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LEGAL AID BOARD

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Information on the treatment of members of the Sunni religious group known as Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat by members of the Shia community in Pakistan

A *BBC News* report on conflict between Sunnis and Shias in Pakistan states:

“A series of shootings and bombings over the last year in north-western Pakistan seems to be manifestations of the bitter split between Sunnis and Shias in the country. No-one has yet claimed responsibility in many of these attacks - but the targets are mostly members of the Shia community. Over the past 20 years extremists from both groups have attacked each other all over Pakistan, although analysts say that the bulk of the violence more recently has been committed by Sunni militants inspired by al-Qaeda's ideology.” (BBC News (20 February 2009) *Pakistan's evolving sectarian schism*)

The 2009 *US Department of State* religious freedom report for Pakistan states:

“Targeted assassinations of clergy remained a key tactic of several groups, including banned sectarian organization Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP), terrorist organization Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ), and sectarian organizations Sunni Tehrike (ST) and Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP). SSP and LJ targeted both Shi'a and Barelvis, whereas ST and SMP targeted Deobandis.” (US Department of State (26 October 2009) *International Religious Freedom Report 2009: Pakistan*)

A *BBC News* report mentions that Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat is the current name of a group previously known as Sipah-e-Sahaba, stating:

“The SSP, which was banned by President Pervez Musharraf in February 2002, has continued to operate under various names to counteract the ban. After 2002, it changed its name to Millat-e-Islamia. When this name was also placed on the banned list, the name of Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat was adopted.” (BBC News (17 August 2009) *Pakistan 'extremist' is shot dead*)

A *Daily Times* article which refers to Sipah-e-Sahaba changing its name to Ahl-e-Sunnat-Wal Jamat states:

“Banned militant outfits are resurfacing in Karachi and reopening their offices, *Daily Times* learnt on Saturday. Some of them have taken on new names. Rival sectarian outfits, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Sipah-e-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP), have reopened their sealed offices and have temporarily changed their names to Ahl-e-Sunnat-Wal Jamat and Shia Ulma Council,

respectively.” (Daily Times (29 June 2008) *Banned militant outfits regroup in Karachi*)

In a section titled “Dynamics of the Sectarian Divide” an *International Crisis Group* report on sectarian violence in Pakistan’s Northern Areas states:

“On 8 January 2005, Ziauddin Rizvi, the driving force behind Shia activism in the Northern Areas, was critically injured in an attack. His bodyguards killed one of the assailants, identified as Mukhtar Ahmed, a FATA resident and member of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Enraged Shias took to the streets in Gilgit, destroying government and private property. A district forest officer and six others were burned alive in an attack on his house, and the Sunni director of the local health department was shot dead in his office. At least fifteen people were killed and scores injured before the government imposed a shoot-on-sight curfew. The riots spread to Skardu, where hundreds of Shias protested, attacking government property and blocking roads. On 12 January, Rizvi succumbed to his injuries, triggering more violent protests. Although leaders of the two main religious groupings in the Northern Areas, the Shia Anjuman-i-Islami and the Sunni Tehreek Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat, signed an agreement brokered by the NALC to restore peace, neither side was sincere. The tit-for-tat killings that followed included the assassination of Sakhiullah Tareen, the Northern Areas police chief at the time of Rizvi’s assassination.” (International Crisis Group (2 April 2007) *Discord in Pakistan’s Northern Areas*, p.18)

This section of the report also states:

“While there has recently been a lull in violence, sporadic attacks still take place, and the *jirga*, which is monitored by a six-member committee headed by Gilgit’s deputy commissioner, is not likely to keep the peace for long. *Jirga* members accuse the government of interference but the Sunni and Shia mullahs who run it have little interest in sectarian harmony and have escalated their rhetoric. Sunni Tehreek Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat chief Qazi Nisar Ahmed has warned that ‘if the Shias continue to publicly hold offensive rituals and disparage our revered religious personages, then one should not be surprised if a Sunni takes up his gun and retaliates’. Sheikh Nayyar Abbas, leader of the Shia Anjuman-i-Islami insists there are no moderate Sunnis in Gilgit, only Wahhabis who denounce Shias: ‘When we are called infidels and people who are detestable to us are publicly venerated, what do you expect us to do? We cannot abandon our core beliefs simply for the sake of peace’. ‘The primary purpose of the *jirga* was to remove differences and thereby unite the people, an endeavour in which it has not been successful’, says Mirza Ali, Anjuman-i-Islami president.” (ibid, p.19)

A *Business Recorder* article states:

“Sunni Action Committee of Kurram Agency on Saturday demanded of the government of Pakistan to provide protection to Sunnis in Parachinar, headquarters of volatile tribal agency. Addressing a new conference here at Peshawar Press Club (PPC), tribal elders affiliated with Ahle Sunnat Wal Jammata, Kurram Agency called for deployment of military in the agency. The tribal elders comprising Haji Shireen Mangal, Haji Sher Mangal, Haji Maulana

Bahadar Khan, Haji Daulat Khan, Haji Bahadar Khan, Haji Marjan and Haji Arif said that heavy fighting were still continued between Shia and Sunni sects in the area. They called for immediate intervention of the government to prevent further bloodshed where dozens of Sunni sect Muslims had already been reportedly killed in the sectarian clashes." (Business Recorder (8 April 2007) *Kurram Agency's Sunni Group Seeks Protection*)

The Pakistani newspaper *The News* reports the killing of a prominent Sipah-e-Sahaba activist as follows:

"A sector in charge of the banned religious outfit, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, was shot dead early Sunday morning in the Brigade police limits. In reaction, unidentified people resorted to aerial firing in various parts of the city, particularly Jamshed Quarters, Lines Area, Shah Faisal Colony, Dalmia Society and North Karachi. Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Jamshed Town, Javed Akber Riaz, said that 35-year-old Allauddin came to his store around 6:30 a.m. after offering Fajr prayers in Rasheedia mosque in Lines Area. This was when three armed men riding a CG-125 motorcycle pulled up and shot him dead." (The News (25 May 2009) *Killing of banned outfit's activist sparks tension*)

This article also states:

"A senior investigation officer (IO) said that this was the third target killing of Sipah-e-Sahaba activists in two months. The other two incidents had occurred in Saddar and Jamshed towns." (ibid)

A *South Asia Terrorism Portal* report states:

"May 27: Another activist of the banned Sunni outfit SSP was shot dead in the Aziz Bhatti Police limits of Karachi within three days of the murder of another SSP activist. The incident sparked tension in Gulshan Town, as armed men resorted to aerial firing, forced the shopkeepers to pull down shutters and also attacked Imambargahs (Shia places of worship) in the area. 38-year old Qari Amanullah was shot dead while his son Sufian was injured by two gunmen near a Tandur in Gulshan-e-Iqbal. According to Police, the deceased was a former Sipah-e-Sahaba unit in-charge." (South Asia Terrorism Portal (October 2009) *Incidents involving Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan*)

A report from the Pakistani newspaper *The Nation* states:

"Four activists of the banned Sipah-e-Sahaba-Pakistan (SSP) were killed in the metropolis during the last 24 hours on Thursday. A security guard of SSP leader Maulana Ghafoor Nadeem was killed while the shot dead body of another activist was found from different parts of the City. Meanwhile, two workers of the defunct outfit sustained injuries in an exchange of fire during the funeral procession of Hafiz Ahmed Bux Advocate, who was killed along with his driver in Model Colony on Wednesday. Tension gripped Model Colony, Saudabad, Malir, Kala Board, Nagan Chowrangi and various other areas on Thursday after the assassinations of Hafiz Ahmed and three other SSP activists." (The Nation (17 July 2009) *4 SSP activists dead in 24 hours*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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