



- 1. Please provide an update on how Ahmadis are treated in Bangladesh, in particular whether they or their mosques are attacked; whether the government has enacted laws designed to restrict them in any way including their publications or their ability to gather at their mosques.**

Sources report that there are approximately 100,000 Ahmadis in Bangladesh.^{1 2} The US Department of State (USDOS) reported in September 2011 that religious freedom is protected in Bangladeshi policies and law, and these freedoms are generally protected in practice.³ A 2010 Supreme Court decision reaffirmed secularism as a constitutional principle, despite Islam previously being established as the state religion.^{4 5}

In the early 2000s, a group of organisations dedicated to preserving the ‘finality of Muhammad’s prophethood’⁶ threatened the Ahmadiyya community with attacks on their mosques, and campaigns for Ahmadis to be declared non-Muslims. These groups were united under an umbrella organisation known as *Khatme Nabuwat* (KN), which had links to the then governing Bangladesh National Party. In 2005, a mob led by KN activists attacked and injured at least 25 Ahmadis and sought to place a sign outside their mosque which read “[t]his is a place of worship for Qadianis;⁷ no Muslim should mistake it for a mosque”. The police allegedly sought to control the situation by hanging the sign on the mosque themselves. In 2004, the Bangladeshi government banned the “publication, sale, distribution and preservation of all books and booklets on Islam published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Bangladesh”. However, the High Court later stayed this ban.⁸

¹Freedom House 2011, *Freedom in The World 2011 – Bangladesh*, 26 May

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2011&country=7993&pf>
Accessed 30 May 2012

² United States House of Representatives 2012, *Testimony of Amjad Mahmood Khan, Esq.*, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, United States Congress website, 21 March, pp.7-8
<http://tlhrc.house.gov/docs/transcripts/2012_3_21_South%20Asia/Amjad%20Khan%20Testimony.pdf> Accessed 26 April 2012

³ US Department of State 2011, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report (July-December)*, 13 September, Introduction

⁴ US Department of State 2011, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report (July-December)*, 13 September, Introduction

⁵ ‘Bangladesh bans Islamic parties’ 2010, *AsiaNews.it*, 3 August <<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bangladesh-bans-Islamic-parties-19109.html>> Accessed 26 April 2012

⁶ Whilst according to Ahmadiyah, Muhammad was the last law-giving prophet, Ahmadis do not believe that Muhammad was chronologically the last prophet of Islam. Rather, for Ahmadis, there is always scope for another prophet to appear. See Ahmad, W 1995, *A Book of Religious Knowledge (For Ahmadi Muslims)*, Second Edition, Fazl il Omar Press, Ohio, Al Islam website, Section 5
<<http://www.alislam.org/books/religiousknowledge/sec5.html>> Accessed 3 January 2012

⁷ Referring to a major sub-sect of Ahmadiyya. Named after Qadian, India which was the birthplace of Ahmadiyya’s founder.

⁸ United States House of Representatives 2012, *Testimony of Amjad Mahmood Khan, Esq.*, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, United States Congress website, pp.7-8

According to the National Director of Public Affairs for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA, the situation for Ahmadis in Bangladesh has improved since the mid 2000s, particularly with the election of a new government in 2008, which is led by the secularist Awami League Party (AL).⁹ The AL reportedly came to power with a ‘landslide’ victory;^{10 11} the AL and its allies won 263 of 300 available seats.¹² Bangladesh is due for its next round of parliamentary elections in 2013.¹³

Prior to its election, the AL had signed a pact with an Islamist group which committed it to a future declaration that Muhammad was the final prophet – a direct challenge to the country’s Ahmadiyya community. However, the AL did not follow through with its commitment and no such declaration was made.¹⁴

Freedom House also states that the government has attempted to protect Ahmadis:

A trend of increased intolerance and attacks on minorities was reversed in 2009, after the new government made explicit commitments to defend minority rights and deployed police to protect vulnerable groups like the 100,000-strong Ahmadiyya sect.¹⁵

Minority Rights Group International states that, according to some NGO reports, violence against Ahmadis may have diminished during 2010 due to an improved level of police protection.¹⁶

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) removed Bangladesh from its Watch List after the AL’s election. The USCIRF states that it is “encouraged by the government’s recent steps to begin to rectify past religious freedom violations...and to protect vulnerability of religious and ethnic minorities from exploitation or violence”.¹⁷ The USDOS reports that while mainstream Muslims in Bangladesh may reject some Ahmadiyya teachings, most nevertheless support the Ahmadis’ right to practice.¹⁸

<http://tlhrc.house.gov/docs/transcripts/2012_3_21_South%20Asia/Amjad%20Khan%20Testimony.pdf> Accessed 26 April 2012

⁹ United States House of Representatives 2012, *Testimony of Amjad Mahmood Khan, Esq*, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, United States Congress website, 21 March, pp.7-8

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¹⁰ ‘Muhith was worried over big win’ 2011, *The Daily Star*, 26 September

<<http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=203990>> Accessed 27 April 2012

¹¹ ‘Ex-Bangladesh PM’s son faces trial’ 2012, *Daily Times*, 19 March

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2012%5C03%5C19%5Cstory_19-3-2012_pg7_22> Accessed 27 April 2012

¹² Inter-Parliamentary Union n.d., *Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad – Last Elections*

<http://www.ipu.org/english/parline/reports/2023_E.htm> Accessed 26 April 2012

¹³ Election Guide n.d., *Bangladesh* <http://www.electionguide.org/country.php?ID=19> Accessed 26 April 2012

¹⁴ United States House of Representatives 2012, *Testimony of Amjad Mahmood Khan, Esq*, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, United States Congress website, 21 March, pp.7-8

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¹⁵ Freedom House 2011, *Freedom in The World 2011 – Bangladesh*, 26 May

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2011&country=7993&pf> Accessed 30 May 2012

¹⁶ Minority Rights Group International 2011, *State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Events of 2010*, July, p.43

¹⁷ US Commission on International Religious Freedom 2012, *Annual Report*, March, p.327

<[http://www.uscifr.gov/images/Annual%20Report%20of%20USCIRF%202012\(2\).pdf](http://www.uscifr.gov/images/Annual%20Report%20of%20USCIRF%202012(2).pdf)> Accessed 23 April 2012

¹⁸ US Department of State 2011, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report (July-December)*, 13 September, Section III

According to an Ahmadiyya news blog, the community plans to celebrate the centenary of the Ahmadiyya in Bengal in 2013 with a program of events.¹⁹

Nevertheless, Freedom House notes that societal discrimination and occasional attacks against religious minorities continue to occur.²⁰ The USDOS reported targeted attacks against Ahmadis in Bangladesh's Tangail district during 2010:

The attacks happened in three waves in June, August, and October. The attacks consisted of small groups entering Ahmadi neighborhoods with weapons, beating Ahmadis they encountered and vandalizing several houses before leaving. The authorities made no arrests, but a few local figures issued statements about the need to live in harmony.²¹

In November 2011, local authorities in a Tangail village apparently prevented the construction of an Ahmadiyya mosque.²² The USDOS also noted that institutions of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community were attacked during July-December 2010. Sporadic demands that Ahmadis be declared non-Muslims also continued.²³

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¹⁹ Rabbi, M G 2012, '100 Year Celebration of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, Bangladesh', The Muslim Times website <<http://www.themuslimtimes.org/2011/10/religion/islam/100-year-celebration-of-ahmadiyya-muslim-jamaat-bangladesh>> Accessed 26 April 2012

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²³ US Department of State 2011, *2010 International Religious Freedom Report (July-December)*, 13 September, Introduction

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