

ANTI-AHMADIYYA SENTIMENT VOICED ON PAKISTANI TV STATION; AHMADIYYA COMMUNITY FEARFUL OF DEADLY REPERCUSSIONS

On June 16, 2010 Pakistan's media channel, ExpressTV aired a highly offensive program against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community only a couple of weeks after the massacre of Ahmadi Muslim worshippers offering Friday prayers in their mosques in Lahore on May 28, 2010. The topic of discussion was "Why Muslim Ulema (clergy) and *all Muslims* consider Qadiyanis to be non-Muslims or apostates". The program opened with a statement that the host had received some Ahmadiyya literature, which he felt was so offensive that it could not be mentioned on public television. Clearly, this set the tone of discussion which was yet to ensue.

The host of the program Mubashar Luqman invited three religious clerics whose anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment is not hidden from the public eye. The panel included: Maulana Abdul Rauf Farooqi (affiliated with the Worldwide Majlis Khatm-e-Nabuwwat), Qari Zawaar Bahaadur (affiliated with Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan) and Alama Ibtasam Ilahi Zaheer (affiliated with Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith Pakistan). Here it is worth mentioning that the third cleric has been reported to have openly declared Ahmadis to be *Waajibul-Qatl* ("obligatory to kill") following the Lahore massacre.

Statements made on the program were not only in poor taste, offensive, and obscene, but the speakers went on to maliciously use derogatory language for Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community). In addition, false allegations were levied against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

These anti-Ahmadi propagandists were provided with a platform to voice their unsubstantiated and hateful opinions on what ought to have been an unbiased public forum. All the statements were made on National television, with no representative of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community present to rebut the unfounded accusations of the clerics.

The nature of the false accusations made against the movement in the program is bound to incite hatred among Pakistani Muslims. The clerics employed the tactic of taking texts from Ahmadiyya literature and either twisting the words of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian or taking them out of context. The clerics made extremely volatile allegations against the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Among the accusations made was that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is not a religious community. Farooqi stated that Ahmadiyyat is a political entity planted by the British to undermine Muslims in India during the time of its founder. Quotes from prominent religious figures were cited stating that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was a traitor to both India and Muslims.

Furthermore, Zavar Bahadur stated that today this Community is part of a plot launched against Muslims by the West.

And finally, when provided the opportunity to give reasons for declaring Ahmadis to be apostates, Ibtisam Zaheer presented fabricated teachings of Ahmadiyyat which include, but are not limited to the notion that God was capable of committing mistakes, that the founder of Ahmadiyyat not only claimed to be the son of God but also stated that a person could reach a spiritual level higher than that of the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}—[this last statement is highly offensive to Muslim sentiment].

Further justifications provided by Zaheer were so obscene that at one point, an annoyed Mubashar Luqman was forced to ask him to refrain from mentioning them on his program, but rather to provide references to the relevant literature, if the viewers at home so cared to look them up. At one point the host exclaimed “*such a person is accursed*” when Zaheer stated—falsely—that the Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} had referred to the wife of the Prophet^{sa} as his wife. Anyone with even the slightest sensitivity to religious sentiment can understand the volatility of such statements.

Abdul Rauf Farooqi not only falsely attributed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as having claimed to be a law-bearing prophet; he went as far as saying:

Regarding the claim to prophethood, the perspective of the Ulema (Muslim clergy) nay, the consensus of the whole Ummah for the past 14 centuries has been that any man who makes a claim to prophethood after the Holy Prophet Muhammad(sa) and says that “I have been given prophethood”, then he is outside the circle of Islam, he is a disbeliever, an apostate, and waajibul-qatl [obligatory to be killed]...In 14 centuries of Islamic history, there has not been a greater liar and falsifier who has feigned and deceived in such a manner...”

Towards the end of the program, the host held up a “well-researched” book as “proof present” containing quotes from Ahmadiyya literature (compiled and sequenced by a non-Ahmadi, Muhammad Mateen Khalid). Viewers were encouraged to purchase the book to get their questions answered about Ahmadiyyat, with the approval of the three clerics.

The program ended with the host asking the clerics to agree to discuss differences with an Ahmadi representative in a future program, on the condition that there be no form of altercation. The clerics agreed. We have yet to see the airing of such a program.

Considering the outrage exhibited by the host at these statements, one can easily anticipate the natural reaction of the Pakistani public, when such beliefs are attributed to an already greatly despised community in Pakistan. Because, the viewpoint of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was not voiced, it is clear the Pakistani media is playing a catalytic role in the negative reaction Ahmadis are bound to face.

It is feared that the negative repercussions of this irresponsible airing of explicit anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment by people of religious authority will instigate Muslims of Pakistan (who are either uneducated or unfamiliar with scripture) to cause further harm to members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Over 5 million Ahmadi Muslims currently reside in Pakistan, their safety is of great concern as a long history of persecution continues unobstructed by the Pakistani government and media.