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**PRESS RELEASE**

**FIFTEEN AHMADIS CHARGED IN PAKISTAN UNDER ANTI-AHMADIYYA LEGISLATION**

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat confirms that a police case has been registered against fifteen Ahmadis at Sillanwali Police Station in District Sargodha, Pakistan. The Ahmadis are charged under Section 298C of the Pakistani Penal Code which is specifically an anti-Ahmadiyya piece of legislation. The accused Ahmadis are charged with having a place of worship, which they call a Mosque and use to offer Friday prayers and Eid prayers. Furthermore they are charged with 'posing' as Muslims because under the aforementioned Penal Code, Ahmadis are not allowed to class themselves as such.

Three persons, Mr Abdul Aziz, Mr Muhammad Ashraf and Mr Khizer Hayat have already been arrested and police raids are being conducted to in an attempt to arrest the remaining persons.

The background to this incident is that an Ahmadi in Sillanwali, Mr Khan Muhammad owns a few shops adjacent to the Ahmadiyya building, Baitul Zikr. A non-Ahmadi desired to hire these shops; however the owner refused this request, as was his absolute right. Thereafter the non-Ahmadi met with a local Mullah and

together they conspired to fabricate a story in order to register a case against local Ahmadis. The complainant in this case is Maulvi Mushtaq.

It is of great regret that the discriminatory laws in place are a tool for religious extremists whose only wish is to deny Ahmadis the right to practice their religion peacefully and free from threats or violence.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat is actively involved in dialogue in an attempt to secure the release of the three Ahmadis and to have the charges dropped, however thus far such attempts have failed. The three men arrested continue to be detained and yesterday a local Judge refused their application for bail.

**End of Release**

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