalating Targeted Killings and Mob Violence (2024–2025)*

In addition to the mass incidents detailed below, the IHRC has documented a sustained and escalating campaign of targeted assassinations and mob violence against Ahmadi civilians throughout 2024 and 2025. These incidents, carried out with impunity, demonstrate a profound failure by the State to exercise due diligence in protecting the right to life and the right to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

## *B. Mob Violence with State Acquiescence*

The killing of Mr. Laiq Ahmad Cheema (aged 46) on 18 April 2025 represents a particularly egregious violation. He was lynched by a mob of approximately 700 to 800 individuals, reportedly affiliated with the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), near the Ahmadiyya Hall in Saddar, Karachi. The sheer scale of the crowd and the public nature of the attack — in which the victim was beaten with rods and bricks following Friday prayers — indicate a severe breakdown of law enforcement control. The inability or unwillingness of the police to prevent such a large gathering of extremists, or to intervene to protect a citizen's life, is indicative of State acquiescence in violence against this minority.

The submitting organisations note that, in accordance with the Committee's General Comment No. 2, the obligation to prevent torture under Article 2 extends to ensuring protection against acts committed by private persons. Where State authorities fail to exercise due diligence to intervene, investigate, or prosecute such acts, State responsibility is engaged.

## *C. Pattern of Targeted Assassinations*

Between March 2024 and May 2025, the IHRC documented the following targeted killings, all characterised by the religious identity of the victims and by a conspicuous absence of State protection or meaningful investigation:

- **Mr. Tahir Iqbal Cheema (4 March 2024):** The local Ahmadiyya president in Hasilpur (District Bahawalpur) was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne assailants. Despite rising anti-Ahmadi agitation and repeated threats to the community, no preventive protection was provided by the authorities.
- **Mr. Ghulam Sarwar (8 June 2024):** A 62-year-old farmer in Saadullah Pur (District Mandi Bahauddin) was shot dead near his home by an extremist whilst returning from the mosque.
- **Mr. Rahat Ahmed Bajwa (8 June 2024):** A 30-year-old business owner in the same district was shot dead minutes after Mr. Sarwar by the same assailant. This successive killing underscores the emboldened nature of sectarian extremists operating without effective restraint or State interdiction.
- **Dr. Zaka ur Rehman (27 July 2024):** A 53-year-old dental surgeon and local community president was shot dead outside his clinic in Lala Musa (District Gujrat). The targeted assassination of a medical professional at his workplace reflects the pervasive and dangerous climate facing Ahmadi professionals.
- **Mr. Tayyab Ahmad (5 December 2024):** A 40-year-old man was killed with an axe in a public market in Dhamaial Camp, Rawalpindi, by an individual harbouring anti-Ahmadi sentiment.
- **Mr. Ameer Hasan Marrani (13 December 2024):** A 40-year-old farmer was shot dead at close range by unidentified assailants in Mirpur Khas (Sindh) whilst returning from morning prayers accompanied by his son.
- **Mr. Muhammad Asif (24 April 2025):** A 19-year-old was shot dead by sectarian extremists in Bhulair (District Kasur), demonstrating that the persecution is indiscriminate in nature and does not spare members of the community who are young in age.
- **Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Mahmood (16 May 2025):** A distinguished gastroenterologist was shot dead inside Fatima Trust Hospital in Sargodha by an armed man who had been waiting near the emergency ward. This targeted killing within a healthcare facility demonstrates the penetration of extremist violence into civic spaces and the State's failure to secure environments in which citizens ought to be safe.

**Analysis:** The repeated targeting of community leaders and professionals — including doctors and farmers — in public spaces and places of work, without adequate State

response, constitutes a violation of Article 2 of the Convention. The State's failure to prevent these foreseeable acts of violence, fuelled by hate rhetoric, and its failure to investigate and prosecute perpetrators, creates a climate of fear that amounts to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 16, inflicted by private actors with the acquiescence of the State.

The submitting organisations additionally submit that the cumulative pattern of these killings, taken together with the legislative framework that denies Ahmadis equal protection under the law, constitutes a form of structural CIDT imposed upon the entire community. The Committee is invited to consider this pattern within the framework of the State party's positive obligations under Article 2(1) to adopt all necessary measures to prevent torture and ill-treatment.

#### *D. State Failure to Protect: Attacks in Rabwah and Piro Chak*

The State of Pakistan has failed to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial, or other measures to prevent acts of torture and CIDT against Ahmadis.

**Terrorist Attack in Rabwah (10 October 2025):** A terrorist attacked worshippers at the Bait-ul-Mahdi mosque in Rabwah — the administrative headquarters of the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan — critically injuring several individuals. This attack occurred despite years of warnings and a well-documented history of violence against the community. The IHRC has recorded the "Government of Punjab's complete failure to protect" the community, an omission that has created an environment of fear that subjects citizens to the risk of severe physical harm in violation of Article 2 of the Convention.

**Piro Chak Violence (28 September 2025):** Extremist mobs, allegedly led by the TLP, launched coordinated attacks, burning homes, beating dozens of residents, and forcing entire families to flee. Police failed to protect the victims and, in several instances, filed false First Information Reports (FIRs) against the victims rather than the perpetrators. This pattern of State inaction in the face of organised mob violence facilitates acts of CIDT and violates the State's obligation under Article 2 of the Convention.

The submitting organisations draw the Committee's attention to the additional and particularly serious dimension of the Piro Chak incidents: the filing of false FIRs against victims by police authorities constitutes an act of intimidation that actively discourages survivors from reporting torture or ill-treatment, in direct violation of Article 13 of the Convention, which guarantees every individual the right to complain without fear of reprisal.

### 3. Articles 12, 13, and 14: Investigation, Complaint, and Redress

#### *A. The Case of Dr. Tahir Mahmood (Continued)*

To date, there is no evidence of a prompt, impartial, and effective investigation into the custodial death of Dr. Tahir Mahmood. The IHRC has demanded an independent inquiry; however, the involvement of TLP-affiliated lawyers in the judicial process and the general climate of impunity strongly suggest that the State party has violated its obligations under Article 12 (duty to investigate) and Article 14 (right to redress) of the Convention. The failure to prosecute the police officers and TLP members who facilitated the torture and death of Dr. Mahmood perpetuates a cycle of impunity that risks encouraging further violations.

The submitting organisations note that Article 14 of the Convention obliges the State party to ensure that victims of torture obtain redress, including fair and adequate compensation, and that the next of kin of Dr. Tahir Mahmood have, to date, received no such remedies. The Committee is invited to request specific information from the State party regarding steps taken to investigate and prosecute those responsible, and to provide redress to the family.

## B. Systemic Failure to Investigate Targeted Killings

The submitting organisations note that, across the eight documented targeted killings between March 2024 and May 2025, there is no evidence that the State party has conducted prompt, impartial, and effective investigations as required by Article 12 of the Convention, or that perpetrators have been prosecuted and punished in proportion to the gravity of their acts, as required by Article 4. This systemic failure to investigate and prosecute further entrenches the climate of impunity documented throughout this submission.

## III. DISCRIMINATION AND CRIMINALISATION OF FAITH

### 1. The Case of Mr. Mubarak Ahmad Sani: Arbitrary Detention and Identity-Based Punishment

On 23 December 2025, an Additional Sessions Court in Lalian, Punjab, sentenced Mr. Mubarak Ahmad Sani to life imprisonment under section 295-B of the PPC and to three years' imprisonment under section 298-C of the PPC.

**The Conduct Criminalised:** Mr. Sani was convicted not for any physical act of desecration, but for acts of peaceful religious devotion and the expression of his religious identity. He was accused of memorising the Quran (thereby bearing the title of *Hafiz*), and of distributing the *Tafsir-e-Saghir*, a Quranic commentary revered by the Ahmadiyya community. The court explicitly treated his use of the title "Hafiz" on donation receipts as incriminating evidence of "posing as a Muslim."

#### Relevance to the Convention:

- **Article 16 (CIDT):** The criminalisation of the act of memorising a religious text — universally regarded as a pious act within the Islamic tradition — solely on account of the individual's religious identity, constitutes degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 16. It serves to humiliate the individual and to punish the very essence of their being.
- **Article 2 (Prevention):** The judiciary's application of blasphemy laws (sections 295-B and 298-C of the PPC) to impose life imprisonment for acts of religious interpretation creates a climate of terror for members of the Ahmadiyya minority. The threat of life imprisonment for ordinary religious practice places community members in a state of constant and severe psychological duress.
- **Risk of Torture in Custody:** As noted by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and other monitors, individuals detained under blasphemy charges face a heightened risk of physical torture and ill-treatment at the hands of fellow inmates and prison authorities, due to the severe stigmatisation associated with blasphemy accusations. By enforcing these discriminatory laws, the State knowingly exposes Mr. Sani to such risks, in violation of Article 2 of the Convention.

The submitting organisations additionally submit that, given the life sentence imposed upon Mr. Sani for the exercise of his religious identity, the Committee should consider requesting interim measures pursuant to Rule 114 of its Rules of Procedure, including a guarantee of Mr. Sani's physical safety and access to legal counsel of his own choosing.

### 2. Criminalisation of Prayer in Azad Kashmir

In August 2025, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Kotli, Azad Jammu & Kashmir, issued legal notices to Ahmadi citizens for offering Friday (Jumu'ah) prayers in private homes, invoking sections 298-B and 298-C of the PPC. This criminalisation of private religious observance by State machinery serves as a tool of intimidation and harassment, violating

the prohibition of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment by weaponising the legal system against a religious minority.

The submitting organisations note that the extension of these discriminatory provisions to Azad Kashmir — a territory administered by Pakistan — confirms that the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community is a systemic and nationwide policy rather than isolated incidents. This geographic expansion of discriminatory enforcement is of particular relevance to the Committee's assessment of the State party's compliance with Article 2(1) of the Convention.

## IV. ASSESSMENT: DESECRATION OF AHMADIYYA GRAVES

### Relevance to the Convention Mandate

The IHRC has documented the systematic desecration of Ahmadiyya graves across Pakistan, including in Daska, Kotli, and Vehari. These acts involve the demolition of tombstones, the application of graffiti, and the destruction of burial sites.

#### **Legal Analysis:**

Whilst these acts constitute grave violations of freedom of religion and the right to dignity under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), they primarily constitute property damage and psychological harm to surviving family members and the community, rather than physical torture against a living person as defined under Article 1 of the Convention.

**State Involvement:** The role of the State is a crucial factor in assessing the relevance of these acts to the Convention. In January 2024, police officers in Daska vandalized over 75 graves. In other documented instances, revenue department officials — acting as State actors — destroyed the *mihrahs* (prayer niches) of mosques and targeted graves under pressure from extremist groups.

When State actors — including police and revenue officials — are the direct perpetrators of these acts, the desecration may be construed as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment under Article 16, directed at the surviving family members and the broader community. Such acts serve to inflict severe mental suffering and intimidation with the aim of coercing the community into submission.

**Conclusion:** Strictly construed, the desecration of a grave does not, in and of itself, typically constitute "torture" within the meaning of Article 1, which requires the infliction of severe pain or suffering upon a living person. However, where State actors actively participate in such desecration, the act constitutes degrading treatment within the meaning of Article 16 and a violation of the State's obligation to protect the dignity of all persons within its jurisdiction.

For the purposes of this submission, the submitting organisations categorise the grave desecrations under Article 16 (CIDT) in respect of the severe psychological trauma inflicted upon the community and the active role of police officers in humiliating the deceased and their families. The submitting organisations nonetheless maintain that these incidents constitute compelling evidence of the hostile environment and conditions akin to apartheid in which the Ahmadiyya community is compelled to live, and are further relevant to the Committee's assessment under Articles 2 and 16 of the Convention.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of Pakistan is in manifest breach of its obligations under the Convention against Torture. The existing legal framework systematically targets the Ahmadiyya community, creating a tiered system of citizenship that exposes its members to mob violence, police abuse, arbitrary detention, and the ever-present threat of torture and ill-treatment.

The submitting organisations respectfully call upon the Committee to:

**(a) Raise the following concerns with the State party:**

1. The custodial death of Dr. Tahir Mahmood and the absence of any independent investigation into the circumstances thereof;
2. The life sentence imposed upon Mr. Mubarak Ahmad Sani for acts of peaceful religious devotion, and the conditions of his detention;
3. The systematic pattern of targeted assassinations of Ahmadi civilians and the absence of effective investigation and prosecution;
4. The State's failure to prevent and respond to coordinated mob violence in Piro Chak and the terrorist attack in Rabwah; and
5. The active participation of police and State administrative officials in the desecration of Ahmadiyya graves.

**(b) Issue the following recommendations to the State party:**

**1. Accountability for Torture (Articles 12 and 14):** Conduct an immediate, independent, and transparent investigation into the custodial death of Dr. Tahir Mahmood, and prosecute all State officials and non-State actors, including TLP affiliates, involved in the torture and denial of medical care. Ensure that the next of kin receive fair and adequate compensation in accordance with Article 14 of the Convention.

**2. Domestic Criminalisation of Torture (Article 4):** Enact comprehensive legislation specifically defining and criminalising torture in line with the Convention, with penalties commensurate with the gravity of the offence, removing reliance on overly broad blasphemy laws that serve to legitimise ill-treatment.

**3. Protection of Detained Persons (Articles 11 and 16):** Ensure the physical safety, access to medical care, and access to legal counsel of Mr. Mubarak Ahmad Sani and all other prisoners of conscience detained under blasphemy laws. Protect such persons from torture or ill-treatment at the hands of fellow inmates or prison staff.

**4. Repeal of Discriminatory Legislation (Article 2):** Repeal or substantially amend sections 295-B, 298-B, and 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code to remove their discriminatory application against the Ahmadiyya community and to bring the legal framework into conformity with the State party's obligations under the Convention.

**5. Prevention of Violence and Intimidation (Article 2):** Take immediate and effective measures to prevent mob violence — including incidents such as the lynching of Mr. Laiq Ahmad Cheema and the coordinated attacks in Piro Chak — and to prevent terrorist attacks such as that perpetrated in Rabwah. Conduct prompt, independent, and impartial investigations into police negligence and complicity in these attacks, and prosecute those responsible.

**6. Cessation of Administrative Harassment (Article 16):** Immediately cease the criminalisation of private religious worship and the administrative demolition of Ahmadiyya mosques and the desecration of Ahmadiyya graves by State actors, including police officers and revenue department officials.

**7. Interim Measures:** The State party should be requested to take immediate interim measures to ensure the physical safety and well-being of all Ahmadi individuals currently held in detention under blasphemy-related charges, and to prevent any further killings of community members whilst the review is ongoing.

**8. Reporting and Follow-Up:** The State party should be requested to provide, within one year of the adoption of the Committee's concluding observations, detailed written information on the steps taken to implement all recommendations, including specific data on investigations initiated, prosecutions undertaken, sentences imposed, and compensation awarded to victims and their families.

**9. Coordination with Other Treaty Bodies:** In view of the overlap between the concerns raised in this submission and those raised before the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the submitting organisations respectfully invite the

Committee to consider coordinating its concluding observations with the findings of those bodies, in order to present a unified and reinforced international response to the persecution of the Ahmadiyya community.

## VI. SOURCES

The following sources were relied upon in preparing this submission:

- International Human Rights Desk (IHRD), *Annual Report 2024: Persecution of Ahmadis*.
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- International Human Rights Committee (IHRC), Press Release: *"Terrorist Attack on Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Headquarters City in Rabwah,"* 10 October 2025.
- International Human Rights Committee (IHRC), *"Martyred for Their Faith: Documented Killings of Ahmadis in Pakistan (2024–2025),"* 20 February 2026.
- CAP Liberté de Conscience, *"The 142nd Session of the Human Rights Committee Expresses Concerns over Violations of Freedom of Religion in Pakistan."*
- UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, *"Freedom of Religion or Belief in relation to Death and Burial Practices."*
- Committee against Torture, General Comment No. 2 (2007): Implementation of Article 2 by States Parties, CAT/C/GC/2.
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