



Fact Finding Report on Joseph Colony attack, Lahore issued by HRFP:

Lahore (March 12, 2013): The series of attacks against religious minorities in Pakistan is continue and another brutal and inhuman incident is happened in Joseph Colony, Lahore where the extremists alleged flasely to a Christian youth and in reaction they put on fire their houses. On 8th March, 2013 the Regional Coordinator of HRFP in Lahore with volunteers informed HRFP head office that a Christian youth named Savan Masih age 40 years, resident of Joseph Colony, Noor Road, Badami Bagh, Lahore has been alleged with a blasphemy charge by his Muslim friend Shahid Imran. Savan Masih s/o Chaman Masih aged 40 has a wife, 1 son and 2 daughters and lived along with his parents, worked as a Sweeper in Municipal Committee Lahore and also runs one table snooker club.



On hearing this information, the local team of HRFP initially went to the Joseph Colony, Badami Bagh for collecting the facts about this case. The team inquired from the community that the violence began on March 7, 2013 when Savan and Shahid were sitting together for drink liquor in a Barber's shop while drinking they start abusing each other and then they went to their houses. Next day on March 8, 2013 the rumor was spread by Shahid Imran that Savan Masih has passed insulting comments against the Prophet Mohammad. Upon hearing this fictitious news, the local Muslims become furious and they gathered other Muslim residents of the adjoining colonies to take action against the act of Savan Masih without inquiring its authenticity. When Police came to know about this incident, they came to the colony and claimed for ensuring the safety of Savan Masih they arrested and took him to Badami Bagh Police Station. Later on by the pressure of the local Muslim clerics they lodged FIR number 112/13 underSection 295-C against Savan Masih.

HRFP came to know from effectees that on Friday, March 8th's night the Police officials provoked the Christian community to flee from their houses for their safety as the situation could become critical in further two or three days. Due to the provocation of the Police, the number of families move towards the houses of their relatives in Lahore, those who have no relatives or acquaintances stayed in their houses under an extreme fearful state of mind. The effectees regretted that when the Police was anticipating the violent situation to be happening, then why they did not give us any protection.



The next day on 9th March, 2013 when the blasphemy allegation on Savan Masih became public , the extremists in huge numbers gathered around the Joseph colony and protested against the Christian Community. When the protest turned into thousands estimated amount of protestors is said to be 4000 in numbers, they moved towards the residence of Christians and brutally attacked and torched 178 Christian's houses, 18 shops and 2 Churches of Joseph Colony. When the local HRFP team reported the attack on Chriстан Colony to HRFP head office, the fact-finding team immediately went to Lahore for helping to victims and monitoring & reporting in details the vandalism against the Christians. The team included President HRFP Mr. Naveed Walter, Program Coordinator Mr. Zohaib Newton and Field Coordinator Mr. Rustam Salvator along with Regional Coordinator Lahore Mr. Nadeem Walter and Local Volunteers Mr. Thomas, Shera and Nadeem Paul when reached to the place of occurrence, the destruction and devastation was prevailing throughout the colony. Disturbing scenes of burning houses, streets strewn with debris , blackened furniture , torched motorbikes and bicycles, broken roofs, burnt papers of the holy bibles and broken electricity & gas meters clearly depict that all the houses along with household effects were burnt to ashes. The chemical used by the extremists mob set fire to the Christian houses was so inflammable that it utterly destroyed the targeted houses. It was reported to HRFP by the Christian residents that the mob not only attacked the houses but also looted them. On the place of occurrence, the fact-finding team noticed that 178 houses were torched and completely destroyed. The infuriated mob of more than 4000 heartless extremists protestors destroyed almost everything of the poor Christian families.

A local resident Shahzad Younas shared with HRFP team whose property and belonging were completely burnt that during the time of the attack on their houses the Police authorities were present, but they were reluctant to take any corrective action to protect their property. He said the police authorities were acting as puppets during the mob attack.

On HRFP's asking some local residents about the responsibility of this inhuman act, they replied the local Government, police and administration were mainly responsible as they allowed the extremists to continue the tragic situation for 24 hours in the heart of provincial capital Lahore. They said if they had work with responsibility, definitely this attack could have been rescued.

Statement of Savan Masih at Badami Police Station:

Savan Masih in his statement at Badami Bagh Police Station said that the complainant Shahid Imran had threatened him during an argument saying that he could destroy his life by accusing him of blasphemy, while both were drunk.

Legal Proceeding of Savan Masih Case:

The FIR number 112/13 under Section 295-C is lodged on Savan Masih at Badami Bagh Police Station on 8th March, 2013. A judicial magistrate on Saturday 9th March, 2013 sent Savan Masih to jail on 14-day judicial remand. Police produced the accused before the court and sought his physical remand. However, the court sent him on judicial remand, directing the police to produce the accused again on March 23, 2013 along with investigation report.

HRFP team Interviews with Victims:

Mr. Ilyas Masih aged 38 years a resident of Joseph Colony and a sanitary work by profession has lost his house during this incident. Mr. Ilyas Masih is having four children, two sons and two daughters named Yasir Ilyas, Shahroon Ilyas, Maria Ilyas and Saima Ilyas. His wife is working as housemaid. Ilyas and his sister Yasmeem of age 24 shared with HRFP team that the number of extremists carrying fuels in their hand entered their house and torched everything. He said, due to fire the roof of my house is also broken. He further said, before this act they fled. He demands

to provide justice to them and help them in ensuring protection to the minorities of Pakistan.



Khurram Masih another Christian resident of Joseph Colony aged 27 years was also the victim of inhumane attack. Khurram Masih works as a local laborer in WASA (Water and Sanitation Agency), having 3 children, Rahul Masih, Elvin Masih and Daim Masih. He said they had lost their years' income after this incident. His settlement was also badly affected. Further he shared that his family was making the dowry for her sister marriage. But the persons who attacked on their house, looted the valuable things related to her dowry.



Kala Allah Dita aged 59 years and his wife Mariam Masih aged 55 years having three sons and one daughter, they said “we have lost our livelihood”. Kala Allah Dita who was running a grocery shop, said the extremists were holding chemicals and fuels which they threw at my shop and everything was turned into ash. He said I saw my shop burning but I could do nothing. Kala Allah Dita said his two brothers Waris Allah Dita and Khalid Allah Dita are also living in the same locality and their houses are also badly burnt and destroyed.

An affected woman Ssriya bibi aged 35, said people in large numbers came to her home, ransacked it, threw household items out of her house, doused them with petrol and set fire to

them. She shared with HRFP it was painful to see the torched houses of many such people who had nothing to do with the incident.

An eyewitness Riaz Masih shared with the team of HRFP that the attackers went on the rampage, setting on fire many houses, damaging bikes and hurling stones at the police. He said my bicycle was also blazed by them. The police did not take any action against the people who were damaging property and setting fire to it, he added.

Discussion with Senator Kamran Michael at Joseph Colony:



While HRFP was visiting the affected area, HRFP team met with Senator Kamran Michael (belonging to Christian community, former provincial Finance and Human Rights minister for Punjab) and discussed the pathetic situation of Christian Colony with him. Mr. Naveed Walter urged the Senator to give their best relief services, provide safety & security to victims and give punishment to the culprits who are involved in this attack so that in future no one could dare to perform such anti-humanity acts. Senator Kamran Michael ensures that he will help to provide relief, security and justice to the affectees of this attack on behalf of Punjab Government.

Compensation to the Affectees :

The Punjab Government has announced that each affected family would be given relief in cash and the burnt houses of every family would be constructed by the government on urgent basis. The Government has also suspended the DSP and SHO of Badami Bagh for showing negligence in such high profile incident. But despite of the Government rehabilitation announcement, the Government has badly failed to protect the rights of minorities and still there are not any developments in relief and other services, the victims shared with HRFP team.

Statement of HRFP:

Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP) has strongly urged Government of Punjab, Government of Pakistan and apex court to take strict measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents and ensure the safety of the minorities. Following are the inclusive recommendations of HRFP to ensure the protection of religious minorities and particularly in the case of Savan Masih.

1. The FIR against Savan Masih should be withdrawn immediately.
2. The Judicial Inquiry should be conducted and the report thereof be issued immediately.
3. The Government of Punjab should find the facts of Savan Masih blasphemy abuse case and do the practical actions for the prevention of such future minority sabotage on account of false blames which has happened and is evident from the history.
4. The Government of Pakistan should penalize all the suspected culprits that are involved in the plans and attack on Joseph Colony.
5. The Government of Punjab should fasten the process of rehabilitation for the affected Christian families and should fulfil its promises as soon as possible.
6. The Government of Pakistan should introduce a reformed legislation to prevent the abuse of blasphemy law in Pakistan.
7. The Government of Pakistan should enhance the initiatives for promoting religious harmony in the society.

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