**Ahrar, Mawdudi, and Ahmedis**

[Syed Ishrat Husain](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/syed-i-husain/)

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Ik kafira key waste Islam ko chhora
yeh Quaid e Azam, hai keh hai kafir-i-azam

Above lines are attributed to Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar, a leading personality in the Majlis e Ahrar ul Islam organisation. The demand for declaring the Ahmadis as a non-Muslim minority was first publicly made at an Ahrar meeting held at Pind Dadan Khan on 1st May 1949. The movement launched countrywide campaigns and protests resulting in a ban on Majlis-e-Ahrar in 1954. Ahmadis were the sole subject of speeches made at public meetings organised by the Ahrar. Majlis-e-Ahrar-ul-Islam had three demands:

Removal of Muhammad Zafarullah Khan from the foreign ministry;

Removal of Ahmadis from top government offices;

Declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims.

In February 1953, the demonstrations escalate into citywide incidents, including murder, looting, and arson targeting the Ahmadi community. The attacks were incited by the Jamaat e Islami political party led by Abul Ala Mawdudi. The anti-Ahmedi protestors billed their struggle as a jihad against infidels. The agitation brought the sectarian pot in Pakistan to a dangerous boil. Some Barelvis demanded that Deobandis be declared a separate minority.

Looking to establish his Islamic credentials in a country whose creation he had opposed, two issues remain central in Mawdudi’s political guile; the dispute with India over Kashmir and the controversy over the status of the Ahmadi community in Islam. In 1948 he challenged Pakistan’s endorsement of Jihad declared by local religious leaders in Kashmir during a ceasefire with India. So long as Pakistan maintained diplomatic relations with India, its covert assistance to the Kashmiri mujahideen was contrary to Sharia. Thus believing that Kashmir’s rightful place was in Pakistan, he advocated breaking off relations with India.

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Maulana Mawdudi’s role in the 1953 agitation to exclude Ahmadis from the Muslim community was linked to his composition of Jihad in Kashmir. The Pakistani state, having been created in the name of Islam, had an obligation to define what it meant to be a Muslim. Ahmedis were apostates, and Islamic law demanded waging a jihad against them.

Charging the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmed with offending faith, Mawdudi argued that declaring them a non-Muslim minority was a natural and reasonable result of the course they had chosen. Most unacceptable were the political irritants that Ahmedis had imposed on Muslims. It was wrong to say that the setting such a dangerous and misguided group outside the bounds of Islam would open the floodgates to the exclusion of other sects. No sect posed a bigger threat than the Ahmedis, who “hide behind Islam” and sow disunity among Muslims. By their cunning method of pretending Islam[sic], they had grabbed more administrative positions and employments. This subterfuge was harmful to the community, which could not tolerate a minority that was persecuting the majority. Apostasy in an Islamic State is punishable with death. According to this doctrine, Chaudhry Zafrullah Khan, if he has not inherited his present religious beliefs but has voluntarily elected to be an Ahmadi, must be put to death. (Partisans of Allah by Ayesha Jalal)

Unable to contain the increasingly widespread civil disorder, Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad handed over the administration of the city to the army under Lieutenant General Azam Khan, imposing martial lawand a curfew in Lahore on 6, March, 1953. Soldiers opened fire on bearded mob. Within two days the disturbances had been quelled. Mawdudi and his colleague Maulana Kausar Niazi were arrested and charged with treason. Both were found guilty, but Mawdudi was sentenced to death, later commuted to some years in prison. Mawdudi’s offence was his book. Kauser Niazi had indulged in violent and obscene rhetoric at a public rally, and stoked the crowd to such a fury that a mob surrounded and lynched an on duty policeman. According to the official inquiry conducted by the Punjab Government the actual number killed in these riots were around 20 people. Chief Minister MumtazDaultana was forced to resign. Kausar Niazi subsequesntly broke with the Jamaat e Islami and joined Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s People’s party in 1972; He became minister of religious affairs and advisor to the prime minister. It was his advice that led to the Bhutto regime that the Ahmedis were non-Muslims. (The Clash of Fundamentalisms)

Justice Munir Report on 1953 riots:

A public court inquiry was appointed, with Justice Munir and Justice M.R, Kayani, to investigate the cause of the Anti-Ahmedi disturbances. The 387 page report was published in 1954. Justice Munir and Justice Kayani were fearless in their recommendations; they mocked the confusions of the mullahs, and warned the country that an Islamic state would be a disaster.

How do you define Muslim? Keeping in view the several definitions given by the Ulama, need we make any comment except that no two learned divines are agreed on this fundamental? If we attempt our own definition as each learned divine has done and that definition differs from that given by all others, we unanimously go out of the fold of Islam. And if we adopt the definition given by anyone of the Ulama, we remain Muslims according to the view of that Alim but kafirs according to the definition of everyone else. The Justice Munir report denounced religious sectarianism as ‘perfidious’ and virtually argued that Islam was the stranger in the house: its intervention was unwarranted, its recourse to violence had created a political crises and it could only impede the development of the new state. Therefore it should be excluded from Pakistan’s politics and institutions. A separation between religion and the state was crucial if the country was to move forward.

The net result of all this is that neither Shias nor Sunnis nor Deobandis nor Ahl-i-Hadith nor Barelvis are Muslims and any change from one view to the other must be accompanied in an Islamic State with the penalty of death if the Government of the State is in the hands of the party which considers the other party to be kafirs. And it does not require much imagination to judge of the consequences of this doctrine when it is remembered that no two Ulema have agreed before us as to the definition of a Muslim.

The violence against the Ahmadis has seen no decline, in fact it has actually increased, yet, they are no longer a sect of Islam. The hatred model of the Majlis e Ahrar has now been adopted by many and has gone mainstream. Thousands of people rallied in Karachi in a massive anti Shia demonstration, in September this year outside the Mausoleum of Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

Sigh!

*The writer is a traveller and freelance writer based in UK. He has previously written for @the\_nation @Dawn\_com @DunyaNews @TheAsians He can be contacted on Twitter @SyedIHusain*