



PRESS RELEASE

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN TELECOMMUNICATION AUTHORITY (PTA) ISSUE ORDER TO REMOVE AHMADIYYA-RELATED DIGITAL CONTENT ON GOOGLE AND WIKIPEDIA

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a victim of state-sponsored persecution in Pakistan for the last many decades and a number of Ahmadis are prisoner of conscience for their religious beliefs. Recently, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority of the Pakistan Government has enacted new regulations that would extend the reach of Pakistan's blasphemy laws to even Ahmadi Muslims living outside of Pakistan, including Europe and the United States.

On December 25, 2020, PTA issued takedown notices to Google and Wikipedia to remove content associated with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. The Pakistan Government is (1) requiring Wikipedia to remove articles portraying the worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad, as a Muslim; and (2) requiring Google to remove a Google play app published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, which provides Arabic and English translations of the Qur'an, and (3) requiring Google to change their algorithm for the search queries "Khalifa of Islam" and "Caliph of Islam". PTA has threatened penalties and prosecution for non-compliance.

On December 30, 2020, the Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court heard a petition "Seeking Removal of Qadiyani [Ahmadi] Caliph name as Muslims Caliph from Google Search." The Chief Justice of the Lahore High Court instructed high-ranking federal officials to find a way to issue criminal warrants for any individuals or entities outside Pakistan who are publishing online content deemed "blasphemous" by Pakistani authorities. The PTA Chairman assured the Chief Justice that his agency was working tirelessly toward this goal.

It is astonishing to note here that neither the Lahore High Court nor PTA has any authority of policing anyone who is not subject to their jurisdiction. Pakistan is acting in complete disregard of its international human rights commitments to protect the basic human rights of Ahmadi Muslims, and if concrete steps are not taken for compelling Pakistan to fulfil its international obligations, state-backed vigilantism will harm all peaceful religious communities living in Pakistan.

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