ONLINE HATRED PUSHING MINORITIES TO THE PERIPHERY

AN ANALYSIS OF PAKISTANI SOCIAL MEDIA FEEDS
SEPT 2019 – JUN 2020

www.bytesforall.pk

CREID
Coalition for Religious Equality
and Inclusive Development

IN LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENTS

Author*: Bytes for All, Pakistan

About this report

This report is written by Bytes for All, Pakistan.

Bytes for All (B4A), Pakistan, is a human rights organization and a research think-tank with a focus on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). We promote the use of technology for sustainable development, democracy and social justice.

Find out more: https://bytesforall.pk/

This report was commissioned in July 2020 by Minority Rights Group (MRG) as part of the Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID). CREID provides research evidence and delivers practical programmes which aim to redress poverty, hardship, and exclusion resulting from discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. CREID is an international consortium led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and funded by UK aid from the UK Government. Key partners include Al-Khoei Foundation, Minority Rights Group (MRG), and Refcemi. Find out more: www.ids.ac.uk/creid

MRGI's partners in Pakistan include Bargad, Bytes for All, Pakistan and the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Both Bargad and NCJP work with religious minorities and youth groups in Pakistan respectively with the objective of promoting tolerance and inclusiveness in society and preparing policy briefs on hate speech in offline spaces for advocacy purposes with the Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa governments.

Please do not share or reproduce the contents of this report without first contacting Bytes for All on info@bytesforall.pk or CREID on: creid@ids.ac.uk

CONTENTS

I.   Introduction

Hate speech has long been pervasive in Pakistani society, especially directed towards individuals and groups belonging to minority faiths (and those of no faith). Those not following the majority's Sunni faith, are given different titles and labels while several stereotypes are associated with different faiths, sects and religions, including Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, Sikhs and Shias. However, when it comes to online spaces where more and more people are joining different social media platforms to express their views and share their opinions (or those of others whom they support), these labels, titles and stereotypes get hugely amplified, attracting widespread attention across whole communities. This report offers an account of such expressions to understand the nature of religion-based hate speech in Pakistan's Twitter and Facebook spheres in 2019/2020. The report documents Pakistan's record vis a vis its international human rights commitments, as well as how un-countered hate speech is relevant to the review of Pakistan's record under the European Union's framework of Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+). This special trade status is granted by the European Union under certain economic conditions and allows a given country to export its products to European markets at a reduced or zero rate of duty. However, this status comes at the condition that states improve their fulfilment of international human rights and labour rights obligations.

II.   Background

Pakistan is a Muslim majority country, where Islam is constitutionally declared as the State religion[1]. While the majority of the population adheres to Sunni Islam,[2] Muslims also comprise Shias, Ahmadis and Ismailis. Article 260 (3)(b) of the Constitution categorically mentions Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Ahmadis and Bahais as non-Muslim groups and communities in the country. The Ahmadi community, however, associates itself with Islam and has a long resisted being categorized as non-Muslim in the Constitution. In addition to the Constitutional categorization, Section 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code which regulates blasphemy laws, proposes up to three years of imprisonment for members of the Ahmadiyya community who associate themselves with Islam, stating that:

> "...who directly or indirectly poses himself as Muslim, or calls, or refers to, his faith as Islam, or preaches or propagates his faith, or invites others to accept his faith, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, or in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims...".

Similarly, discrimination and faith-based crimes against citizens belonging to other religions – commonly referred to as religious minorities – are prevalent and include hate crimes. Blasphemy laws have blatantly been misused/abused against people of Christian, Hindu, Shia and Ahmadi faith.

---

* The names of the author and research associates are kept anonymous fearing any negative security implications. HBMM
[1] Article 2 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
[2] In this report, we will refer to majority Sunni Muslims when describing incidents of online hate to show that instigators are from the Sunni majority Sunni in Pakistan, but we are by no means implying that all majority Sunnis act or speak in the ways described.

Recently, religious expression in Pakistani social media spaces has been increasingly criminalised by the State – dubbed as either hate crime and/or profaning Islam, as interpreted by the Muslim Sunni majority. Two Christian brothers, Qaisar Ayub and Amoon Ayub were sentenced in December 2018 to capital punishment for spreading sacrilegious content online.[3] Earlier, Taimoor Reza, belonging to the Shia faith, was similarly sentenced to death in June 2017 after being convicted by an anti-terrorism court. Reza was accused of spreading hate speech against the Deobandi sect, a Sunni denomination of majority Islam.

Pakistani social media is filled with faith-based hate and/or dangerous messages directed towards Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, Shias and other faiths. The COVID-19 pandemic further created situations for the religious minorities where they faced backlash and were targeted with hate speech campaigns, such as #Shiavirus.[4] The following section of the report has taken stock of Pakistani social media, primarily Twitter, to present different shades and trends of dangerous speech in the country.

III.   Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) Framework

Although the Pakistani Constitution talks about providing equal rights to all citizens, minority religions, sects and faiths have been facing numerous challenges *vis-à-vis* the exercise of their constitutional rights and guarantees. During the latest country-specific reviews under the UN Human Rights instruments, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)[5] and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)[6], the State Party received abundant recommendations to address serious human rights violations against faith-based minorities. These include, but are not limited to, revisiting/decriminalizing blasphemy laws, curricula reforms, equal access to economic, social and cultural rights, etc.

As part of its many global commitments, Pakistan has a legal obligation to adopt and implement international human rights instruments, including treaties on labour and environment. Pakistani is a vulnerable country with regards to its deteriorating financial health. However, it managed to win the European Union's (EU) Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status in December 2013, which came with additional obligations vis-à-vis human and labour rights, environmental protection and good governance, with particular reference to 27 human rights, labour and environmental conventions identified by the European Union. In fact, these instruments are none other than the UN multilateral treaties, which Pakistan is already a state party to.

Other than Pakistan, twelve other countries also enjoy this trade advantage. Once a country has been granted this status, it not only has to implement 27 human and labour rights, environmental protection and good governance treaties, but also has the responsibility to report back to the European Parliament

[3] Rehman, D. (2018). Pakistan sentences two Christian brothers to death for online blasphemy. Daily Pakistan, accessible at: https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/15-Dec-2018/pakistan-sentences-christianbrothers-to-death-for-online-blasphemy

[4] Mirza. J. (2020) Pakistan's Hazara Shia minority blamed for spread of Covid-19, accessible at: https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/pakistans-hazara-shia-minority-blamed-for-spread-of-covid-19/

[5] OHCHR, (2017). Human Rights Committee's concluding observations on Pakistan's review under ICCPR, accessible at: www.OHCHR.org

[6] OHCHR, (2017). Universal Periodic Review, 3rd Cycle. Concluding observations on Pakistan's review under UPR, accessible at: www.OHCHR.org

every two years regarding the progress on these commitments. The EU reserves the right to withdraw or temporarily suspend this status if it finds a country to be noncompliant to these commitments.

Under the international human rights regime, Pakistan, as of now, has ratified seven (7) core human rights treaties of the United Nations. It has yet to sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. In addition to these, the Optional Protocol of the Convention on Torture and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty have not yet been signed or ratified/acceded.

IV.   Methodology

The research employed social media monitoring to understand violent extremism and the trends in religious debates online. For this purpose, both Twitter and Facebook monitoring was carried out.

For the Twitter monitoring, we scraped for dangerous messages directed at or concerning religious minorities. A Pakistan specific Twitter monitor was setup based on the following keywords:

[Blasphemy, blasphemous, blasphemer, ghustakh, gustakhi, Christianity, Christian, Esai, Maseehi, Ahmadi, Ahmadiya, Ahmedi, Ahmadya, Qadiani, Qadiyani, Qadian, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Kafir, Infidel, Takfiri, Kufr, Hindu, Hinduism, Bhagwan, Sikh, Gurdawara, Wajib Ul Qatal, Wajibul Qatal, Wajib Ul Qatl, Lynching, Rabwah, Dr Abdul Salam, Khatm-e-Nabuwat, Khatum-i-Nabuwat, Islam, Muslim, Yasu Masih, Yahudi, Choora, Chura, Chooray, and Churay.]

For data collection, Bytes for All relied on the Brandwatch tool facilitated by Minority Rights Group International/CREID.

A significant chunk of the data is labelled as 'neutral', which denotes that Twitter users using the keywords during their conversations did not include in their messages negative emotions or expressions targeting minority faiths. The remaining tweets are divided in two categories, Negative and Positive. The majority are labelled as 'negative' and include hate content targeting minority faiths attached with negative emotions. A small number of tweets are labelled as 'positive'; These include arguments pacifying the conflict in conversations by associating positive emotions to the terms.

The team were not able to access Facebook's data on Brandwatch's platform and therefore the monitoring of hate speech on Facebook was done by selecting groups that were likely to be involved in conversations about relevant topics with a focus on specific incidents that could result in hate commentary. The posts discussing the events were analysed and the comments and their replies were mined for any inappropriate content. When all the comments were collected, they were categorized under eight categories of religious debates and extremism online which will be discussed below.

For Facebook monitoring, pages of different religious sects including closed groups were joined and monitored daily for a period of 50 days. In addition, some key incidents were also specifically targeted,

which would garner religious hate and dangerous messages/comments. The incidents were related to Christian, Hindu, Ahmadiyya, Shia and Ismailia communities. The spread of violence in or affecting religious communities was assessed from posts across Pakistan.

Timeframe

Twitter – Ten months (September 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020).
Facebook – Six months and 29 days (December 2, 2019 to June 30, 2020).

V.   TWITTER: Trends, Findings and Discussion

a)   **Volume of Tweets:** Total volume of tweets containing the relevant mentions from the keywords was recorded at 309,000 with 68,000 unique authors tweeting between September 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

Figure 1: Volume of tweets monitored

- **Real World Incidents**
1. **September 27, 2019:** Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed the UN General Assembly in New York and talked on issues including Israeli occupations in Palestine, Indian atrocities in Kashmir, Afghanistan crisis, Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslim communities in European and Western countries.
2. **September 29, 2019: Violence on Tarek Fateh:** Scuffle between Pakistanis and Canadian national Pakistani Tarek Fateh in New York because of his anti-Pakistan statements on social media and Indian national televisions.

3. **November 9, 2019:** Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated the Kartarpur Corridor in Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Narowal. The government of Pakistan built the corridor to facilitate Sikh pilgrims from across the world entering Pakistan from India, to reach Kartarpur.
4. **December 16, 2019:** A day when Pakistan observes two disturbing historical incidents; the Fall of Dhaka and the Taliban attack on the Army Public School, where around 150 innocent children were killed.
5. **December 23, 2019:** A young academic from Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Junaid Hafeez was sentenced to death after a lengthy court trial and his conviction under Blasphemy Laws.
6. **January 6, 2020:** Pakistan declared a Hindu temple, Panj Tirath in Peshawar a national heritage site.
7. **January 10, 2020:** A Canadian traveller, Rosie Gabrielle, who spent a year in Pakistan announced her conversion to Islam.
8. **February 24th, 2020:** Prime Minister Imran Khan's tweet in support of religious minorities living in Pakistan provoked radical Islamists and their supporters online to spew hatred against religious minorities.
9. **April 13, 2020:** A women activist Marvi Sirmed's tweet became reason for *Twitteraties* in Pakistan to spew hatred for her criticism on the sub-standard construction of the Kartarpur Corridor, whose domes were broken after a thunderstorm hit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib.

The highest single-day volume was recorded at 28,030 tweets in the week starting on September 23, 2019 up to September 29, 2019. During the UN General Assembly leaders from different countries discussed in their speeches conflict areas including Kashmir, Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and others. Prime Minister Imran Khan made his speech on the evening of September 26, 2019. Using a biased rhetoric, he only highlighted the plight of Muslims in the West and Kashmir. A particular focused was put on the Indian occupation of Kashmir. This speech resulted in an uproar against Hindus, Jews and Christians who are perceived as causing or contributing to the current situation in Palestine and Kashmir.

PM Imran Khan touched upon four global issues, including climate change, money laundering/outflow of money from developing countries to developed countries, Islamophobia and Kashmir. He allocated, to be precise, 3:30 minutes to the climate change issue, 5:02 minutes to money laundering, 13:26 to Islamophobia, and 26:30 minutes to Kashmir issue in his total 48:45 minutes address to the UNGA.

Talking about Islamophobia, Khan criticised European and Western countries for adopting and promoting anti-Muslim policies and practices, such as bans on Muslim women wearing the hijab, the marginalization of Muslims, etc. He used the terms "Islamophobia" 11 times, "radical Islam" 10, "terrorism" 9, "militants/terrorists" 8, "Islamic terrorism" 6, "war on terror" 4, "suicide/suiciders" 6, "religion" 4, "Quran" 4, "marginalization of Muslims" 3, "Jihad" 2, "Mujahideen" 1, "Taliban" 1, "Al-Qaeeda" 1, "worship places of all religion" 1, "Christianity/Christians" 4, "Hinduism/Hindus" 6, "Jewish/Judaism" 7, "Muslim" more than 50, and "Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar" 1 time.

Discussing the Kashmir issue, PM Imran Khan used the terms "Kashmir" 29 times, "India" 25 times, "RSS"[7] (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) 8, "racial superiority" 5, "bloodbath in Kashmir" 4, "ethnic cleansing" 3, "hatred for Muslims" 2, "hate ideology" 2 and "hatred for the religions", in the context of Christians in India, 1 time. He also referred to the defiling of prophet Mohammad and Islam, without mentioning the word blasphemy, at least 3 times. All these terminologies are identical or very similar to words, phrases and themes which have also been detected during the monitoring of online hate speech.

The Hate Speech Monitor alerted of an unusual flow of tweets on September 26th at 2100 PST (Pakistan Standard Time). However, the next day in the evening, people took on Twitter and around 7,958 mentions were recorded on the monitor between 1800 PST and mid night. The peak of the spike was recorded at 2200 PST with 2,327 mentions, whereas at 2100 PST they were 2,217 and 298 at 1800 PST.

The same week witnessed different offline incidents outside Pakistan that fuelled hate mongering within the country. The biggest conversation in terms of volume resulted from an attack in front of the UN General Assembly building in New York by a group of Pakistanis. The attack was directed against Pakistani-Canadian author and TV journalist Tarek Fateh, who was following the proceedings. A Pakistani veteran politician, Farhat Ullah Babar, declared on Twitter that although it was legitimate to disagree with Tarek Fateh's thoughts, the journalist had every right to speak. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf's (PTI) political worker and founder of PTI's Cyber Force (as mentioned in his profile), Salar Sultanzai, from Balochistan, responded to Babar's tweet in a hateful way, addressing Babar with vulgar English slang such as *"Have you lost your bloody mind"* and *"Friggin drunk"*, and in the same stretch used swear words for Tarek Fateh such as *"bastard"*. Sultanzai's tweet got 749 retweets and 22 quote tweets with a total reach up to 309,000 people.

A second spike was witnessed in the week starting on November 4, 2019 with a spike volume of 22,292. Pakistani twitter space remained occupied with praise of Prime Minister Imran Khan who inaugurated the Sikh pilgrim site on November 9, 2019. Almost all main political leaders including Federal Ministers Asad Umar, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar, leading journalists Hamid Mir, Gharida Farooqi, Khawar Ghumman and others praised the Pakistan government and Prime Minister Imran Khan on Twitter, trying to portray Pakistan as a pro minority country. However, at the same time, *Twitteratis* from within Pakistan and across the border in India were talking about Hindus and Christians facing discrimination, forced conversion, and other forms of discriminatory issues. The event resulted in heavy exchanges of hate speech against the Hindu, Christian, Shia, and Ahmadiyya minorities in Pakistan.

The third hate spike in terms of volume was recorded at 14,473 in the week starting on February 24th, 2020, when Prime Minister Imran Khan tweeted in support of religious minorities in Pakistan. The tweet reads: "I want to warn our people that anyone in Pakistan targeting our non-Muslim citizens or their places of worship will be dealt with strictly. Our minorities are equal citizens of this country".

---

[7] RSS is an Indian right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary group.

The fourth and fifth volume spikes were recorded during the weeks starting on December 23rd and December 16th, 2019 respectively, where collectively 21,549 tweet mentions were recorded on the Pakistan Hate Speech monitor.
A series of important events took place in these two weeks, including the observance of the anniversary of the Peshawar Army Public School attack on December 16, 2014; the Fall of Dhaka on December 16, 1971; and the death sentence by a Multan Court to an individual accused of blasphemy: academic Junaid Hafeez.

Other significant volume spikes were witnessed on January 6th, 2020 and April 13th, 2020. On January 6th, the Pakistani government declared a 1000-years old Hindu temple, Panj Tirath, a national heritage site. The temple is located in the Hashtnagri area, Peshawar city. The event resulted in commentaries on Twitter – people projecting Islam as the only true religion and a religion of peace, etc. Echoing this narrative, Pakistani *Twitteratis* were also demeaning other religions, especially Hinduism, due to their hatred towards India. Leading political figure and sitting Federal Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed was also found re-tweeting hateful remarks in a quote tweet[8]. On January 10th, a Canadian traveller, Rosie Gabrielle, who spent a year in Pakistan, converted to Islam. The news hit the social media timelines massively after she broke the news on her official Instagram account.

In the week starting on April 13th, the total volume remained at 9,725 mentions, whereas the biggest reach for a single tweet was over two million of quote tweets of the famous woman journalist and political commentator Marvi Simed. Simed shared a tweet of PML-N politician Ahsan Iqbal, criticizing the sub-standard construction of the Kartarpur Gurdwara, when part of the structure collapsed after the town was hit by a thunderstorm on April 18th. Her tweet received widespread hate comments including some that referred to her as anti-Pakistani. These included titles such as *"begherat aurat", "besharam aurat", "buffalo's brain"*, *RAW's* (Research and Analysis Wing) *puppy*, etc.[9]

b) **Sentiment Analysis:** Out of the total 309,000 volume, 27% (82,364) discussion on Twitter generated negative sentiments, 25% (76,496) generated positive sentiments, whereas 49% (149,808) of the entire discussion was recorded with neutral sentiments.

---

[8] Quote Tweet is a tweet where an individual or group would add their opinion or point of view in addition to the actual tweet.
[9] *Begherat* and *Besharam* aurat are two of the derogatory terms used against activist Marvi Sirmed. They mean "vile" and "shameless woman". Hate mongers would also refer to her as "buffalo" to body shame her. Similarly, labeling activists and journalists as RAW agents is frequent on social media to marked them as Indian patriots.
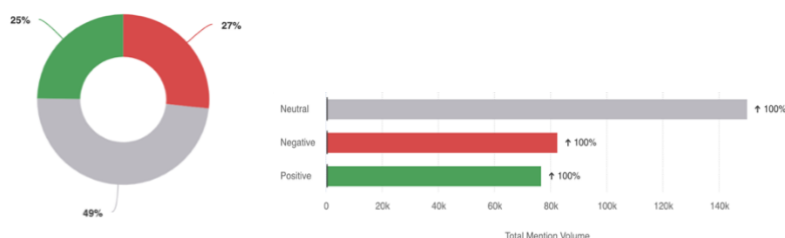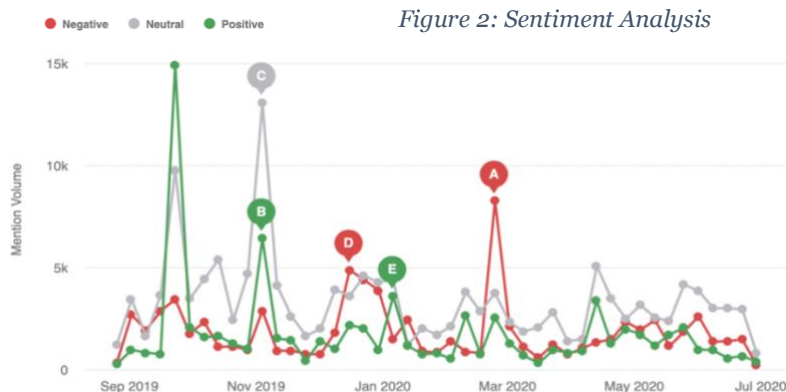
Figure 2: Sentiment Analysis

Figure 3: Peak detection graph

The monitor detected a negative peak on the Peak Detection Graph; categorized as A in Figure 3 on February 24th. The negative sentiment spike hit the peak volume at 8,227 mentions in a single day. According to the monitor, this was 494% higher than the usual volume. On December 16th, another negative spike, on the Peak Detection Graph; categorized as D was recorded with 4,853 tweets in a single day,250% higher than usual.

On November 4th, 2019, the Peak Detection Graph also detected a positive spike with 6,391 tweets; categorized as B on the Peak Detection Graph. It was recorded as 457% higher than the usual volume in a single day.

The biggest volume spike was detected on November 4th, 2019 and is categorized as C in the neutral category with 13,038 mentions on the development of the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor. this was 338% higher than usual mentions in neutral tweets.

This shows that the Kartarpur Corridor was a major development of the year, which resulted in either positive or neutral conversations.

However, in several moments during the monitoring period, negative sentiments overshadowed positive sentiments in comparison, such as between December 2019 and January 2020, and May 2020 and July 2020.

c) **Topic Wheel & Cluster:** The topic wheel shows that the entire discussion in 10 months' time revolved around five main topics: Muslim World, India, Islam, Sikhs and Imran Khan; with sub-topics of [ISLAM] including Muslims, Allah, Islam Republic, Prime Minister, Muhammad; [INDIA] – Ashoswai, Indians, Country, Kashmir, Muslim Majority; [SIKHS] – Kartarpur Corridor, Sikh Community, Sikh Pilgrims, Indians, Sikh Brother; [MUSLIM WORLD] – ImranKhan, PTI, Leader, Kashmir, Malaysia, Prime Minister; [IMRAN KHAN] – Prime Minister, Leader, Kashmir, Allah and Muhmmad.

Some sub-themes appeared under more than one main theme, including Leader, Kashmir, Allah, Muhammad, Muslims, Imran Khan, Prime Minister, Indians, Malaysia. These repetitive themes also indicative of the general mood of the conversation along with its political dynamics.

Surprisingly India is more often associated with modern day politics, such as Kashmir, rather than with other conversations, like Hinduism, etc. The reason for this is that the conversation between Indians and Pakistanis on Twitter is framed through the prism of the Indian occupation of Kashmir and in more recent days, the revocation in August 2019 of Article 370, declaring Jammu and Kashmir as union territories.
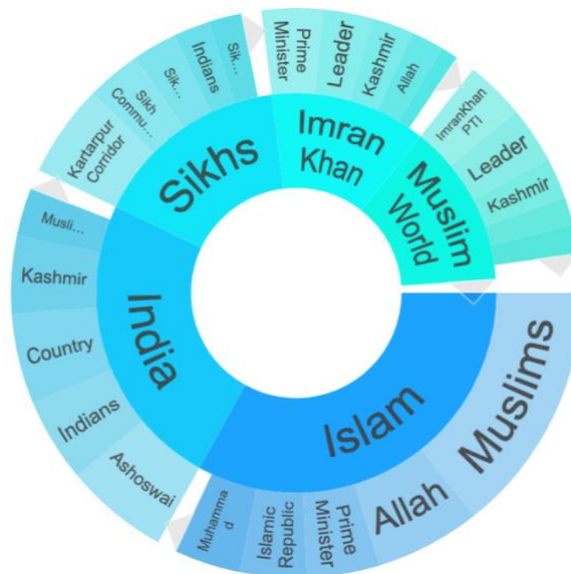

Figure 4: Topic wheel and cluster of monitored tweets

In Fig 5, an online speech 'Phrase Cluster' is shown. This organises topics of discussion[10] into three-sentiments (positive, negative and neutral). The size of the circle indicates the number of mentions and impressions of a topic in Twitter discussions. The distance between the circles also gives some indications of topics which were raised together or in closely related or sequenced twitter exchanges. It is notable that many topics appear as both positive and negative or even all three sentiments. In the top left corner, we see a conversation that is largely positive or neutral, which references Pakistan's founder (and a corner stone of religious tolerance, Mohamed Ali Jinnah) as well as India's Muslims. Current political leaders in Pakistan do not feature in the conversation. Here, human rights are neutral. In the top right-hand corner, we see a mixed picture in which the largest topic is the Prime Minister (especially when references to him by name, Imran Khan, are added). This conversation includes the Kartarpur corridor as positive, neutral and negative. Here, references to Mohamed Ali Jinnah are neutral and to human rights are negative. In the bottom left-hand corner, we have a conversation which is more negative than neutral or positive and in which Blasphemy Laws and Junaid Hafeez feature as topics. Imran Khan is here is a negative topic as are minorities in Pakistan, compared to the larger positive circle denoting minorities in India.
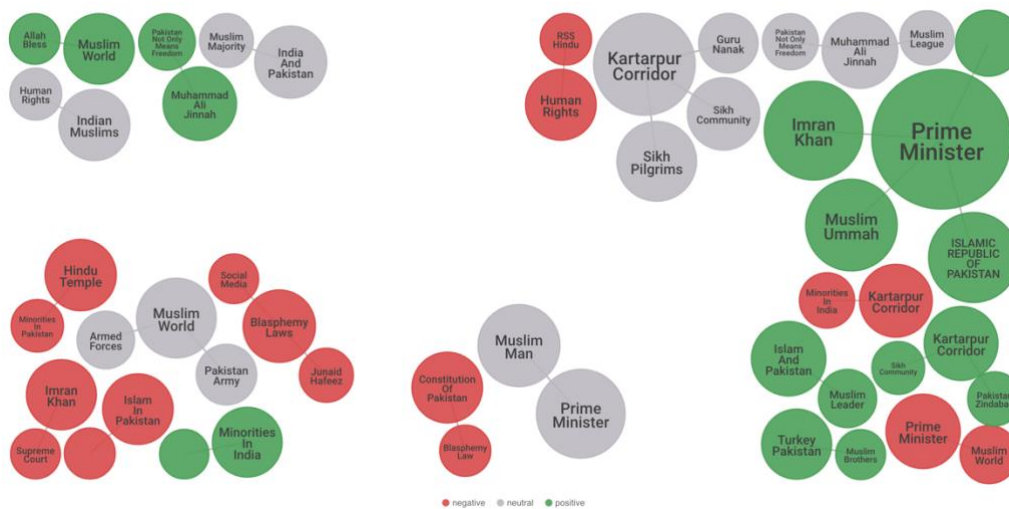
 See Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Cluster chart showing key topics and sub-topics based on positive, neutral and negative sentiments

---

[10] The majority of titles in the circles show nouns such as the names of personalities and places or their designations, etc. However, some are also slogans in Urdu language such as Pakistan Zindabad, which means "long live Pakistan". Four circles show no titles due to the low amount of data detected.

d) **Trending Topics:** Based on the topic keywords appearing in the timeframe and their repetition, the Pakistan Hate Speech monitor lists them as "Trending" and "Fading". The top trending topics in the months of May and June were non-Muslim, worship, places, equal, citizens, targeting, warn, strictly and dealt and are denoted with bright red and orange colours; whereas the fading topics include opening, humanity, proved, biggest, pilgrims, Sikhs, holy, Kartarpur, etc. and are denoted with grey colour.

All the keywords listed as trending have a connection with the announcement of the construction of the Hindu temple in Islamabad, a burning topic at that time. Whereas the fading keywords are in connection with the inauguration of the Sikh gurdwara in Kartarpur, one of the hot debates in November and December. See Figure 6 below:
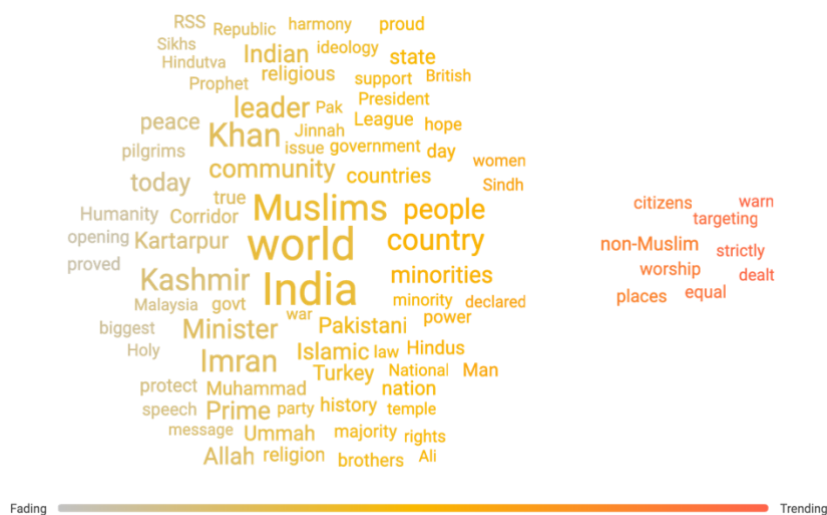

Figure 6: Hate speech monitor trending topics

The majority of keywords in the above cluster are either in yellow or in light orange colours. They also refer to multiple incidents or happenings occurred in different months between September 2019 and June 2020 – for example, the word "minority" can be found in discussions with regards to Ahmadiyyas, Shias, Christians and Hindus. Similarly, the keywords "Muslims", "World" and "India" are more common and frequently used, therefore they would be found in almost all conversations happening at any time, especially with regards to religious minorities.

e) **Online Behaviour of Twitter users:** The monitor recorded Saturdays as the busiest days of the week, when more people were found engaging in hate spewing. One of the reasons could be the impact of Friday sermons, which usually start at 1230 PST and end at 1400 PST on Fridays. This matches the hourly trends vis-à-vis the online behaviour of Twitter users.

People are more charged with religious sentiments after attending Friday sermons. It is a common trend in Pakistan among religious groups to use these sentiments to their advantage by staging protests and

rellies outside mosques after the sermon. For example, anti-France protests took place on October 30th, 2020, in a backlash against President Emmanuel Macron's comments following the publication of Prophet Mohammad's caricatures[11]. Similar protests had already been recorded against the Dutch Embassy in 2018[12]. Anti-Shia rallies took place on September 10th, 2020, after the Friday prayer, and witnessed sectarian violence[13].

Around 53,000 conversations were recorded on the monitor on Saturdays. One obvious reason for this is that more Twitter users are online on the weekend. Another factor is that some key happenings linked to different religious communities happened on Saturdays. These include the Diwali festivities in October 2019; the partial destruction of an Ahmadi mosque in Bahawalpur in October 2019; the formal inauguration of the Kartarpur Corridor in November 2019; the backlash prompt by woman Assistant Commissioner, Jannat Nekokara, after she talked about Ahmadis' equal rights in December 2019: the death sentence against Junaid Hafeez in December 2019, etc.
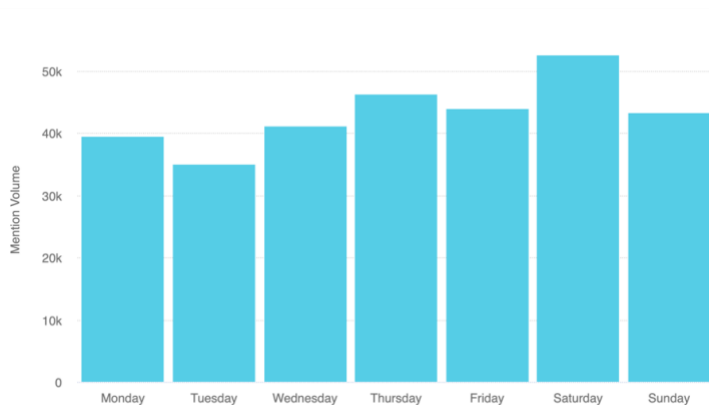

Figure 7: Twitter users' online behaviour on weekly basis

Similarly, the main threshold of hate speech in a single day, as the Twitter monitor suggests, is witnessed after 10 am and lasts until 12 pm; with 3 pm, 9 pm, and 10 pm as the slots producing the most hate filled conversations – all slots crossing 19,000 conversations each. This suggests that Twitter users are more actively using the social media platform between 10 and 12 pm. On a daily average, over 10,000 conversations around keywords are detected on our hate speech monitor; with 10:00 PST till midnight seeing above average numbers of conversations containing hate speech.

---

[11] Pakistani police fires teargas at protesters trying to approach French embassy, available at: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-security-pakistan-protests/pakistani-police-fire-teargas-at-protesters-trying-to-approach-french-embassy-idUSKBN27F276
[12] Pakistanis protest Dutch MP's plan to publish cartoons of the prophet, available at: https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/pakistanis-protest-dutch-mps-plan-publish-cartoons-prophet
[13] Anti-Shiite protest rattles Pakistan's Karachi, available at: https://www.arabnews.pk/node/1732981/world
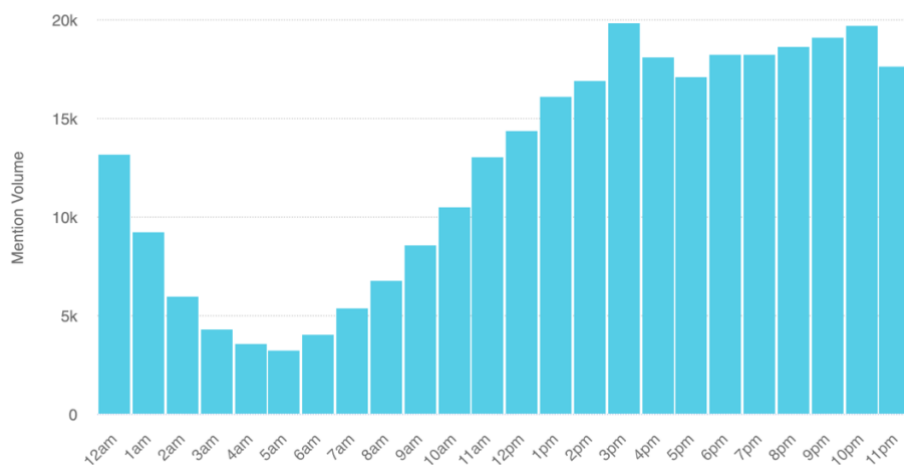
Figure 8: Twitter users' online behaviour on an hourly basis

VI.   Content of tweets and keywords

Some of the keyword searches highlighted the extreme nature of derogatory, inciting and dangerous expression used in the Twitter spaces. The following discussion will present a brief analysis of some of the tweets' content:

a   **Cross-border hate mongering** – a detailed analysis of the tweets around the selected keywords found that in a majority of instances, major faith-based developments happening in Pakistan and India generate huge amounts of hate mongering and exchanges of dangerous messages. For example, the Kartarpur corridor (#KartarpurCorridor) opened by Pakistan to facilitate the transit of Sikh pilgrims into Pakistan across the Indian border resulted in over 7,449 Twitter conversations in Pakistan, with a massive reach. The top 10 influencers for the keyword "Kartarpur Corridor", reached 1.44 million users. Since many conversations followed content initiated by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf's ministers, party workers and official party accounts, most Indian *Twitteratis* believed that the Kartapur initiative was a new military strategy by Pakistan to use Sikh sentiments and the Khalistan separation movement to harm India. Meanwhile, Pakistanis were found arguing that the initiative was done in accordance with Islamic teachings that protects the rights of other religions and faiths.

b   **Terms of extreme hatred: "Kafir" "qadiani" "fitna" and "Wajib-ul-Qatl"[14]** – These terminologies were frequently used in Twitter conversations by Pakistani *Twitteratis*. *Kafir,* "infidel", is one of the most lethal[15] expressions used for non-Muslims and religious minorities, especially Ahmadis, Shias and non-religious. In Pakistan, this term is particularly sensitive if uttered against Ahmadis and Shias. It is usually accompanied by the term *"wajib ul Qatal"*, "deserving to be killed" or "hanged". Pakistan Hate Speech monitor captured this expression in over 1,011 mentions, mostly concerning Ahmadis. A few mentions of this expression were also recorded in connection with Shias[16]. In the context of Ahmadis, SaeeD Qadri S_M_A (@smasaeedattari), a Pakistani Twitter user and supporter of the Tajdar-e-Khatm-e-Nabuwat movement steered by Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) says: "we want Pakistan free from the Qadiani *fitna*. Remove this *fitna* from our beloved homeland. Qadianis are *fitna*." Qadiani is a derogatory term used for Ahmadis and included in the Constitution of Pakistan, where they are referred to as non-Muslims. Whereas *fitna* is a term meaning "unrest", "chaos" or "rebellion". The tweet received over two dozen retweets with a reach of over 12,000.

Figure 9: Tweet by SaeeD Qadri S_M_A

In another Tweet, Muhammad Sheraz Bashir says, "Everyone should keep this in mind; Qadianis were *kafir*, are *kafir* and will remain *kafir*".

---

[14] Translations: *Kafir*, Infidel; *Qadiani*, A derogatory term used for Ahmadis; *Fitna,* rebellion, chaos or unrest; *Wajib-ul-Qatl*, deserving to be killed

[15] The term carries lethal implications due to the sensitivity of religion for the Sunni Muslim majority in Pakistan. Questioning or criticising the majority interpretation of Islam is associated with blasphemy and carries grave consequences.

[16] Tension around the celebration of the Ashura, in 2020 also resulted in a massive increase in hate speech online and violence in Karachi and other Pakistani cities. However, these events and data are not included in this analysis.

Figure 10: Muhammad Sheraz Bashir's tweet

Ababeel (@ArbabKasho) says, "Qadiyani kafir are preaching qadyanism in Sindh Tharparkar and doing development projects. The government should stop them and their activities because according to Pakistan constitution and Islam they are not allowed to preach on Muslim soil".

Figure 11: Ababeel's tweet

Wajib-ul-Qatl, literally translated as "deserving to die", is another extreme expression normally used by the Pakistani Sunni majority for alleged blasphemers, those changing religion from Islam to any other, or for non-believers. Ahmadis and Shias would often become victims of this expression, which inherently calls for extreme forms of violence. A cross border tweet, extensively retweeted from Pakistan, was posted by Major Gauravarya (Retd) (@majorgauravarya). The tweet highlights the cross-section of "Pakistan vs. India" sentiments and the plight of minorities in the two countries: "Jannat Hussain Nekokara, a Pak bureaucrat, mentions the word 'Ahmadi' and all hell breaks loose. She has to publicly take back her statement.

The Constitution of Pakistan lists Ahmadis as Kafir. Mullahs call them "Wajib-ul-Qatl". And @ImranKhanPTI lectures India on tolerance".

Jannat Hussain Nekokara, a Pak bureaucrat, mentions the word "Ahmadi" and all hell breaks loose. She has to publicly take back her statement.

The Constitution of Pakistan lists Ahmadis as Kafir. Mullahs call them "Wajib-ul-Qatl".

And @ImranKhanPTI lectures India on tolerance.

8:32 AM · Dec 13, 2019 · Twitter for iPhone

2.2K Retweets   99 Quote Tweets   4.3K Likes

Figure 12: Major Gaurav Arya (Retd) tweet

His tweet resulted in finger-pointing and hateful comments against Pakistani Muslims. A Pakistani twitter user, Nasir Hussain Shah, responded: "Sir, what about lynching incidents across India. We should promote peace rather than hatred, it will not benefit both sides". Responding to him, Indian twitter users Har_HaR_MaHaDeV (@BBahuram) said: "*Ek hakikat bat batoun Muslim ka matlab rakshas hai wo keshe me bata ta hoon … pehle Hindu khatm ho gye to ye apash me siya Ahmediya apne aapko blast karenge….to bataye ye dharti par konsa santi fehla rakha hai Islam ne….* [Let me tell you a fact. Muslim means evil spirit/man eater… if Hindus vanish then they will blast Shias, Ahmadis and then themselves. So, tell me how Islam has spread peace on earth]. Another reply reads: "You live in a fool's paradise, the lynching is in your head. We leave a very peaceful life. Peace for *porkistan* is a little hard to digest". "Porkistan" is a provocative term which associate Pakistan with pork, strictly prohibited in Islam.
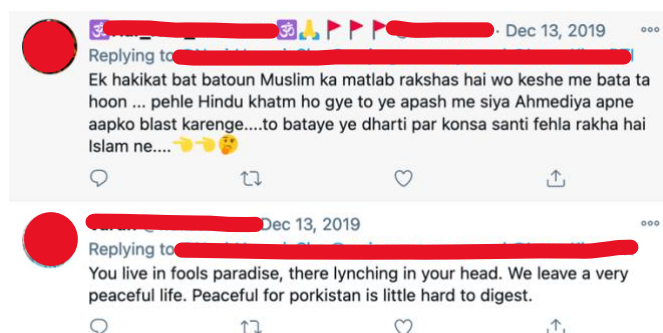
Figure 15: A conversation exchange between Indian and Pakistani Twitter users

As part of the events to mark International Human Rights Day on December 13th, 2019 Jannat Hussain Nekokara, Assistant Commissioner for the Attock district, addressed a gathering of college students on the topic of human rights, talking about equality, non-discrimination and unity between different faith groups and sects, including Ahmadis. This generated an extreme reaction amongst the students who started calling her a *kafir*. The situation was only resolved when the senior administration of the district eventually forced Ms. Nekokara to publicly re-iterate her Sunni Islamic faith - confirming her belief that the Prophet Mohammad is the last prophet - and declaring Ahmadis to be non-Muslims. A video of the event went viral immediately on Twitter. Many people took to Twitter and a lot of them used the expression *Wajib-ul-Qatl'* for Ahmadis and those supporting them.

One of the most interesting facts recorded within the monitoring period is that Ahmadis are the only religious group in Pakistan which has continuously been the target of hate speech and titles such as *kafir* and *Wajib-ul-Watal*. The following graph from the data collected on the monitor shows that there was not a single month when Ahmadis have not been targeted with hate messages. Additionally, the same graph shows Punjab as the province where people have been spewing more hatred toward the Ahmadiyya community. Among cities in Pakistan, Rawalpindi was the single largest city in terms of hate speech against Ahmadis, followed by Peshawar, Karachi and Lahore, as shown in the following graph.
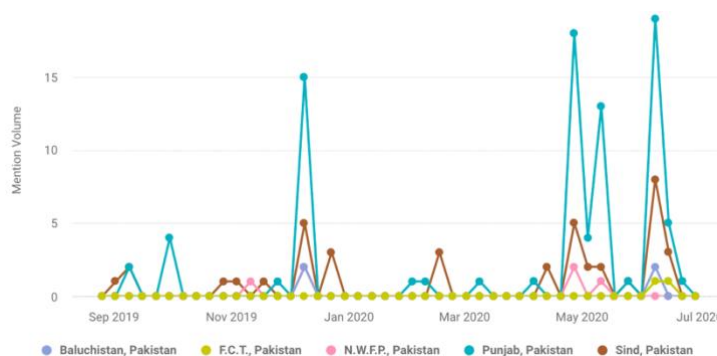

Figure 16: Graph showing different regions spewing hatred towards Ahmadis through the years
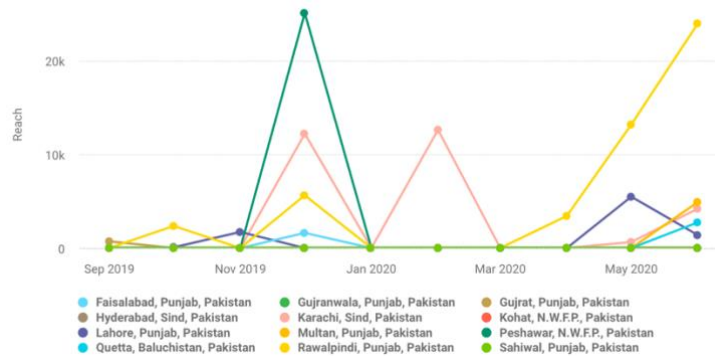
Figure 17: Graphs showing different cities spewing hate towards Ahmadis

'Choora' – is an extreme derogatory expression, used to express hate in connection with "untouchables". This expression is commonly used by members of the Sunni Muslim majority for people belonging to Pakistan's religious minorities, particularly Christians. The Pakistani Twitter space was also found to be polluted with this derogatory expression. Asher Azeem Gill is a Pakistani celebrity and former customs officer from the province of Balochistan, now settled in Canada. Ashir belongs to the Christian faith and on November 6th, he tweeted on an issue relating to the politician Maryam Nawaz, who is facing charges of corruption. The replies included this derogatory expression mired with an anti-Pakistan label[17].

---

[17] Translation of Asher's tweet: "It's an issue with Balochistan people that we started fighting with those in power".

Figure 18: Ashir Azeem's tweet

VII.   FACEBOOK: Trends, Findings and Discussion

Specific Events
   I.   **Support for Ahmadis by Jannat Hussain, Assistant Commissioner Attock**
The incident involving the video of Ms. Jannat Hussain, Assistant Commissioner (AC) of the Attock district also went viral on Facebook.

As described above, she was invited to make a speech on Human Rights Day at a college, where she stressed the need for unity among different faiths. She referred to equal rights and non-discrimination against Ahmadiyya. Her words resulted in a religiously charged mob gathering outside the office of the university AC, demanding an explanation. In the video, Ms. Hussain can be seen giving explanations to the mob. While the mob keeps harassing and grilling her, she appears to be forced to sit in front of them with police officers sitting beside her. It then seems that Ms. Jannat was forced to apologise about her comments in support of Ahmadis to avoid any untoward incident.

The video on the Facebook posts received mixed commentary, both in support and against her. However, some Muslim Facebook users spat venom against the Ahmadiyya community as shown in the examples below.

- **Cursing someone for supporting Ahmadis –** In the screenshot below, the comment made by a woman Facebook user translates as "May Allah destroy anyone who supports Ahmadis" and further adds that "the coming generations of those supporting Ahmadis should also be destroyed".
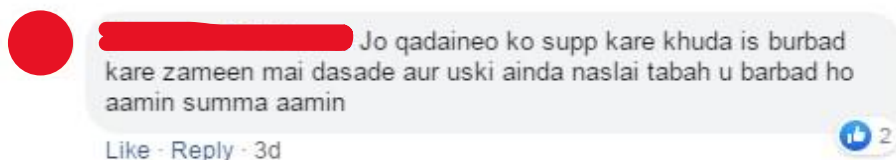

Figure 19: Facebook user curses supporters of Ahmadis

- **Questioning faith for supporting Ahmadis –** In Pakistan, statements in support of Ahmadis are highly sensitive. As seen in the Facebook screenshot below, the person believes that speaking about the rights of Ahmadis is equal to forgetting the Islamic faith.
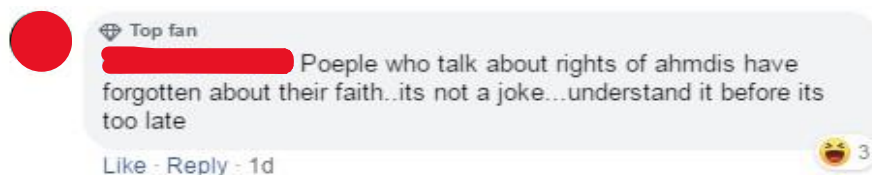

Figure20: Facebook user equates support for Ahmadis to Muslims forgetting their faith

- **Calling Ahmadis as *"Kafir"* Infidel –** As discussed in the Twitter Section, the term *kafir* is commonly used for non-Muslims and it is often associated with Ahmadis. Like in Twitter feeds, numerous posts, comments and discussions referring to Ahmadis as *kafir* were found. In the same context of statements in support of Ahmadis, one commentator states that Ahmadis are non-Muslims and infidel. The person further comments: "May Allah curse Ahmadis and those who support them".
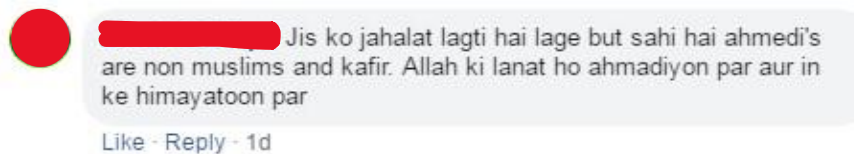

Figure 21: Another Facebook user curses those who support Ahmadis

II.   Verdict of Junaid Hafeez for Blasphemy

Junaid Hafeez, a former lecturer at the Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), Multan, was convicted on blasphemy charges and sentenced to the death penalty by the court on December 21, 2019. The decision was widely condemned by rights activists and progressive social media users alike. However, the verdict was widely praised in conservative circles. Facebook pages were thronged by the proponents of blasphemy laws and the capital punishment in Pakistan.

In one screenshot, the comment reads: "Musharraf and [Junaid Hafeez] should be hanged together". It is important to note the user's mention of General Pervez Musharraf, who was tried and convicted by a special court. His trial was conducted under Article 6 of the constitution, high treason, which also carries the death penalty for the convicted.
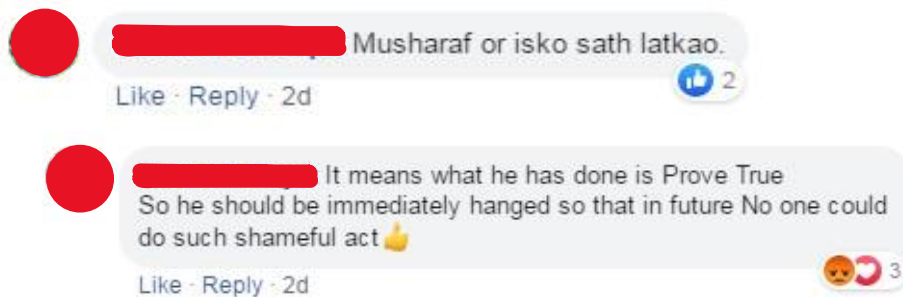

Figure 22: Facebook users suggest Junaid Hafeez should be hanged

In another screenshot, a comment is made by a user and translates as "such dogs deserve this". The commentator further adds: "you cannot give importance to such progressivism where one starts blaspheming Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)".
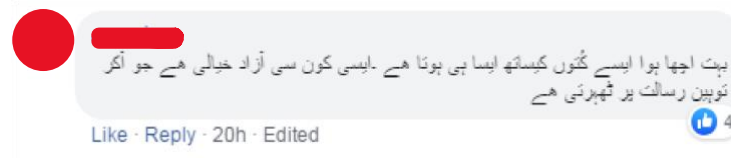
Figure 23: Facebook user refers to Junaid Hafeez as a dog

With many comments in support of the court's verdict on the Junaid Hafeez's case, another comment reads: "the punishment of blasphemy will always be death; if he had germs of progressivism as an English teacher, he should have written poems, or articles on wars or war crimes, but he only had to commit blasphemy".
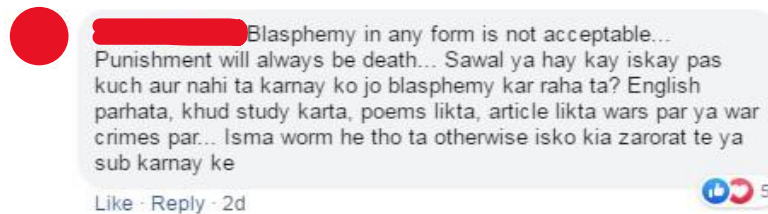

Figure 24: Facebook user support punishment by death for Junaid Hafeez

III.   Wishing Christmas Greetings

The most common and a regular debate online each year is the use of the phrase "Happy Christmas" or "Merry Christmas". In Pakistan, most people believe that passing on Christmas greetings means that the person doing so accepts Jesus Christ as the son of Allah. This belief does not exist in Islam as no partner and children are associated with Allah. For this reason, Christmas greetings by Muslims become sensitive and controversial.

- **Labelling people for perpetuating polytheism** – The most commonly used word for Muslims who greet Christian friends on Christmas is "*shirk*", polytheism (belief in more than one religion simultaneously, or according to Islamic teachings a person who believes in another god than Allah). It means that the people wishing others a merry Christmas have accepted the Christian beliefs, which is tantamount to apostasy and unacceptable in Islam.

Several Pakistani celebrities were seen wishing Merry Christmas to their followers and celebrating the event. The comments under their posts spewed hatred and accusations of polytheism against them. In the screenshot below, the commentator states that the greeting itself should be considered as *shirk*. Another comment uses the word "*lanat*", cursing those Muslims celebrating Christmas.
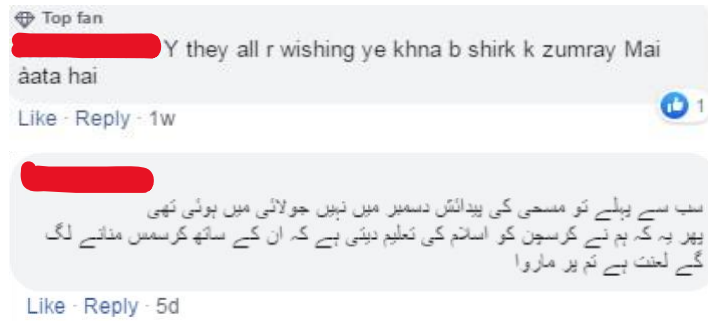
Figure 25: Facebook user accuses Christmas well-wisher of polytheism

Another comment reads: "Curse on those illiterates who are greeting Christmas to Christians. God is only one and with all this education, they should die. They have forgotten their faith because of money". This comment is a reinforcement of the stereotype that the West invests money or lures Muslims to propagate the message of Christianity in Pakistan. Majority users say, "God forbidden, but this is sin because Merry Christmas means Muslims have accepted that Jesus Christ was the son of Allah [God]." For the Islamic faith neither has Allah [God] a son or daughter, nor was He born to anyone. Whereas in Christianity, Jesus is referred to as the son of God.
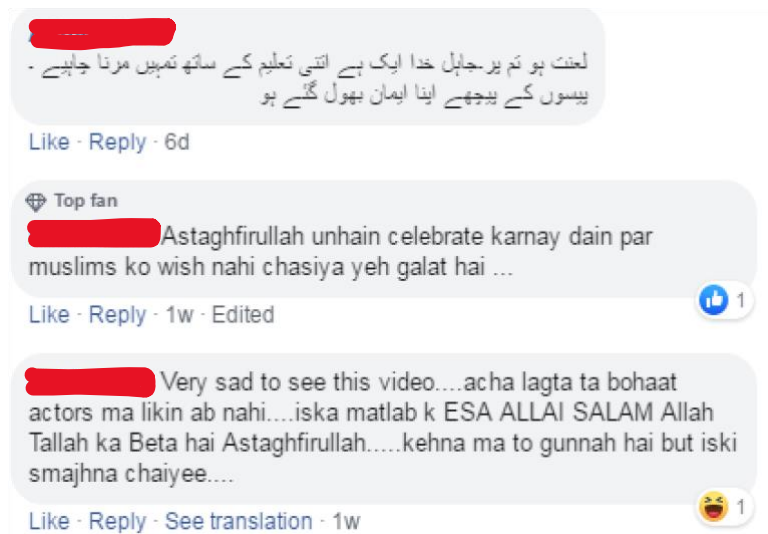
Figure 26: Facebook users accuse Christmas well-wishers of forgetting their faith and being corrupted by Western money

Facebook Word Cloud

Overall Trends

Overall trends regarding religious hate speech were observed mostly against Ahmadis. The Shia community was also targeted with hate commentary. People belonging to the Ismaili faith were also the target of similar abuse.

- **Fearless use of term *Kafir* [infidel] for Ahmadis and Shia:** In most comments, people online from both Ahmadi and Shia beliefs are ridiculed and called *kafir*. The word *kafir* has been used repeatedly in the majority of comments in reference to the Ahmadi and Shia community.

In the comment below (Figure 23), a Facebook user describes Shia Muslims as follows:

"people would say [to me] stop calling Shias Kafir. I am afraid I will become Kafir if I will call them Muslim".

The comment uses this word repeatedly, along with another extreme derogatory expression for Shias, again common in Pakistan: *"Shia is the unholiest thing, even more impure than a pig".*
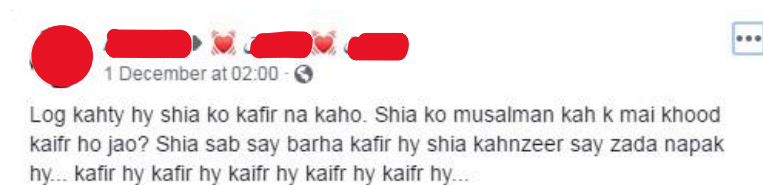
Figure 27: Facebook user describes Shia as kafirs

In the screenshot below (Figure 24), multiple users have directed curses at the Shia community and have called them "*kafir*" and "*dog*". They have also cursed their families and their future generations.

Figure 28: Multiple Facebook users describe Shias as kafirs and dogs

Ahmadi-bashing is again prevalent in Pakistani Facebook spaces. Where Ahmadis are referred to as *kafir*, they are also defined by the majority Sunni Muslims as "a dirty section of humanity". This expression is posted by a Facebook user in his comment below (Figure 25).

Figure 29: Facebook user describes Ahmadis as "dirty section of humans"

In another screenshot (Figure 26), it is written: Ahmadis were, are and will always remain *kafir*". The debate was started by a user who raised the following question: "I do not know why the admin of this

page always supports Qadianis more than Muslims". He further says that either the admin is an Indian or himself a Qadiani.

Figure 30: Facebook user describes page administrator as Ahmadi or Indian for not declaring Ahmadis to be kafirs

The Ismaili community is also at the receiving end of hate mongering by social media users in Pakistan. In a group known as "Ismailis Lost in Worship of Aga Khan", a hate group against Ismaili believers, Sunni Muslims would frequently post comments calling Ismailis "*mushrik*" or polytheists. The comment below (Figure 27) says, 'Those who would believe anyone except Allah, are polytheist'.

Figure 31: Facebook user post from "Ismailis Lost in Worship of Aga Khan" group

Images and photos
Some derogatory images and photos are also shared in these groups to express hatred towards Ahmadis and Ismailis. Some of them are as follows:

- **Ismailis** – In one meme (Figure 28) shared in the group "Ismailis Lost in Worship of Aga Khan", the Ismaili community is ridiculed. The meme says, "It is a pity that Ismailis only have a naked Imam and naked abuses".

Figure 32: The image was taken from Ismailis lost in Worship of Aga Khan, September 5, 2019.

- **Shias –** The following image (Figure 29), shared by another user, quotes a very common statement: *"Dosto bhol tu nahi gaye ho! kafir, kafir, shia safir. shia rafzinu pe allah ai lanat"* which translates as "Friends, I hope you haven't forgotten that infidel, infidel, Shias are infidels. God's curse on Shias".

Figure 33 The image was shared by a Facebook user (November 5, 2019)

- **Ahmadis** - The following two images target Ahmadis. The person appearing in the first picture (Figure 30) is the spiritual leader of the Ahmadiyya community, Muhammad Ahmad Qadiani. Beneath his picture is a statement saying "Send curses on me, I deserve [them]. I always raised the banner of lies, I am sinful.

I am the one who will be punished till the day of judgement arrives. I am the proponent of pharaohs and the friend of Iblis".

Figure 34: The image was shared in a closed group named Ahmadiyyah one family (December 5, 2019)

The second picture (Figure 31) is a meme that reads "a million curses on Ahmadis".

Figure 35: The meme was shared in a closed group named Ahmadiyyah one family

Statistics and Word Cloud

Monitoring of Facebook posts and comments [between October 12, 2019 to December 1, 2019] showed that the majority were targeting the Ahmadiyya community in one way or the other. A total of 116 hate messages/content were recorded in 50 days of Facebook monitoring, of which 52.8% of hate messages/content was counted as Ahmadiyya name calling. Shia name calling was 11.5%; polytheism accusations with regards to Christmas greetings were 13.4%; abuses Ismailia name calling 1.9%. Abuses hurled at both Ahmadi and Shia communities were 17.3%. Due to the Christmas celebrations, the accusation of *shirk* or polytheism was present mainly as a result of people sharing Christmas wishes online.

The following table gives a breakdown of the categories from Facebook:

Sr #	Category	No. of Comments	Percentage (%)
1	Ahmadi name calling	55	52.8
2	Abuse	18	17.3
3	Polytheism Accusations Against Progressive Muslims	14	13.4
4	Shia-name calling	12	11.5
5	Threat to life	7	6.7
6	Malediction	6	5.7
7	Gender abuse	2	1.9
8	Ismailia-name calling	2	1.9

Nature of hate commentary on Facebook

- Ahmadi name calling
- Abusive language
- Polytheism accusations against progressive Muslims
- Shia-name calling
- Life threats
- Malediction
- Gender abuse
- Ismailia-name calling
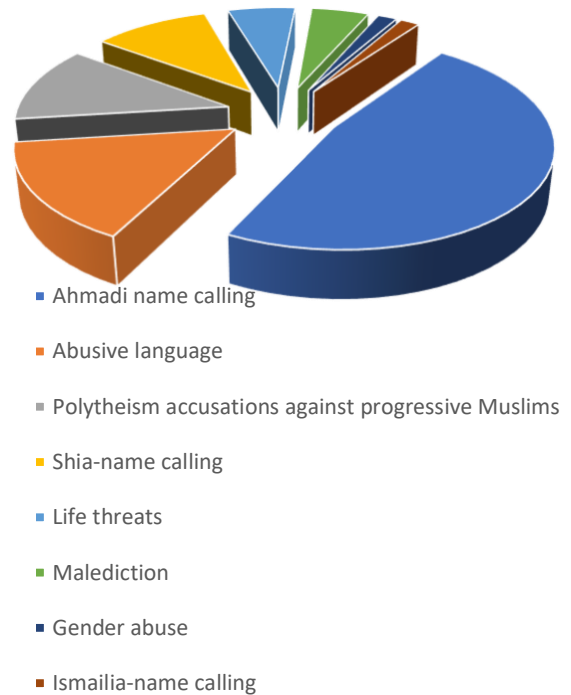
VIII. CASE STUDIES:

1. National Commission for Minorities & anti-Ahmadi hashtags

Ahmadis in Pakistan are unfortunately stigmatized and subjected to the worst forms of hate-based violence. The Ahmadiyya community also faces dangerous speech inciting violence on online platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. Similarly, many Ahmadis have been targeted and killed. At least three fatal attacks have been reported since January 2020.

Although Ahmadis define themselves as a sect of Islam, they are unilaterally and arbitrarily included in the list of non-Muslims by the Second Amendment of the Constitution of Pakistan, enacted in 1974. In May 2020, it was reported that an Ahmadi representative had been initially included in the re-constitution of a National Commission for Minorities by the Ministry of Religious Affairs; however, the government later denied that this was the case after a backlash from the party and the general public. Even the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Noor-ul-Haq Qadri and the State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan[18], both members of the sitting government, publicly expressed hate against the Ahmadiyya minority on Facebook by accusing them of *fitna* [rebellion]; their statements were also shared on Twitter and Facebook. A leading journalist belonging to a national television, Nadeem Malik, hosted a biased discussion against Ahmadis, asking why an Ahmadi had been included in the minutes of the Federal Cabinet meeting. He repeatedly appealed for the disclosure of the cabinet members' identities as well as the identity of the senior official who supported the idea of Ahmadis' inclusion in the Commission and changed the meeting minutes. Federal Minister Ali Ahmed Khan, who was participating in the interview, repeated his words saying that Ahmadis are the biggest *fitnah* [rebellion]. This amplified and legitimized the ongoing hate campaign against Ahmadis.

Ali Muhammad Khan had earlier expressed on Twitter his extreme hate towards the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan by saying that "Beheading is the only punishment for blasphemers". The tweet

---

[18] State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan's video message against Ahmadis on the issue of their inclusion in National Commission for Minorities, available here: https://web.facebook.com/watch/?v=233919767832948&extid=hKBbCfrYzYf2n3Mf

was later removed after being reported through trusted channels; however, it had already yielded damage to Ahmadis, provoking social media users and amplifying his hate message among the public.[19]

گستاخ رسول (ص) کی ایک ہی سزا
سر تَن سے جُدا سر تن سے جُدا

.
.

اللہ اکبر !

— Ali Muhammad Khan (@Ali_MuhammadPTI) April 29, 2020

Figure 36: Ali Muhammad Khan's tweet suggesting, 'Beheading is the only punishment for blasphemer'. Tweet was later removed by Twitter

Although the cyber environment at the time was extremely anti-Ahmadiyya, particularly on Twitter, certain religious groups had been busy spewing grave forms of hate towards Ahmadis. Every day, a new anti-Ahmadi trend would surface and take over the entire Pakistani Twitter timelines. A hashtag, trending around April 29-30, 2020 against Ahmadis and used by multiple users, stated: 'قادیانی اقلیت نہیں غدار' which translates as "Qadianis [Ahmadis] are not a minority, they are traitors". The hashtag generated massive hate commentary against the Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan. On the sentiment analysis algorithm, the hashtag was filled with negative commentary against Ahmadis, 29%, including bullying content and threats against Ahmadis' lives.[20] Conversations supporting their equal rights and condemning anti-Ahmadiyya expressions were at 22%.

22%   29%

48%

● Negative   ● Neutral   ● Positive

_____
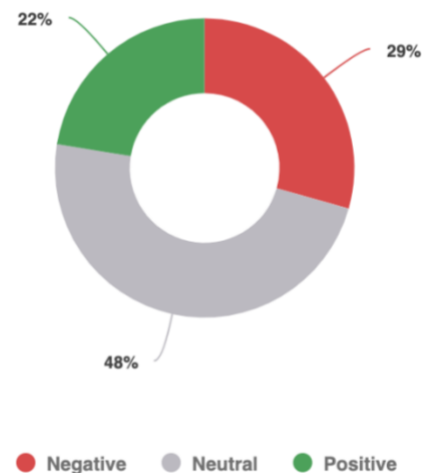
[19] Minister Ali Muhammad Khan says blasphemers should be beheaded, available here: https://nayadaur.tv/2020/04/minister-ali-muhammad-khan-says-blasphemers-should-be-beheaded/
[20] Threat messages/comments are not being re-stated here for fear that they may provoke more people.

In addition, one more hashtag used against the Ahmadiyya community was "قادیانی دنیا کا بدترین کافر" which translates as "Qadianis [Ahmadis] are the worst infidels in the world". This hashtag was used by Twitter users against Ahmadis, with 690 mentions [Twitter conversations with tags and other Twitter users in it. This is done by Twitter users to increase the outreach and engagement rate] and reach impressions in millions. Negative expression heavily overshadowed the positive and neutral expression under the hashtag. On the sentiment analysis algorithm, 49% of the entire conversation recorded extreme derogatory and threatening remarks against Ahmadis.
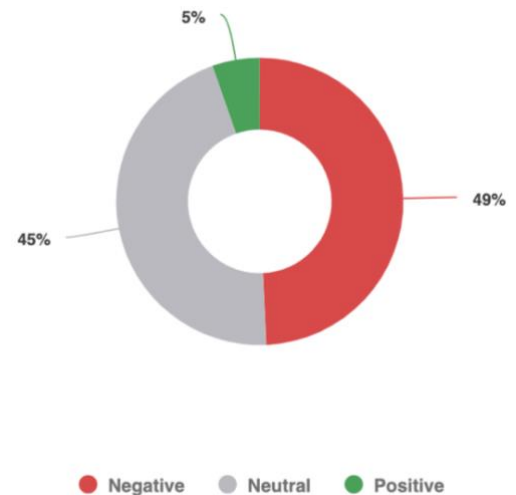
The context of these tweets was the reconstitution of the National Minority Commission by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in which Ahmadis were initially included as one of the country's religious minorities. However, the said point was retracted after the backlash. Some of the collected tweets on the issue including the hashtag are as follows:

a. One user said that they accept other minority religions but disregard Ahmadis because they do not believe in the finality of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

> We accept the Hindus, Sikh, Christens, in Pakistan because these are religions, and they respecting and accept our prophet as finality.
> But qadyani is not a religion and they are not muslims they are not accept prophet finality and this is blasphemy.
> #قادیانی_اقلیت_نہیں_غدار
>
> 10:15 PM · Apr 29, 2020 · Twitter for Android

b. Another tweet was called out the Prime Minister Imran Khan, stating that Ahmadis are a threat to the ideology of Pakistan and the finality of the Prophet and Islam.

> Listen niazi !
> Qaidiyanis are the biggest threat to the idealogy of Pakistan, Khatmi nabowwath and Islam.
> #قادیانی_اقلیت_نہیں_غدار
>
> 10:26 PM · Apr 29, 2020 · Twitter for Android

c. In another tweet using both hashtags, the user said that they should not be included in the minority commission.

> Qadiani's are non-Muslims.
> The constitution of Pakistan will have to be changed to include Qadiani's in minority commission.
> This is not acceptable at all.
> #قادیانی_دنیا_کا_بدترین_کافر
> #قادیانی_اقلیت_نہیں_غدار

d. In an extreme example of hatred inciting violence, a Twitter user questioned whether there was any Fatwa [edict] issued by religious scholars sanctioning the murder of Ahmadis. In his reply, another user said that "in the light of the example of the Prophet's companions',, Fatwas by religious scholars have no value. Qadyanis [Ahmadis] are *murtad* [apostates] and the punishment for *murtad* you will come to know soon".

> Apr 30
> Kisi Alim ka fatwa hai kay Unhay qatal kiya jaye?
> ♡ 2   ⇄   ♡   ↥
>
> Apr 30
> جب صحابہ رضی اللہ عنہ کی مثالیں موجود ہی تو کسی عالم کے فتوے کی کوئی حیثیت نہیں
> اپ حضرت خالدبن ولیدرضی اللہ عنہ کے جہاد کی تاریخ پڑھ لیں
> اپکو پتہ چل جائے گا کہ مرتد کی کیا سزا ہے
> اور قادیانی کافر نہیں مرتد ہیں
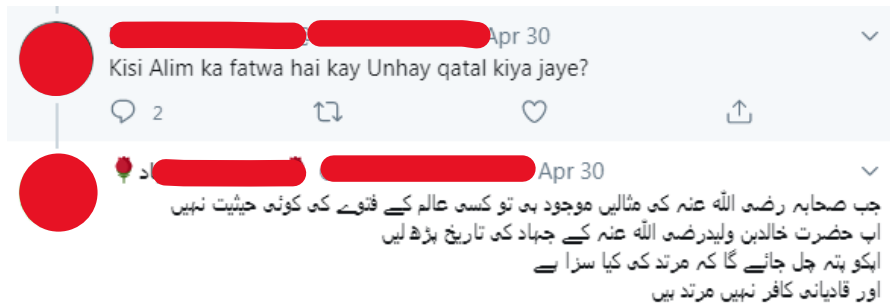
2. Construction of Shri Krishna Mandir in Islamabad

Hindus in Pakistan are another marginalised minority which is often victim of hate speech, violence and forced conversions by the Muslim majority. The monitor was able to capture some data about a case that is still ongoing.

On June 23rd, 2020, a Hindu representative in the National Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary on Human Rights, Lal Chand Malhi, laid the foundation stone of the first Hindu temple in Islamabad on land allotted in 2017 by the Capital Development Authority (CDA)[21]. The land was allotted in compliance with the directions of the National Commission for Human Rights,2016[22].

As soon as the news of the ground-breaking ceremony hit the social media timelines, it turned into a controversy and people started commenting on the plight of Muslims in India and Kashmir. It is unfortunate that every development or issue vis-à-vis Pakistani Hindus is immediately connected to the plight of Muslims in India. In this case, several users started linking the decision to build the temple with the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992.
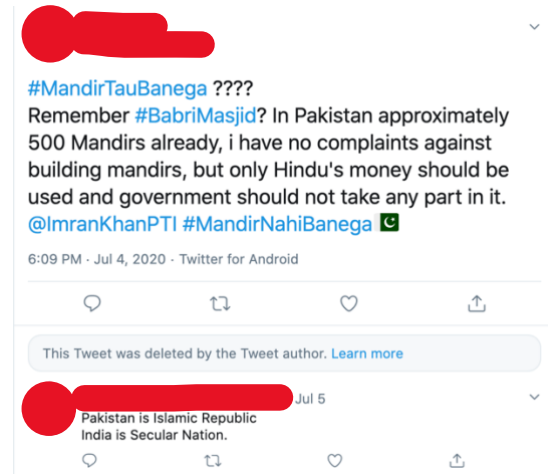
In the same stretch, some radical Islamists also started opposing the construction of the temple on Twitter. A reply tweet to the ceremony's video reads, "یہ تو بہت گندہ کام ہے شرک کا سامان مہیا کرنا" [facilitating polytheism is the dirtiest development]. Some others also expressed their shock by raising questions: "How many Hindus live in Islamabad? Why is government constructing idolatry places? Reserving four (4) Kanals? What's happening?

---

[21] South Asia Monitor. (2020). Pakistan's capital Islamabad to get Hindu temple, crematorium, accessible at: https://southasiamonitor.org/pakistan/pakistans-capital-islamabad-get-hindu-temple-crematorium
[22] Abbasi, K. (2016). Land to be allotted for Hindu temple, crematorium, accessible at: https://www.dawn.com/news/1291510

36

> **Replying to**
>
> How many Hindus are in Islamabad? Why is Govt constructing Idolatry places? reserving 4 Kanals? What is happening
>
> 1:46 PM · Jun 24, 2020 · Twitter Web App
>
> **4 Likes**
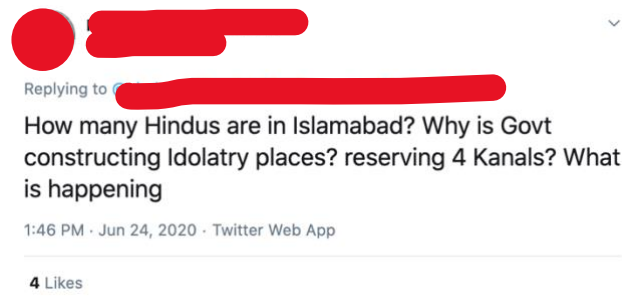
On June 27th, 2020, Darul Ufta Jamia Ashrafia Lahore issued an edict against the construction of the Hindu temple in Islamabad, wh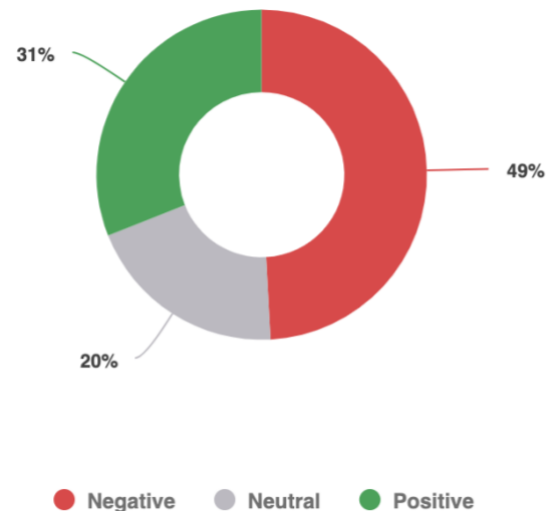ich was widely shared on social media and further fanned the controversy. Meanwhile, on July 2nd, some supporters of the Hindu temple floated the hashtag #MandirTauBanega [the temple shall be constructed]. On July 4th, 2020, Twitter recorded the highest number of mentions on this hashtag, 600.

On the sentiment analysis algorithm, the negative conversations and words expressed at the time overshadowed the positive sentiments. However, it is encouraging that many people were at the same time supporting the construction of the Hindu temple and the government's decision to allocate funds for it. Meanwhile, another positive development emerged from the Council of Islamic Ideology, who also supported the decision.

31% 49% 20%

🔴 Negative ⚪ Neutral 🟢 Positive

On the same day, the opponents of the temple's construction introduced the hashtag #MandirNahiBanega [the temple shall not be constructed]. The hashtag reached 30 mentions on that day. Collectively, both hashtags produced a massive online clash and hate content:

Pakistan was built in the name of Islam
Millions sacrificed themselves
#MandirNahiBanega

MandirTauBanega can only be in dreams understand
💪@ImranKhanPTI

12:50 PM · Jul 4, 2020 · Twitter for Android

30 Retweets   6 Quote Tweets   44 Likes

#we_are_equal_in_islam
Today it is Mandir, tomorrow they will say convert to Hinduism, Islam permits that too.

Pakistan was supposed to be a fortress of Islam not Hinduism.
#MandirNahiBanega #Islamabad #Mandir #MandirInIslamabad #minority

کعبہ میں پڑے بتوں کو توڑ دیا گیا، وہ
مشرکین کے حوالے بھی کئے جا سکتے
تھے، کہ فتح تو ہوگئی چلو اقلیتوں کو
عبادت سے نہ روکا جائے!

8:58 PM · Jul 4, 2020 · Twitter for Android

IX.   DISCUSSION

During our monitoring period, Twitter and Facebook feeds in Pakistan thronged with hate messages, particularly religious and/or faith-based hate. Mostly, the hate speech being monitored online originates from an offline incident and further fuels tensions, especially when this turns into violence.

When it comes to Twitter feeds in Pakistan, most of the exchanges of hate messages are aimed at Ahmadis and/or are event specific. Twitter is a more public medium than Facebook because of its unique algorithm that works on hashtags. In contrast, on Facebook, not every conversation is open and most, in fact, happen in closed groups. During the selected timeframe, the Twitter analysis focused on contemporary hashtags evolving around some major events taking place in Pakistan such as the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor (#kartarpurcorridor), the construction of the Hindu temple - temple shall be constructed (#MandirTauBanega), temple shall not be constructed (#MandirNahiBanega) - Shia Kafir (#shiakafir), etc. Hashtags such as #KartarpurCorridor allowed Pakistanis not only to debate the event itself, but also to project themselves as a nation caring for religious minorities. However, there were also voices who brought to light cases of violence again Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Ahmadis and Shias perpetrated by majority Sunni Muslims. It also provided an opportunity for the Indian *Twitterati* to malign Pakistanis, drawing on the ongoing animosity stemming from the 1947 Partition, four wars between the two countries, and a longstanding dispute over Kashmir. Although the focus of this study is faith-based hate speech in Pakistan, such cross-border hate speech cannot be overlooked as it directly impacts the Hindu community, one of the largest religious minorities in the country. A similar trend was witnessed during the construction of the Krishna Mandir in

Islamabad, where social media users linked the event to the 27-year-old Barbri Masjid incident in Ayodhya, India. The two hashtags i.e. #MandirTauBanega and #MandirNahiBanega have thus been used to express conflicting point of views between the two schools of thought.

Most of the hate speech being perpetuated by majority Sunni Muslims, according to Facebook results, is against the Ahmadiyya community, followed by progressive Muslims greeting non-Muslim communities on = religious celebrations such as Christmas. Another significant chunk of comments spewing hate, as per Facebook results, is against Shia Muslims by radical Islamists. Similarly, the Ismailia community is also the victim of religion-based hatred on Facebook.

Extensive monitoring of both the social media platforms overwhelmingly confirms that faith-based minorities in Pakistan including Ahmadis, Hindus, Christians, Shias, Sikhs and Ismailis as well as atheists are the victims of serious forms of hate speech targeting their religious identities, faiths, personalities and religious teachings. In the worst form of hate content, individuals belonging to religious minorities are being faced with death threats.

Social media platforms have the potential of reinforcing, amplifying and deepening hate messages perpetuated against religious minorities.

The monitoring process of the two platforms is completely different due to their different algorithms. In the case of Twitter, it turned out to be relatively easy to collect data because of the platform's openness, whereas this was far more difficult when it came to scraping data from Facebook using data harvesters. Facebook doesn't allow third party technologies to access its users' data; hence the entire exercise was done manually. Another reason was that most hate discussions would happen in religion-specific groups, which in most cases are private.

As a beneficiary of GSP+ status, Pakistan has both legal and moral obligations to implement 27 human rights, labour, environmental protection and good governance instruments. Several of these are multilateral treaties including ICERD, ICCPR, ICESCR, etc.

The EU's review of Pakistan under GSP+ in 2019 observed under compliance with GSP+ obligations that fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression, misuse of cyber laws, discrimination against religious minorities, etc. are high priority areas for EU.

The final report released on February 10, 2020 says:

> "The Government of Pakistan stated its commitment to maintain its GSP+ eligibility. However, political will needs to be coupled with determined action for reform, in particular in the areas of fundamental freedoms, as well as labour rights. The deteriorating situation of **freedom of expression**, including the **misuse of cyber laws, the intimidation of media practitioners,**

> **and laws discriminating against religious minorities** remain elements of high concern."
> (chap. 4, sec. 4.1)[23]

The UN Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its review of Pakistan's record of compliance with the UN Convention, in 2016 talked about issues related to **hate speech, hate crimes, *madrassa* reforms, misuse of blasphemy laws, violence and segregation of minorities, violence against minority women, and access to justice**.

The CERD expressed its deep concerns at:

> "'the reportedly high incidences of **hate crimes such as harassment, violent mobs and killings of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, particularly Hazaras, Christian Dalits, Hindu Dalits and Ahmadis, and the absence of investigation and prosecution**. It is also concerned at reports of a **rise in racist hate speech targeting ethnic and religious minorities and refugees, including by public officials and political parties, in the media, on social networks and at religious gatherings** (arts. 2, 4 and 6)." [24]

The UN Human Rights Committee after its first ever review of Pakistan's human rights record under ICCPR in 2017 concluded with its reservations over hate speech and hate crimes perpetrated against religious minorities in Pakistan. It also regretted the absence of information *vis-à-vis* the implementation of the Supreme Court of Pakistan's landmark judgement of June 19, 2014 and recommended that the State party should investigate all reported cases of hate speech and hate crimes and ensure that perpetrators are punished and victims compensated.

The committee had directed the State Party to:

> "ensure that all cases of hate speech and hate crimes are thoroughly and promptly investigated and that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, punished".

Besides, it also directed to repeal blasphemy laws, take action against those who make false blasphemy allegations, protect judges, lawyers, prosecutors and witnesses of blasphemy cases and also to:

---

[23] The EU Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance ('GSP+') assessment of Pakistan covering the period 2018 -2019, available at:
https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/10102/2020/EN/SWD-2020-22-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF
[24] CERD concluding observations on Pakistan 2016, available at:
https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsrWoYjtM%2fV4TfMzF%2f0ZXE%2b7zvrF%2b8qPexiT5LK%2bcke0qKKanGVkq22yHvgG30t5clxr3MWA7VuPq0sfIxbGSqQm58bwpaPF8qmjpCGuVPNvNTVq4RPKHSmHR68nelt5%2bjQ%3d%3d

"**review school textbooks and curricula with a view to removing all religiously biased content, incorporate human rights education therein and continue to regulate *madrasas*"**.[25]

Similarly, the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights discussed its concerns in the context of religious-based hatred being perpetuated through the curricula and textbooks of schools and madrassa. The Committee urged the State party to:

"**monitor school curricula and textbooks, as well as practices in schools, at all levels, including in *madrassas*,** to ensure that they promote the full development of the human personality of students. It also recommends that "**the State party intensify its efforts to reform *madrassas*.**"; that "the State party incorporate human rights education in school curricula with a view to strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." and that: "the State party takes appropriate measures to raise awareness among the public of human rights and, in particular, **to raise the awareness of religious leaders of human rights and of their role in promoting understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among different ethnic and religious groups.**"[26]

X.   RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government must implement a comprehensive legislative and administrative mechanism in accordance with the international human rights law to curb hate speech and hate crimes against minorities and ensure an effective redress mechanism for victims of these crimes, including assurance of strict action against the perpetrators and it should be ensured that these mechanisms have a balanced approach, so that legitimate speech is not restricted under the guise of hate speech;

2. Keeping the June 19, 2014 judgement of the Supreme Court in view; the government must establish an Independent, autonomous, and permanent Commission for Minorities[27] (the one established by the Federal government is not a statutory body). It should be provided with adequate human and financial resources, with the powers of a tribunal, to examine complaints from minority communities' members including incidents of incitement to hatred and hate crimes with timely redress, and with a system in place to collect data of incitement to hatred offences;

3. The government should work with civil society to counter hate speech, particularly building capacity of various stakeholders including media and administration;

---

[25] Para 34 of Human Rights Committee's concluding observations. 2017 Review, available at,
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR/C/PAK/CO/1&Lang=En

[26] Paras 83 & 84 of Social, Economic and Cultural Rights Committee's concluding observations, 2017 Review, available at,
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E/C.12/PAK/CO/1&Lang=En

[27] National council for minorities' rights

4. Government must introduce and comprehensively implement a public policy and a regulatory framework which promote pluralism and diversity in the society at all levels;

5. The government should ensure the full implementation of June 19, 2014 judgement of the Supreme Court and Action (iv) of Thematic Area-II of the National Action Plan on Human Rights, assuring action against the perpetrators of hate speech against religious minorities;

6. The government should engage with Twitter and Facebook administrations in developing mechanisms for checking extreme forms of hate expressions being used to incite violence against groups and individuals belonging to minority sects and faiths and those of no faith;

7. The civil society and media need to closely monitor and advocate against issues emerging as result of problematic social media algorithms promoting religiously inappropriate content for social media users;

8. The government should revise primary, secondary and higher secondary level curricula being taught at schools and madrassas with view of removing hate language and for inclusion of lessons that would promote acceptance of religious diversity, and social harmony among different faith groups;

9. Awareness raising campaigns on responsible use of Twitter and Facebook and other social media platforms are urgently needed. The government, civil society and social media platforms need to work closely together to evolve solutions to discourage hate-based stereotypes from society in order to mitigate the risks of dangerous hate crimes;

10. Alternate speech needs to be promoted in the society in order to promote respect towards thoughts and opinions of individuals and groups belonging to those of different/minority faiths. Online spaces are shrinking for these groups and an express effort is needed by range of actors to open them up for the minority groups; and

11. The government and other independent actors (donors, INGOs) should work with civil society to counter the menace of hate speech, building capacity of various stakeholders and knowledge sharing.

#IDontForwardHate

Please join us by sending your pledges

To promote peace, dignity and respect for all communities, including minorities

Visit
https://idontforwardhate.net/

@DontForwardHate

@IDontForwardHate

@IDontForwardHate