

1. 5/28/10 - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and UN Experts, Asma Jahangir, Gay McDougall, Philip Alston: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=34849&Cr=&Cr1=>

Three United Nations human rights experts today called on the Pakistani Government to take every step to ensure the safety of religious minorities after the killing of at least 70 members of the Ahmadiyyah community, noting that numerous early warning signs had not been properly heeded.

“Members of this religious community have faced continuous threats, discrimination and violent attacks in Pakistan,” the experts said in a joint statement on the attack, which was also condemned by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The attack occurred during Friday prayers, when gunmen armed with grenades attacked two Ahmadi mosques in the city of Lahore. While the police responded to the attacks, the gunmen took control of one mosque and reportedly held hundreds of Ahmadi worshippers hostage.

In Pakistan and elsewhere, Ahmadis have been declared non-Muslims and have been subject to a number of undue restrictions and in many instances institutionalized discrimination. This emboldens opinion makers who wish to fuel hatred and perpetrators of attacks against religious minorities, the experts said.

“There is a real risk that similar violence might happen again unless advocacy of religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is adequately addressed,” they stressed, adding that the Government must ensure a prompt and impartial investigation, followed by effective prosecution of all those responsible for the killings.

“The Government must take every step to ensure the security of members of all religious minorities and their places of worship so as to prevent any recurrence of today’s dreadful incident,” they declared, while noting the condemnation by senior Pakistani leaders. This is all the more important since there have been numerous early warning signs which have not been properly heeded, they said.

The independent experts – Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Asma Jahangir, Independent Expert on minority issues Gay McDougall and Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions Philip Alston – report to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council in an independent and unpaid capacity.

Mr. Ban voiced his condemnation of the attack through his spokesperson, Martin Nesirky, who added that the Secretary-General extended his condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government.