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PRESS COVERAGE

**One-Day Roundtable: “Violations of Rights of Religious Minorities –
Muslims & Sikhs – in India”**
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TRIBUNE

Pakistan should adopt innovative strategies to highlight brutalities in IoK

By News Desk
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Roundtable of experts say Modi’s rise to power accounted for greater persecution of Indian Muslims. PHOTO: AFP

With the world seemingly less than moved over state aggression against unarmed civilians in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IoK), experts on Wednesday called on the Pakistan government to adopt innovative strategies to highlight the brutalities.

At a roundtable on “Violations of Rights of Religious Minorities –Muslims & Sikhs – in India”, organised by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) President Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema said that stressed that Pakistan should try and find new ways to highlight violations of human rights of religious minorities in India, especially those in IoK.

‘India won’t allow IoK to be part of CPEC’

He added that there is nothing which can separate Pakistan from Kashmir given their socio-cultural, historical and religious commonalities.

Dr Mujeeb Afzal, an assistant professor at the School of Politics and International Relations, discussed the plight of the Muslim community and Indian atrocities on Kashmiris. He stated that Indian Muslims were the victims of an ‘Indian myth’ of nationhood and socio-cultural integration of Hindu majority and their deeply entrenched in their caste system.

Dr Afzal pointed out that politically, India’s reliance on aggression against minorities ensures a large vote bank since the presence of religious minorities is perceived to be a hurdle in the process of national integration.

“In the process of cultural transformation, religious minorities, especially Muslims have been the victims of ‘soft Hindutva’,” he suggested.

Moreover, he said given the social circumstances of the Indian Muslim community, they only speak out over the human rights violations in Kashmir but stop short of supporting the freedom struggle there.

Earlier, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Director General Khalid Rahman said that “The reason India chose secularism over Hinduism—constitutionally—was not by choice, it is rather because of inescapable political needs of the country.” He added that incidents of abuse and mistreatment against religious minorities in India are taking place because secularism in the country was merely an arrangement for political gains without any commitment to its core values.

India uses excessive repression in occupied Kashmir, reports Amnesty

He pointed out that since Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party came into power, Muslims had been targeted by various hate campaigns such as Ghar Wapsi, Love Jihad, and most recently in the name of cow vigilantes and a ban on beef slaughtering.

Quoting a 2017 report by India Spend, he informed that in the 63 heinous hate incidents from 2010–2017, 86 per cent of the victims were Muslims while 98 per cent of these incidents took place after Modi assumed power.

He recommended Indian Muslims should devise innovative and comprehensive socio-academic strategies with which they can empower themselves and protect their rights.

Published in The Express Tribune, July 13th, 2017.

‘Space for minorities shrinking rapidly in India’

July 13, 2017

Islamabad - Religious minorities in India are living in a hostile environment and the space for them is shrinking rapidly exposing its claim of being a secular state, speakers said on Wednesday.

Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) organised a roundtable conference on ‘Violations of Rights of Religious Minorities –Muslims & Sikhs – in India’.

The speakers said that use of force and violation of the rights of religious minorities at the hands of Hindu extremists backed by the Indian government has become a common occurrence.

“In such a hostile environment of coercion, denial of equal rights and discrimination, space for India’s religious minorities is fast shrinking, laying bare the falsehood of the Indian Constitution and its claims of being a secular state,” they viewed.

Acting President of the Institute Brig (R) Sohail Tirmizi, SI (M) outlined the importance of the roundtable in order to awaken the world conscience against the brutalities on Indian Muslims and Sikhs primarily, but also against innocent unarmed Kashmiris, Christians and Harijans by India.

In the session chaired by Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President & Executive Director, Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), Islamabad, Mr. Khalid Rahman, Director General, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad spoke on Indian Secularism and Policy towards Religious Minorities: Myth and Reality (Case of Muslims).

“The reason India chose secularism over Hinduism—constitutionally — is not by choice, it is rather because of inescapable political needs of the country,” said DG IPS.

According to him, the reason why incidents of abuse and mistreatment have been and are taking place against religious minorities in India is because secularism in the country is merely an arrangement for political gains, without any commitment to its core values.

He pointed out that since Modi's BJP government came into power, Muslims have been targeted under various hate campaigns such as 'Ghar Wapsi', 'Love Jihad', and most recently in the name of cow vigilantes and ban on beef slaughtering.

Quoting a 2017 report by India Spend, he informed that in the 63 heinous hate incidents during 2010–2017, 86 per cent of the victims were Muslims and 98 per cent of these incidents occurred after Narendra Modi assumed power.

He recommended that to gain representation in political and administrative avenues, Indian Muslims need to devise innovative and comprehensive socio-academic strategies with which they can empower themselves and protect their rights.

Networking and alliances with the 'saner' elements in Indian society should also be an essential part of their strategy. While in the international arena, there have been voices raised at the United Nations, as well as reports by rights' organizations, the need is to make these voices strong enough to put real pressure on India to be fair to its minorities, he stressed.

Dr Muhammad Mujeeb Afzal, Assistant Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Islamabad discussed the Plight of Muslim Community and Indian Atrocities on the Kashmiris.

He outlined that Indian Muslims are victims of the 'Indian Myth of nationhood and socio-cultural integration of Hindu majority which is deeply entrenched in their discriminatory caste/class system. He added that in India, no recognition has ever been given to religious minorities constitutionally.

However, during the entire process, the important issue for Muslims was how to protect themselves and their values in order to emerge as a community with their own political identity.

Dr Mujeeb pointed out that politically India's reliance on aggression against minorities ensures a large vote bank since the presence of religious minorities is perceived to be a hurdle in the process of national integration.



Roundtable on “Violations of Rights of Religious Minorities –Muslims & Sikhs – in India

DNA News | July 12, 2017



Use of force and violation of the rights of religious minorities at the hands of Hindu extremists backed by the Indian Government has become a common occurrence. In such a hostile environment of coercion, denial of equal rights and discrimination, space for India's religious minorities is fast shrinking, laying bare the falsehood of the Indian Constitution and its claims of being a secular state. These were some of the views shared by speakers and participants of the roundtable on “Violations of Rights of Religious Minorities –Muslims & Sikhs –

in India” organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute here in Islamabad today. Welcoming the speakers, Acting President of the Institute Brig (R) Sohail Tirmizi, SI(M) outlined the importance of the roundtable in order to awaken the world conscience against the brutalities on Indian Muslims and Sikhs primarily, but also against innocent unarmed Kashmiris, Christians and Harijans by India.

In the session chaired by Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, President & Executive Director, Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), Islamabad, Mr. Khalid Rahman, Director General, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad spoke on *Indian Secularism and Policy towards Religious Minorities: Myth and Reality (Case of Muslims)*. ‘The reason India chose Secularism over Hinduism—constitutionally—is not by choice, it is rather because of inescapable political needs of the country,’ said DG IPS. According to him, the reason why incidents of abuse and mistreatment have been and are taking place against religious minorities in India is because secularism in the country is merely an arrangement for political gains, without any commitment to its core values. He pointed out that since Modi’s BJP government came into power, Muslims have been targeted under various hate campaigns such as Ghar Wapsi, Love Jihad, and most recently in the name of cow vigilantes and ban on beef slaughtering. Quoting a 2017 report by *India Spend*, he informed that in the 63 heinous hate incidents during 2010–2017, 86% of the victims were Muslims and 98% of these incidents occurred after Narendra Modi assumed power. He recommended that to gain representation in political and administrative avenues, Indian Muslims need to devise innovative and comprehensive socio-academic strategies with which they can empower themselves and protect their rights. Networking and alliances with the ‘saner’ elements in Indian society should also be an essential part of their strategy. While in the international arena, there have been voices raised at the United Nations, as well as reports by rights’ organizations, the need is to make these voices strong enough to put real pressure on India to be fair to its minorities, he stressed.

Dr. Muhammad Mujeeb Afzal, Assistant Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Islamabad discussed the *Plight of Muslim Community and Indian Atrocities on the Kashmiris*. He outlined that Indian Muslims are victims of the ‘Indian Myth’ of nationhood and socio-cultural integration of Hindu majority which is deeply entrenched in their discriminatory caste/class system. He added that in India, no recognition has ever been given to religious minorities

constitutionally. However, during the entire process, the important issue for Muslims was how to protect themselves and their values in order to emerge as a community with their own political identity. Dr Mujeeb pointed out that politically India's reliance on aggression against minorities ensures a large vote bank since the presence of religious minorities is perceived to be a hurdle in the process of national integration. In the process of cultural transformation, religious minorities especially Muslims have been a victim of 'soft Hindutva', he opined. Given their social circumstances, the Indian Muslim community only speaks over the human rights violations against Kashmiris, but does not support the freedom struggle of Kashmiris as well.

Dr. Noor ul Haq, Former Senior Research Fellow at IPRI argued that Indian HR violations and atrocities on the Sikhs only accelerated their demand for a separate homeland. The Khalistan movement was brutally curbed by Congress by declaring emergencies, making numerous arrests, inflicting brutal tactics against Sikhs, including killing them. Reviewing the historical perspective, Dr Haq stated that the events of 1984 onwards left the Sikh community at large emotionally distraught. Non-Resident Indian Sikhs are keeping the Sikh Freedom Movement alive which started in 1984. 'Never-forget 1984' is the slogan on social media, he said.

Concluding the roundtable, Dr Zafar Iqbal Cheema stressed that Pakistan should adopt innovative strategies to highlight violations of human rights of religious minorities in India. He said that there is nothing that could separate Pakistan from Kashmir given their socio-cultural, historical and religious commonalities.

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NATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

Roundtable on Violation of Rights of Religious Minorities, Muslims and Sikhs in India

ISLAMABAD, July 12: Use of force and violation of the rights of religious minorities at the hands of Hindu extremists backed by the Indian Government has become a common occurrence. In such a hostile environment of coercion, denial of equal rights and discrimination, space for India's religious minorities is fast shrinking, laying bare the falsehood of the Indian Constitution and its claims of being a secular state. These were some of the views shared by speakers and participants of the roundtable on 'Violations of Religious Minorities - Muslims & Sikhs - in India' organized by the

Islamabad Policy Research Institute here in Islamabad today. Welcoming the speakers, Acting President of the Institute Brig (R) Sohail Hrnizi, SIPM outlined the importance of the roundtable in order to awaken the world conscience against the brutalities on Indian Muslims and Sikhs primarily, but also against innocent unwarred Kashmiris, Christians and Harijans by India.

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Islamabad spoke on Indian Secularism and Policy towards Religious Minorities: Myth and Reality (Case of Muslims). The reason India chose Secularism over Hinduism-constitutionally is not by choice, it is rather because of inescapable political needs of the country,' said DG IPS. According to him, the reason why incidents of abuse and mistreatment have been and are taking place against religious minorities in India is because secularism in the country is merely an arrangement for political gains, without any commitment to its core values. - PR



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