

*In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful*

On behalf of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Canada, I would like to express my gratitude at your attendance here today on such short notice. The purpose of this press conference is to provide an update regarding the horrific events of earlier today in Lahore, Pakistan, as well as the official statement of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Canada regarding them.

Based on the reports of leading news agencies, on Friday, May 28, 2010, at approximately 1:40 pm Pakistan time, armed religious extremist militants simultaneously stormed two mosques located in Lahore, Pakistan, namely, the Dar ul Zikr Mosque and Model Town Mosque. The militants opened fire upon the thousands of worshippers attending the Friday prayer services being conducted in these mosques. The militants were armed with automatic rifles and hand grenades, and fired upon the worshippers indiscriminately. All of the worshippers were members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. At the time of this statement, more than 80 Ahmadiyya Muslims are believed to have been killed with scores seriously wounded and being attended to in hospitals. The list of casualties is feared to continue to grow over the course of the day and this weekend.

Prior to the attack, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community received threats which they had forwarded to police

authorities. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, a non-governmental organization, had been warning government authorities of threats against the Model Town mosque for well over a year. However, local police enforcement refused to acknowledge and heed any of these warnings and provide the required protection.

After the incident, local police arrived on the scene and two of the militants were captured. However, the remaining militants committed suicide by igniting explosives worn on vests.

As all of those killed during today's attacks were killed solely on account of their religious faith and beliefs, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community considers them to be martyrs.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has suffered from persecution in Pakistan for decades. The Ahmadiyya Community is condemned by religious extremists, like the Taliban, for its peaceful interpretation of jihad (holy struggle) and its disassociation with war and violence as well as for its differing interpretation on the meaning of the finality of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him). At the behest of religious extremists, in 1974, the Pakistan Constitution was amended to declare the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as non-Muslim. Further, in 1984, the peaceful practice of Islam by the members of the Ahmadiyya Community was made criminal, and in some cases, subject to the death penalty. The United Nations Sub-Commission on Human

Rights, the United States House of Representatives, and numerous governments and non-governmental organizations have called upon the Government of Pakistan to repeal all criminal laws which prohibit the religious freedom of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan has yet to comply with the demands of the international community regarding the ongoing persecution of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 181 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. It is the most dynamic denomination of Islam in modern history, with worldwide membership exceeding 200 million. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908). He claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Mahdi for the Islamic world whose advent was foretold by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community strives to promote the benevolent and peaceful message of Islam, encourages interfaith dialogue, and diligently defends Islam in order to correct misunderstandings regarding it. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur'anic teaching: "There is no compulsion in religion." (2:257) and thus strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. On July 5, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated that the Ahmadiyya

Muslim Community represents "the true and benevolent face of Islam" and referred to Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Head of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community as a "champion of peace."

In a statement, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community said,

*“The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama`at is a peace loving true Muslim Jama`at. Thus there will be no improper reaction from any Ahmadi. Our salvation lies in our supplications to God Almighty and we believe that He has, and always will, help us. No terrorist and no government can ever stop the progress of our Jama`at because it is a Divine organisation.*

*May Allah protect all good natured people from the evil acts of those opposed to peace.”*