

Marking Fifty Years of the Second Amendment: A Fresh Wave of Hostility Targets Ahmadis in Pakistan

SEPTEMBER 2024

A Special **Human Rights** Report

**“When God Himself has
declared you a
Muslim, why do you
worry? Let the world say
what it wants. You
have nothing to fear.”**

Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad
The Third Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Community



Foreward

In 1974, Pakistan amended its constitution to declare the Ahmadiyya Community as non-Muslims, a decision that continues to reverberate across the country's social and political landscape. While celebrated by some as an affirmation of Pakistan's Islamic identity, this decision institutionalised the exclusion of Ahmadis from mainstream society, and subjected the community to legal, social, and religious persecution.

Fifty years on, the legacy of the amendment is evident in the discrimination faced by Ahmadis in Pakistan, marked by both state-sanctioned legal restrictions and societal hostility. In recent days, the fifty-year anniversary of this pivotal moment, has sparked large-scale public marches and gatherings across Pakistan, with religious and political movements renewing their calls for upholding and expanding the boundaries of this decision. At the same time, the international human rights community continues to question the impact of such laws on religious freedom and minority rights.

The passage of time has only deepened the divide between those who view the Second Amendment as a vital cornerstone of Islamic identity in Pakistan and those who see it as a violation of basic human rights. As September unfolds, a wave of hostile public commemorations, including hate marches and conventions inciting violence against Ahmadis, have drawn renewed global attention to the ongoing persecution faced by the community in Pakistan.

01

Introduction: The Second Amendment and Its Historical Context

In 1974, Pakistan introduced the Second Amendment to its constitution, a landmark decision that fundamentally altered the status of Ahmadis within the country. This amendment officially declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims, marking a significant turning point in religious identity politics.



Passed in response to growing societal and political pressures, particularly from conservative religious factions, the amendment was met with widespread acclaim. On the day the amendment was passed, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto left parliament in an open topped vehicle as gathered crowds hailed him as a hero. The decision was seen as a unifying moment for the nation, symbolising solidarity and consensus across religious and political divides. A national day of thanksgiving was

observed and, for a moment in time, Pakistan was a country united. However, while the decision initially garnered widespread support, it also marked the beginning of decades of institutionalised discrimination and hostility against the Ahmadis of Pakistan.

The impact of the Second Amendment was profound and multifaceted. For Ahmadis, it meant severe restrictions on their religious freedoms particularly their right to self-identify as Muslims. It also laid the groundwork for the passing of Ordinance XX under General Zia-ul-Haq a decade later, which criminalised Ahmadi worship and preaching, prohibited Ahmadis from issuing the Muslim call to prayer, using the language and symbols of Islam, and from “posing as Muslims”, thereby curtailing every aspect of their religious and civic lives.

Socially, it exacerbated sectarian tensions and reinforced prejudices against all religious minorities, contributing to a climate of intolerance and discrimination. Politically, the amendment reflected the state’s intervention in religious affairs and set a precedent for the marginalisation of minority communities based on religious beliefs.

The socio-political landscape of Pakistan

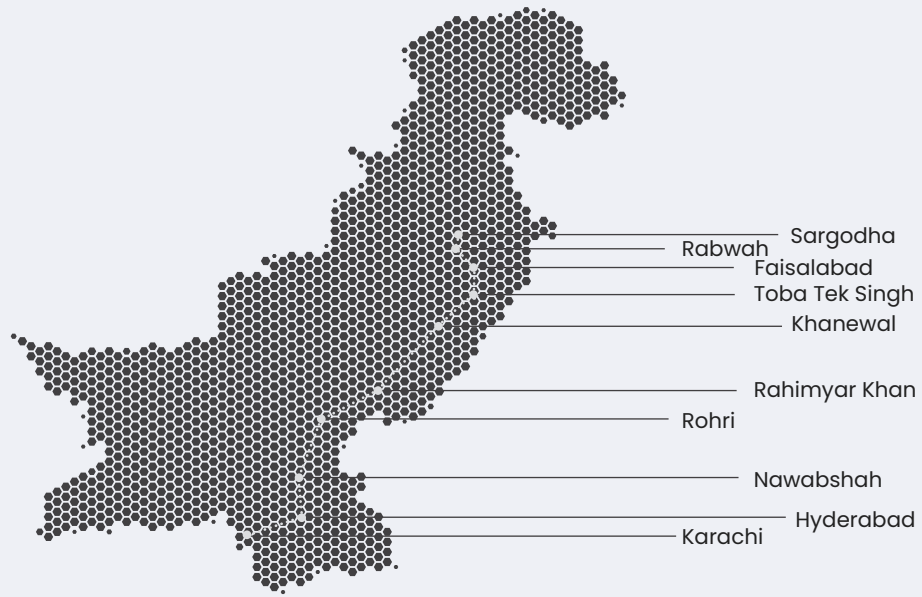
in 2024 continues to be shaped by the legacy of this amendment. Over the past five decades, Pakistan’s religious identity has been increasingly defined by strict boundaries of orthodoxy, and the Ahmadiyya Community has often borne the brunt of this. Today, while many Pakistanis celebrate the “Golden Jubilee” of the Second Amendment as a milestone in Islamic unity, others see it as

a reminder of the exclusion and suffering endured by a minority community whose human rights remain unprotected. To mark this anniversary, religious groups across have organised large-scale events, conferences, and marches, targeting the community. The following report sets out how these celebrations have unfolded across Pakistan in 2024, with a focus on certain key incidents.



An armed mob descends on the Ahmadiyya mosque in Mardan in 1974.

Route Map of
the Khatm-e-
Nabuwwat
Train March



15+

Conferences and
rallies held
across Pakistan.



Pakistan's Prime
Minister Shehbaz
Sharif made a
public statement
commemorating
the 50th
anniversary
of the Second
Amendment.

The Parliament building in
Islamabad was illuminated with
green lights, a symbolic gesture
celebrating the decision to declare
Ahmadis as non-Muslims.



40K

People watched the Golden
Jubilee Khatm-e-Nabuwwat
Conference live.

02 Spotlight on Key Events and Incidents

The “Khatam-e-Nabuwwat Train March” – 31 August to 1 September 2024

A two-day Khatam-e-Nabuwwat Train March was organised by Anjuman Talaba-e-Islam from 31 August to 1 September. This event, framed as a symbolic journey from Karachi to Rabwah – the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Community – was aimed at reinforcing the doctrine of the Finality of Prophethood. The march, which drew the participation of numerous religious activists, was not only a show of solidarity with the amendment but also served as a stark reminder of the socio-political pressures faced by the Ahmadiyya Community.

The train’s route and its final destination in Rabwah were chosen deliberately, as the city has historically been a spiritual and administrative centre for the community. The march was marked by rhetoric that underscored the entrenched hostility towards the community, contributing to the broader climate of fear and intimidation faced by Ahmadis across Pakistan. This event, though presented by organisers as a celebration of religious unity, further highlighted the profound marginalisation and exclusion of Ahmadis from Pakistan’s mainstream religious and civic life.



The march’s participants called for stricter enforcement of blasphemy laws and the continuation of state-sanctioned measures to curb Ahmadi religious practices. It served as both a celebration of the Second Amendment’s legacy and a renewed demand for the preservation of what they termed as Pakistan’s “Islamic integrity.” For the Ahmadiyya Community, however, the march symbolised yet another display of organised hostility, exacerbating the persistent fear of violence and persecution.

The Journey and Participation

The train march began on 31 August 2024, departing from Karachi and travelling through various cities including Hyderabad, Nawabshah, Bahawalpur, and Faisalabad, before reaching Rabwah on 1 September. Initially, around 200 people boarded the train in Karachi, but the numbers fluctuated along the way, with a significant drop in participation by the time the march reached Bahawalpur. By the time the train arrived in Rabwah, fewer than 90 participants remained on board.

In several cities, such as Hyderabad and Nawabshah, the train was greeted with enthusiasm by supporters, while in others, such as Bahawalpur and Faisalabad, the participation remained low. Despite this, at each stop, speeches were made emphasising the importance of the 1974 decision and demands were raised, including the renaming of Rabwah Railway Station to the Khatam an-Nabiyyin Railway Station.



Incidents at Rabwah

When the train finally arrived at Rabwah on 1 September, it was met with a heavy police presence. The authorities had closed off roads leading to the station, ensuring no Ahmadi residents could approach the area. Shops were shuttered, and there were reports of brief but intense sloganeering by the participants. The train stopped for only a minute, during which no one was allowed to disembark, preventing any significant altercations. However, on social media, organisers falsely claimed that participants had been met with police brutality, creating further tensions.

Golden Jubilee Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Conference – 7 September 2024

On 7 September, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, organised a grand conference at Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore. This event was the culmination of various activities marking the 50th anniversary and aimed to honour those involved in the passing of the Second Amendment.



Religious and Political Speeches

The conference was attended by prominent clerics and politicians, including Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad, and Liaquat Baloch. The speeches delivered during the event were inflammatory, with many speakers praising the 1974 decision as a victory for Islam. There were frequent references to the Ahmadiyya Community, with clerics issuing warnings to the Pakistani state about the dangers of any perceived concessions to the community.

Anti-Ahmadi Rhetoric

The conference featured aggressive language against Ahmadis. Speakers emphasised that any attempts to reverse or amend the Second Amendment would be met with fierce resistance. Some clerics went as far as to call for the community to be labelled as national traitors, and urged the government to take stronger action against their religious practices.

“The apostate must be killed...it is the responsibility of the government to kill him”



One of the most egregious examples of hate speech at the Minar-e-Pakistan Conference came from prominent Sunni scholar Maulvi Manzoor Mengal. During an address Mengal declared Ahmadis apostates and called for their execution. He asserted that it was the government’s duty to kill them, but if the state failed, he urged the public—Pathans, Punjabis, and Sindhies—to take the matter into their own hands. His inflammatory words were met with applause and chants promoting violence. A video clip of this speech went viral on social media, amplifying anti-Ahmadi hate rhetoric and further fuelling an already hostile atmosphere towards the community during this sensitive time.

Anti-Ahmadi Conferences in Rabwah – 6 and 7 September 2024

In addition to the high-profile events in Lahore, a series of smaller but significant conferences were held in Rabwah, the centre of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan.

The Seerat-un-Nabi (Life of the Prophet) Conference – 6 September 2024

On 6 September, a Seerat-un-Nabi (Life of the Prophet) Conference took place near Rabwah Railway Station. Speakers used harsh language to attack the community, accusing them of treachery and anti-Islamic activities. There were accusations that in 1974, Ahmadi students had martyred innocent Muslims at the Rabwah station, a claim historically disputed and unsupported by evidence.

International Khatm-e-Nabuwat Conference – 7 September 2024

The following day, a more prominent anti-Ahmadi conference was held under the leadership of Qari Shabbir Usmani, the Deputy Amir of the International Khatm-e-Nabuwat Movement. This event featured several sessions, during which clerics reiterated their demands to prevent any amendment to the anti-Ahmadi laws and warned of extreme consequences if the community continued to challenge the existing legal framework.

Much of the rhetoric from the conference revolved around accusing the Ahmadiyya Community of conspiring with foreign powers to undermine the state of Pakistan. There were also calls for the Pakistani government to expel Ahmadi leaders and restrict their rights further. The police maintained a heavy presence around the event.



Anti-Ahmadi Conference in Chiniot

In Chiniot, the town which most closely neighbours the Ahmadi headquarters of Rabwah, Maulana Muhammad Yameen Chinioti further fanned the flames of anti-Ahmadi rhetoric. Speaking at a large gathering, he warned supporters of “Qadianis” (a derogatory term used for Ahmadis) that they were “warring against Allah and the Holy Prophet” and vowed to offer his life for the protection of the belief in the Finality of Prophethood. His message, endorsed by other prominent clerics, amplified the call to eliminate any perceived threats to this belief by oppressing the Ahmadiyya Community.

Federal Government Marks 50th Anniversary of the Second Amendment

On 7 September, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made a public statement commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Second Amendment. In a post shared on X formerly known as Twitter, Sharif expressed his gratitude for the resolution passed by the Parliament of Pakistan in 1974, hailing it as a historic moment that safeguarded the “sanctity of the Finality of the Prophethood.”

Sharif praised the efforts of parliamentarians, religious scholars, and leaders involved in the passage of the amendment, framing their actions as a necessary step to remove “ambiguities” concerning Islamic doctrine. His message emphasised that the belief in the Finality of the Prophethood is intrinsic to Pakistan’s faith and values, stating, “for which everything is sacrificed.”

To mark the golden jubilee of the constitutional amendment, the Parliament building in Islamabad was illuminated with green lights, a symbolic gesture celebrating the decision to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslims. The green lighting served as a tribute to the parliamentarians who passed the law, as confirmed by Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, a member of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Dr Chaudhry took to social media to highlight that the Parliament building was lit up to honour the individuals who played a pivotal role in drafting and approving the amendment. He stated that the tribute was a recognition of the contributions made by the members of Parliament and religious leaders in affirming the position of the Finality of the Prophethood in Pakistani law and religious practice.



Anti-Ahmadi Ahmadi Rhetoric in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)

Leading political figures in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) issued statements that underscored the entrenched discrimination against the Ahmadiyya Community. The public commemorations of the 1974 Second Amendment, reflected an ongoing commitment by leaders to uphold this decision.

On 6 September 2024, Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, the President of AJK, addressed the nation, calling the Second Amendment a historic moment that reflected “the true sentiments of the Muslim Ummah.” He described the declaration of Ahmadis as non-Muslims as a necessary step to protect the Finality of Prophethood. His remarks highlighted the continuing official narrative that Ahmadis pose a threat to Islam and should be socially and religiously marginalised.

Similarly, AJK Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq reiterated the importance of protecting the belief in the Finality of the Prophet Muhammad as the essence of Islam. His speech was marked by calls for unity in defending this belief, invoking past sacrifices made by the people of Azad Kashmir to uphold it. His rhetoric, echoing President Chaudhry’s message, not only justified the state’s legal stance on Ahmadis but also emboldened religious factions that continue to target the community.



Attendees of the Golden Jubilee Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Conference in Lahore on 7 September 2024.

03

Media Coverage

The 50th anniversary of the Second Amendment and Ahmadi persecution in Pakistan was covered across various platforms. BBC Urdu's Sairbeen explored whether the state is complicit or compelled in the ongoing persecution of Ahmadis, examining how the legislation from 1974 continues to affect the Ahmadiyya Community today. The report touched on the systematic exclusion of Ahmadis from religious and social freedoms, delving into both state and societal roles in perpetuating this exclusion.

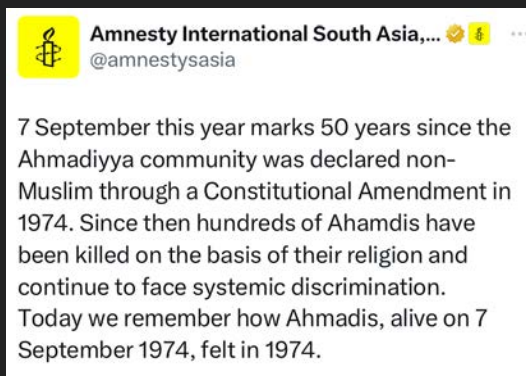
Meanwhile, another report published by BBC Urdu recounted personal stories of loss and suffering experienced by Ahmadi families, reflecting on the emotional and social toll of the amendment. It shed light on the depth of psychological trauma caused by decades of persecution.



An opinion piece in *The Friday Times* titled "50 Years On: Revisiting The Second Amendment" discussed the long-term implications of the 1974 amendment that declared Ahmadis non-Muslim. It highlighted the political motivations behind the law and how it has been used as a tool to marginalise the community, with social and legal discrimination now embedded in Pakistan's national identity.

On YouTube various gathering and events commemorating the amendment were either live streamed or uploaded later on, replete with anti-Ahmadi hate speech and incitement to violence.

Amnesty International South Asia marked the 50th anniversary of Pakistan's Second Amendment, on X formerly known as Twitter. In their post, Amnesty highlighted the decades of discrimination, violence, and marginalisation faced by Ahmadis since this constitutional change. The post described the period as "fifty years of injustice," offering a historical overview of the events leading to the amendment and its long-lasting effects on Ahmadis in Pakistan.



04

Conclusion: Human Rights and the Second Amendment in 2024

The 50th anniversary of the Second Amendment in Pakistan is a reminder of the complex interplay between religion, politics, and human rights in the country. While many in Pakistan see the decision of 1974 as a defining moment for Islamic identity, for others, it represents a legacy of marginalisation, persecution, and state-endorsed discrimination.

The events of 2024, marked by train marches, conferences, and public gatherings, have spotlighted the deep-rooted tensions surrounding the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan. Despite international criticism and concerns from human rights organisations, the political and religious leadership in the country remains steadfast in its commitment to upholding the Second Amendment.



The 50-year legal and social exclusion of Ahmadis from the mainstream of Pakistani society has had far-reaching consequences. Pakistan's Anti-Ahmadiyya Ordinance of 1984, which forbids Ahmadis from identifying as Muslims or using Islamic symbols, continues to be used as a tool of religious discrimination. The demands from the Train March and the 7 September conference to reinforce these laws and further restrict Ahmadi practices are indicative of a broader human rights crisis.

The international community, alongside Pakistani civil society, and human rights stakeholders, must continue to advocate for the protection of Ahmadis and all religious minorities in Pakistan. There is a pressing need for legal reforms that ensure religious freedom for all citizens, regardless of their faith. Furthermore, the government of Pakistan must take decisive steps to address the incitement to violence and uphold the rule of law in accordance with its obligations under international human rights treaties. Failure to do so will only deepen the divisions within Pakistani society and exacerbate the decades long persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in Pakistan.

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