

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: PAK31967
Country: Pakistan
Date: 27 June 2007

Keywords: Pakistan – Imamia Student Organisation (ISO) – Hangu – Shias – Sunnis

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT 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.

Questions

- 1. Please provide information on Hangu and its religious and other demographics?**
- 2. Please provide information about the Imamia Student organisation (ISO), its aims, purposes and political action?**
- 3. Is there any information on whether the ISO advocates unity between Shia and Sunnis?**
- 4. Is there a Hangu branch of the ISO?**
- 6. Is there any evidence of violence between Sunnis and Shias in Hangu on 21 March 1997 and 1998 and 9 Feb 2006 and what happened?**
- 7. Is there any evidence or documentation that Nisar Ali and other Shia leaders were shot in Hangu in 2001?**
- 8. Are there other places in Pakistan where there is no violence between Shias and Sunni and there is a large population of Shias where either Urdu or English is widely spoken?**
- 9. Is there any information that the police in Hangu have taken action against Sunnis who have committed violence against Shias?**
- 10. Are there any organisations in Hangu that are anti Shias?**
- 11. Please provide any other information that you think is relevant.**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide information on Hangu and its religious and other demographics?**

Information on the town of Hangu and the district of the same name, their religious composition, and other demographic data in general is very limited. Government statistics based on the most recent 1998 census indicates that Hangu district in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) had a population of 314 529 persons and an area of 1097 square kilometres. The proportion of the population living in urban areas within the district was 20.4 per cent ('Area, population and density by District', 1998 Statistics Division of the Government of Pakistan website

http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/fbs/publications/pocket_book2006/2.pdf – Accessed 21 June 2007 – Attachment 1). The Pakistani government does not collect statistics on the numbers of adherents to the Shia or Sunni strands of Islam at either the national or provincial level, nor for individual cities, in a wish to encourage a picture of Muslim religious homogeneity. The International Crisis Group (ICG) does however point to Hangu as one of the few areas in the NWFP with concentrations of Shia followers; and indicates that it is a province where seventy per cent of the population speak Pashto and eighteen per cent Hindko. The ICG also indicates that the Pashtun Bangash tribe, which includes both Shias and Sunnis, dominates Hangu (International Crisis Group 2005, *The State Of Sectarianism In Pakistan*, International Crisis Group website, 18 April, p.2, 17-18 http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_asia/095_the_state_of_sectarianism_in_pakistan.pdf – Accessed 19 February 2007 – Attachment 2).

In 1998, a native and former resident of Hangu, Zafar Bangash, now living in Toronto provided his comments on the city and district in the aftermath of the 21 March 1998 Shia-Sunni clashes. This violence is reported on more fully below in question six. The author's article on the Muslimmedia International website does include some further details on the religious and ethnic features of the town and surrounding areas:

The tragic sectarian clashes in Hangu and the surrounding areas in Pakistan's Frontier Province last month that resulted in scores of deaths were entirely avoidable. The mayhem started on March 21 when a Nowroz procession by the Shias was fired upon by heavily-armed Sunnis. In the first attack, 10 persons were killed. Thereafter, in the cycle of violence, at least 27 persons and perhaps twice as many died.

...Far from easing tension, a March 26 statement by the Frontier chief minister Sardar Aftab Ahmed Khan, compounded the problem. He asserted that Shia-Sunni clashes have been the norm in Hangu.

This is a stunning display of ignorance by the provincial chief executive. **There is no history of Shia-Sunni clashes. In fact, Hangu is a very mixed town. Had the chief minister bothered to make a few simple inquiries, he would have discovered that many relatives of the wife of even the provincial governor, general Arif Bangash, are Shias. The governor and his wife are both Sunnis. Shia-Sunni marriages are not very common but there is no truth to the chief minister's claim. It appears to have been made at the behest of the local administration in Hangu which clearly wanted to cover their own incompetence and criminal negligence.**

Similarly, a March 22 mortar attack on a Shia locality in Shahukhel village on the edge of Orakzai Agency northeast of Hangu did not lead to Shia-Sunni clashes even though 11 members of the same family died. The Sunnis of Shahukhel came out in strength to express sympathy with the Shias and joined in the funeral processions. The missiles appeared to have been fired from the tribal area. A major clash was thus averted through the good sense of the Sunnis.

Prior to these clashes, the only other instance of Shia-Sunni fighting in Hangu was in 1980. On that occasion too, ulama from both sides had inflamed passions by making irresponsible statements. Now the situation has deteriorated. The emergence of the **Sepah-e Sahaba [SSP]** and of militant Shias who are willing to kill innocent people without any provocation, has led to this tragic situation.

In addition to Hangu, the entire Kurram Valley from Kohat to Parachinar is dominated by the Bangash tribe who are a mixed bag of Shias and Sunnis. Travelling from Kohat

to Parachinar, one finds Shia-Sunni villages spread in a chequer-board fashion along the route. Between Kohat and Hangu, there are three major Shia villages: Ustarzai Bala, Ustarzai Payan and Ibrahimzai. There are a number of Sunni villages in-between. The other major concentration of Shias is in Parachinar, home-town of the late maulana Arif Husaini.

Parachinar has had an uneasy history of Shia-Sunni relations because of the almost equal numbers of the two groups. This balance was upset with the arrival of the Afghans. This time, however, the local administration took preventative measures and managed to avoid the repeat of 1995 when more than 250 people died in such clashes.

Despite claims by the Tehrik-e Jafariya Pakistan (TJP) leader, Allama Sajid Naqvi, the Afghans were not involved in the Hangu shootings. The majority of Afghans in Hangu are ordinary people uninvolved in political activity. **Most of the killings in Hangu and the surrounding areas were carried out by people from the Sumarai village who are Khattaks, and the tribals from Orakzai Agency.**

...Two phenomena have occurred since the Afghan war: spread of drugs, and sectarianism in Pakistan. Hangu has been afflicted by both.

With the latest eruption of Shia-Sunni clashes, the tranquility of this picturesque town has been shattered, perhaps, irreparably. It will be very difficult to restore confidence between the two communities even if the vast majority on both sides are not involved in any sectarian conflict or hatred. It takes a handful of extremists to spark clashes (Bangash, Z. 1998, 'Picturesque Hangu valley turned into killing field', Muslimedia International website <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/world98/pakclash.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 3).

The growing influence of a Taliban inspired form of Islam and governance from Afghanistan in Hangu itself is referred to in a 1998 opinion piece published in the *Dawn* newspaper. The author, Eqbal Ahmas, also refers to the fact that prior to 1998 Shia and Sunni communities lived together without conflict:

The Taliban are not merely another Afghan party, in control of “80% of Afghanistan”, as our officials routinely remind every journalist and visiting diplomat. Graduates of Pakistan’s madaaris, owing their sponsorship and logistical life line to Pakistan, they are deeply linked to it. In Afghanistan they have pushed the boundaries of jahaliyya in the name of Islam. In certain sections of Pakistani society, they are a state of mind, model of governance, and marjaa’ taqlid. They are a reality mirrored – in Binuri Township, Mominpura, and **Hangu. Last night, yet another journalist offered yet another piece of evidence: “I interviewed the body guard of the SSP [Sepah-e Sahaba] leader”, he said, “all of them had been with the Taliban.”** There are myriad ways in which Afghanistan’s ongoing warfare distorts us. Look, and you will find the connections in the Parachinar and Hangu district where until recently the Bangash and Orakzai, Shia and Sunni, had lived in relative peace, where missiles and artillery were not deployed when disputes did occur, and where foreign groups did not join a local fray. **Peace in Afghanistan is Pakistan’s most urgent need** (Ahmas, E. 1998 ‘The message from Hangu’, *Dawn*, sourced from a geocities website http://geocities.com/CollegePark/Library/9803/eqbal_ahmad/hangu.html – Accessed 21 June 2007 – Attachment 4).

2. Please provide information about the Imamia Student Organisation (ISO), its aims, purposes and political action?

Most sources consulted for this research response give 1972 as the year the ISO was founded with financial assistance from Iran. Mariam Abou Zahab's essay on sectarian conflict in Pakistan argues that the Iranian assistance targeted rural, lower middle class students, many of whom began to study Persian in Iran through scholarships; that the ISO emerged from the Engineering University in Lahore; and that it was initially "just organizing rituals in the universities and taking care of the material problems of students" (Abou Zahab, M. 2000 'The regional dimension of sectarian conflict in Pakistan', Centre D'études Et De Recherches Internationales website, October

<http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/archive/octo00/artmaz.pdf> – Accessed 22 June 2007 –

Attachment 5; Irfani, S. 2004 'Pakistan's Sectarian Violence: Between the "Arabist Shift" and Indo-Persian Culture', Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies website, p. 152

<http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/ReligiousRadicalism/PagesfromReligiousRadicalismandSecurityinSouthAsiach7.pdf> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 6). Its

main purpose is to advocate for, and service the religious needs of, Shia students. In 2003, the then president of the ISO, Syed Nasir Shirazi, denied that the organisation was receiving financial assistance from Iran. He went on to provide other details on the origins, aims, and extent of the organisation in Pakistan. Shirazi states that the ISO had approximately 1200 units across the country and that between fifty and seventy per cent of Shias belonged to the organisation:

Iran is neither funding the Imamia Students Organisation (ISO) nor influencing its working, said ISO President Syed Nasir Shirazi on Sunday. He said the ISO was just taking spiritual guidance from Syed Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran.

In an interview with *Daily Times*, Mr Shirazi said the ISO was not a sectarian organisation, **but was working to protect Shia students' rights**. "We believe every student organisation should be banned if found involved in sectarian activities," he said. **Mr Shirazi said the ISO came into existence in 1972 when secular and commonest student organisations were dominating educational institutes and the majority of students who were close to them were Shias. "The ISO was formed to save the faith and ideology of Shia students," he said.**

"The ISO provided financial assistance to deserving Shia students because there was no other financier to aid them in the 70s," he said, adding it was the time when various political and student organisations with different school of thoughts were dominating student politics like the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam of Deobandis, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan of Brelvis and the Jamaat-e-Islami. "Only Shias were not in the mainstream of politics, and when General Zia imposed the rules of Hanfia sect on Shias, **only the ISO responded to the call of Shia leader Mufti Jaffar Hussain and converged on Islamabad for their rights,**" Mr Shirazi said and **denied any support from Iran at that time. "It was our own fight, and it should be clear that the ISO has no political links with Iran. Iran is only the source of ideological inspiration to us,"** he said, adding that according to the Shia sect, they obeyed the orders of the mujtahid in their religious affairs. "Before Imam Khamenei, our mujtahid was in Iraq," he said.

Regarding differences with the Tehrik-e-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) and its head Allama Sajid Naqvi, the ISO president said they had no link with the TJP. "We have our independent identity. Allama Naqvi didn't prove himself a Shia leader and Shias suffered due to his political policies," he said.

Mr Sherazi said his prime objective was to expand the ISO. "We have planned to double the number of organization members," he said, adding the organisation was training and inspiring students to follow the sayings of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH). **"We have a training cell**

called Alhuda to educate students how to spend their lives according to the preaching of Muhammad (PBUH) and his descendants,” he said.

He said the ISO had decided to expand its offices and membership to rural areas, particularly the Northern Areas, where the literacy rate was very low because of poverty. He said according to a survey last year, around “50 to 70 percent” of Shais [sic] were ISO members. “We have a structure of around 1,200 units in Pakistan,” he added.

Mr Shirazi and ISO Secretary-General Syed Aftab Naqvi demanded the government lift the ban on student unions. “This will open the environment of campuses. The unions shouldn’t be seen as a political or negative element in universities,” Mr Naqvi said. He said the government should monitor the organisations but not ban them. Mr Shirazi said Youm-e-Hussain was one of the most important events on campuses, which was being peacefully every year.

Mr Shirazi said the Muttahida Talaba Mahaz (MTM) was the finest example of unity among student organisations. However, he said the MTM had been unable to become effective nationwide. He said the quota system in universities was causing campuses to lose.

Mr Shirazi said ISO members had always been supportive of the liberation movements in Palestine and Kashmir (Rana, A. & Gillani, W. 2003, ‘Iran not funding ISO: Shirazi’, *The Daily Times*, 24 November http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_24-11-2003_pg7_20 – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 7).

Information on the ideology and structure of the ISO is provided on the organisation’s site which is hosted at <http://www.geocities.com/imamianet/>. The page devoted to ideology describes the more esoteric religious principles fundamental to the ISO and is provided in Attachment 8 (‘Imamia Student Organization: Pakistan - Ideology’ (undated), Imamia net website <http://www.geocities.com/imamianet/ideology.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 8). The page given over to the structure of the ISO describes the various divisions and units across Pakistan and lists the nine departments through which it seeks to implement its aims:

The organization of the movement is divided in to center, divisions and units. There are 19 division and 500 units, covering all the four provinces of Pakistan, tribal areas, Azad jummoo & Kashmir and Northern areas. Also there are 800 units called Muhib units of students of metric and lower classes. All the units and divisions are firmly bonded to a strong and well-established center.

DEPARTMENTS:

Following are the important departments of the organization

1. Training department (Tarbiat)
2. Education department (Ta’leem)
3. General affairs department
4. Publication and propagation department (Isha’at)
5. Information department
6. Finance department
7. Scouting department
8. Muhibeen department
9. Talibat department (‘Imamia Student Organization Pakistan - Organizational Structure’ (undated), Imamia net website, <http://www.geocities.com/imamianet/structure.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 9).

Brief descriptions of these nine ISO departments are also contained in Attachment 9 ('Imamia Student Organization Pakistan - Organizational Structure' (undated), Imamia net website, <http://www.geocities.com/imamianet/structure.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 9).

3. Is there any information on whether the ISO advocates unity between Shias and Sunnis?

Several reports were found quoting ISO leaders urging greater unity among Sunnis and Shias (and Muslims in general) who live in Pakistan and overseas in countries such as Iraq. As illustrated in the two reports quoted below, the call for greater unity by the ISO occurs in the context of resisting divisions within Islam which it believes are being instigated by the Pakistani government and foreign governments such as the United States. Nonetheless, the reports do suggest that unity among Muslim sects is also a general theological principle of the ISO. The first report of April 2007 from *The Frontier Post* records such views being expressed by ISO members at a conference in Peshawar:

PESHAWAR... A conference through a resolution demanded of the President General Musharraf, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and NWFP Governor Ali Mohammad Jan Aurakzai to take effective and immediate steps for ending hostilities in Kurram agency. The moot on the topic of Itihad-e-Ummat-e-Muslima was organized by **Imamia Students Organisation, Pakistan**, at Peshawar Press Club on Wednesday, which was addressed by **ISO representative Shafiq Bangash, Prof Dr Qibla Ayaz and Allama Mohammad Jawad Hadi and attended by students of university and colleges, doctors, professors, ulema and people from various school of thought.**

Through another resolution, which were moved by general secretary of ISO, the conference urged the Muslims to forge unity among their ranks and foil the nefarious designs of the imperialist forces. Addressing on the occasion, Allama Mohammad Jawad Hadi said that Islam preached love, peace and harmony among the Muslims. He held the government responsible for worst kind of sectarianism in the country and said that sectarian clashes in various parts of the country was the proof of the government's failure and negligence.

He said that the worst law and order situation in Parachanar, DI Khan, **Hangu** and Waziristan had been caused by miscreants and backing of the government. "If the administration of Parachanar had reacted timely, the situation would not deteriorate to such extent," he said, adding that the dwellers of the Kurram Agency wanted to live in peace.

Speaking on this occasion **Prof Dr Qibla Ayaz appreciated the role of the ISO, Pakistan, for the unity among the Muslims. He said that the imperialist forces wanted the Muslims to fight with each other for achieving the interests. He appealed to the Muslims to follow the basic principles of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and crush sectarianism. He said that all the Muslims especially the youth should come forward in this regard. He was of the view that only mutual unity, love and peace could give victory to the Muslims in the world.**

Central representative of the ISO, Pakistan, Shafiq Bangash said that the unity was the basic requirement of any society. "Our enemy is only imperialist and there is no difference between Shia and Sunni," he said.

He was of the view the conference would prove a milestone **in promotion of unity among the Muslim ummah, appealing to Muslims to show unity for foiling the nefarious designs**

of the world imperialist forces ('Gov't Asked To Take Immediate Steps For Ending Kurram Riots' 2007, *The Frontier Star*, 11 April – Attachment 10).

A second 2007 report, from the Islamic Republic News Agency website, refers to the Central President of the ISO, Yasif Navaid Hashmi, calling for unity among among Muslims in Iraq following an attack on a shrine there:

A largely attended rally in the Pakistani port city of **Karachi** on Sunday condemned the barbaric attack on the al-Askari shrine in Samarra, one of the most revered sites in Islam.

The rally was organized by the **Imamia Students Organization (ISO), at the city's Tibet Center**, to join the protest against the shrine. Two minarets of the Shrine were collapsed in the attack.

Thousands of demonstrators **chanted slogans against the United States and Zionist regime**. They were also holding banners and placards, inscribed with anti-America slogans. The demonstrators also burnt flags of the United States, Britain and Israel. The speakers said that the US-led foreign forces are responsible for the attack on the Shrine.

Addressing the rally Senator Abbas Kameli said the attack was not carried out either by Sunni and Shia Muslims, but they were agents of Zionists. He described the attack as a frustrated move to divide Iraq but the Muslims will foil such conspiracies.

He said there is no conflict of Shia or Sunni in Iraq but inimical forces are fomenting sectarianism for their ulterior motives. He urged the Muslims to show unity to foil conspiracies of anti-Islamic elements.

Central President ISO Yasif Navaid Hashmi told the rally that the whole Islamic *Ummah* is in the state of shock after the attack on al-Askari shrine in Samarra. Every person on the earth is sad over the attack, Hashmi said. He said neither Sunni nor Shia can even think to attack religious places.

He said that foreign forces in Iraq are also fully involved in the conspiracies of attacks on religious places. He urged the Muslims across the world to show **unity** and stand against those who are trying to divide Muslims under the pretext of sectarian hatred ('Pakistan rally condemns Iraq shrine attack' 2007, Islamic Republic News Agency website <http://www2.irna.ir/en/news/view/menu-234/0706177345190505.htm> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 11).

4. Is there a Hangu branch of the ISO?

No information was found on the Hangu branch of the Imamia Student organisation (ISO).

5. Is there a position called Secretary General in the ISO or its branches?

Several news articles refer to the position of both Secretary General and General Secretary of the ISO. The 2003 *Daily Times* news article quoted above in response to question two refers to the "ISO Secretary-General Syed Aftab Naqvi" (Rana, A & Gillani, W. 2003, 'Iran not funding ISO: Shirazi', *The Daily Times*, 24 November http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_24-11-2003_pg7_20 – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 7), while the 2007 *Frontier Star* news article quoted above in response to question three refers to the "general secretary of the ISO" (Gov't asked to take immediate steps for ending Kurram Riots' 2007, *Frontier Star*, 11 April – Attachment 10). In

2003, a *Daily Times* news item referred to Shabbir Hussain as holding the position of general secretary in the ISO's Peshawar division in his advocacy for the rights of students in Kurram Agency:

PESHAWAR: The Imamia Students Organization (ISO) on Monday threatened countrywide protest if students of Kurram Agency were not given their due rights immediately.

The representative of ISO said students belonging to the Kurram agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) are being deprived of the reserved seats in medical colleges, engineering universities and other educational institutions.

Shabbir Hussain, general secretary ISO Peshawar division told a news conference held at the press club that the Frontier Regions (FR) had a separate status and they were not a part of any tribal agency, and these have been brought under the administrative control of their adjacent districts.

Mr Hussain said that the frontier regions of Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, D.I. Khan and Tank had their own set up, administrative control, and reserved seats for the students.

The ISO office bearer further added in order to divide the resources of the agency, privileges of agency people and reserved seats for the students, the Frontier regions adjacent to district **Hangu** and Tall were unconstitutionally attached to the Kurram agency through 'an organized conspiracy'.

Following repeated public protests against this injustice, the present government then separated these areas from the agency in accordance with a court decision, he said.

The ISO general secretary further remarked that, students who are domiciled in these regions, were submitting admission forms to different professional institutions particularly medical colleges on the basis of quota reserved for the students of Kurram Agency thus they were depriving them of their right.

Mr Hussain said the education department was committing a contempt of court, since students of frontier region are not a part of Kurram Agency, and requested the court to take suo motto action against the department.

The president ISO Peshawar division, Sajid Hussain was also present during the press conference, who demanded that the governor, provincial education minister and the home secretary direct the concerned authorities to accept their demands as soon as possible as the interviews of FATA students for admission in professional colleges were only a few weeks away. In case their demands were not met, the ISO would launch a countrywide agitation for the acceptance of their demands (Hassnain, Z. 2002 'ISO threatens protest if Kurram Agency students not given seats', *Daily Times*, 19 November http://dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_19-11-2002_pg7_25 – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 12).

- 6. Is there any evidence of violence between Sunnis and Shias in Hangu on 21 March 1997 and 1998 and 9 Feb 2006 and what happened?**
- 7. Is there any evidence or documentation that Nisar Ali and other Shia leaders were shot in Hangu in 2001?**
- 10. Are there any organisations in Hangu that are anti Shias?**

No evidence was found suggesting violence between Sunnis and Shia took place during March 1997. The earliest reports of Sunni-Shia conflict in Hangu are for the period February-March 1998 and since that time the area has seen similar events on several occasions. Reports for March 1998, 2001, and February 2006 are all presented below. These provide details on the unfolding of events on each occasion and the groups involved, including those who were killed or injured as well as the organisations allegedly involved in attacks against Shias in Hangu. A *Dawn* news article of 6 February 1998 on events in early February in Hangu includes comments from the then ISO acting President, Mazhar Turi. The comments suggest that members of the ISO were arrested in Hangu alongside members of the Shia Tehrik-i-Jafria group:

PESHAWAR: Tension again prevailed in Hangu on Friday following an incident in which a Shia was fired at and wounded in the town. Hangu has witnessed sectarian strife in recent days in the wake of an incident involving members of the Sunni and Shia sects and the law-enforcement agencies. **The authorities made a number of arrests later, provoking strong-worded statements demanding their release.** The Tehrik-i-Jafria and its front organisations in particular threatened dire consequences if those arrested weren't freed. In Friday's incident, the wounded person was shifted to Peshawar for medical treatment. The administration later reinforced the police presence in Hangu and patrolling was intensified to prevent any untoward incident. **Meanwhile, the Imamia Students Organisation's (ISO) acting central president Mazhar Turi told a press conference in Parachinar on Friday that the body would start a countrywide agitation if the government failed to stop action against the ISO and didn't release its activists. He alleged that the terrorists had been given a free hand while the ISO members were being harassed, apprehended and punished only to hide the incompetence and corruption of the administration. He claimed the Hangu incident involved the Sepah-i-Sahaba and the administration but ISO members were made the scapegoat and arrested and tortured** ('Tension in Hangu as Shia activist fired at 1998, *Dawn*, 6 February <http://www.karachipage.com/news/feb98/020798.txt> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 13).

As referred to above in response to question one, in 1998 a native and former resident of Hangu, Zafar Bangash, provided his commentary on the 21 March 1998 Shia-Sunni violence on the Muslimmedia International website. The essay contains a detailed description of how events unfolded in Hangu:

The tragic sectarian clashes in Hangu and the surrounding areas in Pakistan's Frontier Province last month that resulted in scores of deaths were entirely avoidable. The mayhem started on March 21 when a Nowroz procession by the Shias was fired upon by heavily-armed Sunnis. In the first attack, 10 persons were killed. Thereafter, in the cycle of violence, at least 27 persons and perhaps twice as many died.

There were rumours that there would be trouble during Nowroz celebrations. Hangu was tense since the firing in Ramadan when two Sunnis were shot and killed.

How the tragic cycle of violence escalated can be traced to two separate processions taken out by the Shias and Sunnis in Hangu during Ramadan. The assistant commissioner, Sher Azam, in a serious lapse of administrative responsibility, gave permission for both processions simultaneously (He has since been transferred to Mansehra).

The Sunnis organised a procession for Al-Quds on the last Friday of Ramadan. The Shias took out a rival procession to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Ali. **A Shia fired on the Sunni procession killing two. Later, some Sunnis fired on the Shias.**

...In the ensuing Shia-Sunni clashes, the Frontier Constabulary (FC) was called out to restore order. Curfew was imposed in Hangu and the situation was brought under control. A Sunni Supreme Council emerged, backed by the **Sepah-e Sahaba** who immediately made three demands: arrest and prosecution of the Shia who had shot and killed two Sunnis during Al-Quds rally; no Nowroz procession by the Shias nor any procession during Muharram, and no adhan by them on loud speakers.

While the last two demands were clearly unrealistic, the local administration's failure to apprehend the culprit even though he roamed around in the town freely, inflamed Sunni feelings. The Sunnis' deadline of March 13 for his arrest came and went without any action by the police. The Sunnis felt that the authorities were ignoring them and proclaimed that henceforth they will not be responsible for any unpleasant consequences.

Why the Shia who had shot dead two Sunnis in Hangu was not apprehended despite roaming freely has not been explained. **The Sunnis, egged on by members of the Sepah-e Sahaba and some local ulama from the Miftah-ul Uloom mardrassa** in Sangher locality of Hangu provided the spark for the latest mayhem. They had even called for a general strike on March 21 to coincide with Nowroz.

A group of heavily-armed Sunnis from the nearby villages of Sumarai, Bagato and Kotgai took up positions at the Nowroz Mela Maidan early in the morning of March 21. They did not fire upon the first group which comprised mostly Shia women and children. The second procession setting out at 8:30 am from near Hangu College for the Nowroz Mela was fired upon with automatic weapons. The shooting lasted until 1 pm before the FC, backed by army contingents, brought some semblance of order. When the shooting died down, at least 10 persons were dead, most of them Shias.

That, however, was not the end of the tragedy. Hangu is situated in a valley surrounded by mountains beyond which lies the Tribal area of Orakzai Agency. The tribals are all Sunnis. A call immediately went out to them for help.

A number of heavily-armed tribal lashkars attacked the Shia villages of Saidano Banda and Ibrahimzai, southeast of Hangu. Both villages suffered heavy damage. Hardly a house was left intact. The number of people killed has still not been determined.

Hangu remained under curfew for 10 days. The police, backed by the military arrested scores of people from both sides. The busy Kohat-Hangu road was closed and opened only on April 2.

Far from easing tension, a March 26 statement by the Frontier chief minister Sardar Aftab Ahmed Khan, compounded the problem. He asserted that Shia-Sunni clashes have been the norm in Hangu (Bangash, Z. 1998 'Picturesque Hangu valley turned into killing field', Muslimedia International website, 16-18 April <http://www.muslimedia.com/archives/world98/pakclash.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 3).

Further details on the events of March 1998 are referred to by Suroosh Irfanni in his essay, 'Pakistan's Sectarian Violence: Between the "Arabist Shift" and Indo-Persian Culture'. At the same time the author refers to the subsequent violence of 2 March 2001. The author describes how:

In March 1998, sectarian violence erupted in the city of Hangu, eighty kilometers from Peshawar, after a procession of hundreds of Shias celebrating the traditional Iranian new year (the spring solstice, naurooz) came under indiscriminate fire, because "the procession was

taken out despite opposition from Sunni militant group, the supreme Sunni council.” Ten people were killed and twenty-five were injured as the violence spread to the nearby villages following the failure of the paramilitary forces to restore order. Army units, therefore, were called in from the Kohat garrison, but the **Shahukhel village near Hangu was razed to the ground by armed tribal lashkars of the Sunni Orakzai tribe**, whose arsenal included locally made anti-aircraft guns. While the district administration eventually brokered a ceasefire between the two warring groups using the mediation of a local jirga besides Shia and Sunni ulema flown in from Peshawar, the ceasefire was all too precarious.

The city was gripped by sectarian violence in the following years, and most recently again on 2 March 2001, **when three Shia shopkeepers were gunned down in the main bazaar by militants of the anti-Shia SSP, who had come all the way from Punjab for the act.** The shooting took place while the district administration was negotiating with local Shia and Sunni leaders as to how to ensure peace during the upcoming Nauroz celebrations later that month. **In this particular case, then, it was not so much a local incident that sparked the clashes but the extension of SSP death squads to the tribal areas. By killing the Shias in Hangu, the militants were exacting revenge for the execution of SSP leader Haq Nawaz in Punjab’s Mianwali jail, where Haq Nawaz was hanged on 28 February 2001 after an eleven-year-long trial for the murder of Sadek Ganji, the director of the Iranian cultural center in Lahore.** As the government had taken hundreds of SSP activists in the Punjab into preventive custody prior to the execution, SSP militants took their revenge in the far northern city of Hangu (Irfani, S. 2004 ‘Pakistan’s Sectarian Violence: Between the “Arabist Shift” and Indo-Persian Culture’, Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies website, p. 152 <http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/ReligiousRadicalism/PagesfromReligiousRadicalismAndSecurityinSouthAsiach7.pdf> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 6).

The names of those killed during the violence of March 2001 in Hangu are supplied in a report on the Shia News website. The list of names includes that of Nasir Ali. While a search of other sources naming those killed was undertaken, none were found to confirm those listed on this website:

Eight Shia Muslims have been gunned down and five injured in Hangu, as a Wahabi terrorist opened fire in a market Thursday. The assailants emerged from a van and sprayed bullets at a crowded market before escaping. Rampaging crowds of Shias and Wahabis torched shops and vehicles and exchanged gunfire. At least six shops and several vehicles were set on fire, police said.

“The situation is still tense and the authorities have rushed para military troops to quell the rioting,” senior home ministry official Manzur Ahmed said. A press note by the NWFP government said that civil armed forces, including the Frontier Corps and Frontier Constabulary militia, had been called out to assist the administration in Hangu.

The violence erupted after a Wahabi terrorist belonging to **Tehreek-e-Taaliban (Wahabi organisation supporting Sipah-e-Sahaba)** had shot dead three Shia shopkeepers and injuring another in the main bazaar of Hangu. An indefinite curfew was imposed on Hangu town and the law enforcement agencies were given shoot-at-sight orders for any one found violating the curfew.

A doctor at Hangu’s district headquarters hospital confirmed eight deaths and injuries to five persons till 6pm. But unofficial reports said eleven persons were killed and 13 injured in the violence. Eight bodies were reportedly brought to the Civil Hospital, Hangu and another three to the private Madina Medical Centre on Thall Road in the outskirts of the town.

Out of the four Shias hit in the market, two died on the spot and another succumbed to injuries at the DHQ hospital. Among the dead were seven local men and one visitor from the North Waziristan Agency in FATA. Hospital sources identified some of the dead as Syed Jawad Hussain, **Nisar Ali**, Haji Minhaj Ali, and Subedar Lalmai. Bodies were kept at the DHQ hospital.

The man belonging to Mir Ali in the North Waziristan Agency, who was hit by a rocket, was identified as Bakhtawar Khan. The injured included Shah Turab and Naseer Khan from Hangu, Haji Zakeem Khan from Mir Ali (NWA), Haji Aziz from Lakki Marwat and Zulmat Shah from Teerah in the Khyber Agency.

The immediate cause of the flare-up appears to be the execution of SSP terrorist Haq Nawaz in the Mianwali jail on February 28 for the murder of Iranian diplomat Sadiq Ganji. **It enraged the SSP workers and caused tension in Hangu and the adjacent Orakzai tribal agency.**

A sectarian dispute over a shrine in Orakzai agency in the first week of January 2000 caused at least nine deaths. This issue is still unresolved and a cause of much concern to both the sects. In March 1998, sectarian violence had claimed over 30 lives in Hangu.

Elders of the Shia blamed the government for not taking adequate security measures in Hangu despite being aware that Nawaz's hanging could fuel sectarian clashes. The Imamia Council spokesman Malik Nawab Khan, advocate, said that special preventive measures should have been initiated in Hangu as it was prone to sectarian violence.

Shia leaders in Hangu and Peshawar accused the administration of failing to take action. They demanded arrest of the killers of the Shia Muslims in Hangu (Abbas, J. and Aliraza 2001, '8 Shias killed, 5 injured in Hangu by Wahabis', *Shia News* website, 1 March http://www.shianews.com/hi/asia/news_id/0000848.php – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 14).

The US State Department's *International Religious Freedom Report* indicated that at least 10 people were killed on 1 March 2001 and the deaths were perpetrated by members of the SSP:

At least 10 persons were killed during sectarian rioting in Hangu, a small city in the NWFP on March 1, 2001. The SSP arranged prayer gatherings throughout the NWFP for SSP activist Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, who was executed on February 28, 2001 for the 1990 killing of the head of the Iranian Cultural Center in Lahore. SSP activists reportedly left one such gathering and proceeded to Hangu's main shopping area where they shot and killed three Shi'a shopkeepers and one Sunni passerby. Following this incident, armed Sunni and Shi'a groups used mortars, rockets, and other heavy weapons against each other (US Department of State 2001, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2001 – Pakistan*, 26 October – Attachment 15).

9 February 2006:

On 9 February 2006 a suicide bomb attack targeted participants in a Shia Ashura religious procession in Hangu on the Hangu-Tall road. More than thirty people were killed and sixty five injured. Rioting following the attack caused further damage to the city's bazaar and shops. Clashes between armed rival Shia and Sunni groups also followed the bomb blast and resulted in further deaths, bringing the total number of dead to forty. A judicial inquiry into the events in Hangu was set up by the government through a judge of the Peshawar High Court. The army and paramilitary officers were used to control the unrest. The central president of the ISO at the time, Rizwan Haider Kazmi, called on the government to find

those responsible for the attack and stated that it “was aimed at triggering sectarian violence” (‘Worshippers die in Pakistan blast’ 2006, *BBC News* website, 9 February http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4695776.stm – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 16; ‘Pakistan clashes claim more lives’ 2006, *BBC News* website, 10 February http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4699806.stm – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 17; Yusufza, R. et. al. 2006, ‘Hangu death toll climbs to 40’, *The News* website, 11 February <http://www.jang.com.pk/thenews/feb2006-daily/11-02-2006/main/main1.htm> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 18; ‘31 killed in Hangu blasts’ 2006, *Pakistan Tribune* website, 11 February <http://www.paktribune.com/news/index.shtml?133784> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 19; quote from ISO president in ‘Suicide bombing, clashes kill 31 in Pakistan, 2006 *Agence France Press*, 10 February – Attachment 20; Khan, A.S. 2006 ‘37 die in two Hangu blasts, violence’, *Dawn* website, 11 February <http://www.dawn.com/2006/02/11/top3.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 21).

The US Department of State’s 2006 International Religious Freedom Report states that the suicide bomber was linked to the Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP):

On February 9, 2006, a suicide bomber, **linked with SSP**, attacked a Shi’a religious procession commemorating the month of Muharram in Hangu, NWFP, killing at least forty and injuring at least fifty. Three more died in sectarian clashes that followed the attack on February 10 and 11 (US Department of State 2006, *International Religious Freedom Report for 2006* – Pakistan, 15 September – Attachment 22).

8. Are there other places in Pakistan where there is no violence between Shias and Sunnis and where there is a large population of Shias where either Urdu or English is widely spoken?

Two recent RRT Country Research responses provide information on Shia-Sunni violence and its causes at a national level and in specific districts and cities. These responses include reports on recent attacks against Shia adherents both in large urban centres and small, remote rural villages. An estimated 4000 people have died in the last two decades and 300 in 2006 alone. Seventy per cent of the deceased have belonged to the Athna Ashari (or Twelvers) sect of the Shia community. Most of the current anti-Shia violence is conducted by the Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP) and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ) groups who follow the Deobandi form of Sunni Islam. (questions 1-3 of RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response PAK17755*, 19 January – Attachment 23; and question 1 of RRT Country Research 2007, *Research Response PAK31335*, 26 February – Attachment 24). No information or reports were found specifically identifying locations in Pakistan which are free of violence between Shia and Sunni religious groups.

No reports or studies were found which focus on languages spoken in Pakistan according to religious affiliation and location. Several independent studies indicating (a) where large Shia populations or concentrations are located in the country, and (b) where Urdu and English are spoken or used, are contained in *Research Response PAK17755* and *Research Response PAK31335*. According to the reports quoted in *Research Response PAK31335*, population concentrations of Shia are found in Karachi (25% of the city’s population), Gilgit and parts of Balochistan, the southern Punjab, and the Northern Areas. In the southern Punjabi city of Multan, Shias constitute approximately forty per cent of the population of four million people (question 1 of RRT Country Research 2007, *Research Response PAK31335*, 26 February – Attachment 24).

Other reports quoted in these responses indicate that Urdu is the *lingua franca* of Pakistan. While for only ten to twenty per cent of the population is Urdu their mother tongue, between seventy five per cent (countrywide) and ninety five per cent (in urban areas) of inhabitants speak, understand and communicate in Urdu (question 4 of RRT Country Research 2006, *Research Response PAK17755*, 19 January – Attachment 23; and question 3 of RRT Country Research 2007, *Research Response PAK31335*, 26 February – Attachment 24).

On the use and levels of spoken English, a study by Dr Tariq Rahman, who is the national distinguished Professor of Linguistics and South Asian Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad, states that:

...English is the key to power as far as the modern, employment-based domains of power are concerned. Without knowing English one cannot enter the most lucrative and powerful jobs, both in the state apparatus and the private sector, in Pakistan. There are no reliable figures of the number of Pakistani who can use English. ... most matriculates from vernacular-medium schools cannot speak English and can barely read their textbooks which they tend to memorize. **As such, those with fluency in English could hardly be more than 3 to 4 per cent of the population.** Urdu, however, is much more widespread and not only the 20 per cent matriculates are quite proficient in it, but also the students of religious seminaries, madrassas, soldiers, as well as otherwise illiterate working class people living in cities pick it up and use it quite well. Urdu has spread so widely because it is used for inter-provincial communication, entertainment, media (T.V, radio, newspapers) and, above all, lower middle-class jobs all over Pakistan except in rural Sindh (Rahman, T. 2002, 'Language-Teaching and Power in Pakistan', The LinguaPax Institute website, 16-20 April http://www.linguapax.org/congres/Tallers/article12_ang.html – Accessed 21 February 2007 – Attachment 25).

9. Is there any information that the police in Hangu have taken action against Sunnis who have committed violence against Shias?

Information on the specific actions taken by the police in Hangu against Sunnis who have committed or may commit violence directed at Shias is slight. On 30 March 1998, the *Dawn* newspaper reported on the arrest of more than twelve people in Hangu, including local leaders and activists of the Sunni group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP):

As tense calm prevailed in Hangu town on Sunday, **authorities arrested 12 more people**, including four leaders of the Tehrik-i-Jafaria Pakistan (TJP) and, at least, one belonging to **Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)**.

A source told *Dawn* from Hangu that 12 people were apprehended in raids conducted under the supervision of army and, according to independent sources, those arrested in the morning included local leaders of the TJP and the SSP.

The arrested TJP leaders are provincial chief Allama Khurshid Anwar Jawadi, Malik Nawab, advocate, Abbas Ghulam and Hussain Ali Hussaini.

Mr Hussaini had contested elections on the TJP ticket for the provincial assembly seat from Hangu. Moulvi Abdullah is one of the SSP leaders arrested during the raid.

The names of **other SSP leaders\activists** could not be ascertained as the civil administration refused to give details about the clean-up operation. According to official and independent sources, no untoward incident took place in any part of the town or adjoining areas on Sunday.

Curfew restrictions were relaxed for three hours on Sunday during which some shops in the main Hangu Bazaar were opened. Strict security measures had been taken by the district administration to avert any untoward incident. Meanwhile, a 20-member action committee of Shia leaders was formed on Sunday.

Mehtab-ul-Hassan, a prominent Shia leader from Usterzai and a nephew of a former chief justice of the Peshawar High Court, Syed Ibne Ali, told *Dawn* the action committee had been constituted to hold dialogue with the administration as well as Sunni leaders so that the issue could be resolved amicably ('TJP, SSP leaders held in Hangu' 1998, *Dawn*, 30 March, sourced from Karachi Page.com website <http://www.karachipage.com/news/mar98/033098.txt> – Accessed 22 June 2007 – Attachment 26).

A report was also found referring to aspects of the police investigation into the more recent February 2006 events:

HANGU: The police have released the photo of a suspected bomber of the February 9 Hangu suicide attack that killed more than 42 people. A police official said on Thursday that the police had obtained a video of the procession that had pointed to a new suspect in the investigation. "We suspect him to be the suicide bomber," said the police official on condition of anonymity. A young, shawl-clad suspect is now believed to be the bomber instead of another suspect spotted in an earlier video. "The young man's photo was shown to Shia leaders but they could not identify him," said the police official, adding that once the young man was identified, they would be able to get more leads on the real suicide bomber ('Photo of Hangu bombing suspect released' 2006, *The Daily Times*, 24 February http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006\02\24\story_24-2-2006_pg7_31 – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 27).

In response to the violence in February 2006, the police also attended meetings between elders of Shias and Sunnis in Hangu intended to form a permanent peace committee for the area:

HANGU, Feb 12: Hangu was calm but tense on Sunday and a 24-member peace committee, comprising **elders of both sects**, held its first meeting to enforce a ceasefire agreement. The meeting decided to set up a permanent peace committee and a number of sub-committees to restore peace and assess the damage caused by Thursday's blasts and subsequent clashes.

The members said they would meet again on Feb 15 after the elders explained to people details of the agreement and their decision to form a permanent peace committee. **Deputy Inspector-General of Police Abdul Majeed Marwat, District Coordination Officer Ameeruddin Mahsud and District Nazim Ghaniur Rehman also attended the meeting.**

The meeting urged the government to pay compensation for deaths, injuries, damage and looting during the violence. It called upon the provincial government to take effective measures to restore peace in the city.

Despite overall calm, reports of sporadic gunfights were received from the Ibrahimzai village, while some people tried to set on fire a mosque on fire in Hangu. The authorities have started deploying army in the Ibrahimzai area to dislodge combatants from their positions.

Hospital sources said three of the 43 who died during the violence were still unidentified. They put the number of injured at 143. Power supply to most of the affected localities was not restored till Sunday evening and the city's main bazaar remained closed. About 390 shops in

the bazaar were destroyed or damaged during the violence ('Elders meet to enforce truce in Hangu' 2006, *Dawn*, 13 February <http://www.dawn.com/2006/02/13/top5.htm> – Accessed 26 June 2007 – Attachment 28).

11. Please provide any other information that you think is relevant.

Hangu has experienced violence as recently as January 2007. A rocket and mortar attack on a Shia mosque occurred on 30 January and participants in the Shia Ashura procession were again attacked. A car bombing also took place in the town two weeks earlier killing one person and injuring seven ('Pakistan curfew after Shia attack', 2007, *BBC News* website, 30 January http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6312291.stm – Accessed 26 June 2007 – Attachment 29). Recent reports of Sunni-Shia violence in nearby areas include two days of violence in Parachinar in Kurran Agency in the NWFP. Forty people were killed and others injured during two days of violence after Shias began protesting against Sunnis who allegedly chanted anti-Shia slogans. A curfew was imposed by the authorities and government helicopter gunships fired on the rival groups to quell the violence ('Deadly clashes rage in Pakistan' 2007, *BBC News* website, 7 April http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6534473.stm – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 30). The South Asia terrorist Portal (SATP) website lists the most recent major incidents of violence in Pakistan up to May 16 2007, including those between Shia and Sunnis groups. The SATP lists two such incidents for 2007, both in the NWFP: one in Dera Ismail Khan district (25 April), the other being the Parachinar clashes in early April for which it provides some further details:

...April 25: Unidentified militants shot dead three people in a targeted sectarian attack in the **Dera Ismail Khan district of the NWFP**. The assailants fired from a Kalashnikov rifle on a vehicle in which two brothers from a prominent **Shia** family, Najaf Ali Shah and Syed Ali Shah, and their **Sunni** employee were traveling. An unnamed official of the NWFP government is reported to have blamed the attack on the banned **Sunni** group SSP and urged Shias to remain peaceful.

...April 10-11: At least 45 more people were killed during sectarian clashes in the **Kurram Agency of FATA as Shia and Sunni combatants** continued to attack each other's villages with heavy weapons despite warnings of military action by the government against those refusing to stop fighting. For the sixth day, fighting occurred in most parts of the Kurram Agency bordering Afghanistan.

April 10: Eight more persons were killed on the fifth day of the sectarian clashes in the Kurram Agency of the FATA. Hospital and tribal sources said that firing of missiles and shelling by mortar guns killed three people in the Pir Qayyum village, three in Balishtkhel, one more in Ibrahimzai and another in the Shingak village. The eight persons who died included **five Shias and three Sunnis**. Reports quoting people in Sadda, headquarters of Lower Kurram, said around 2,000 missiles had hit their town. Some 250 houses in Sadda were damaged.

...April 8: 16 more persons were killed in the Kurram Agency of FATA as sectarian clashes spread to most parts of the tribal region bordering Afghanistan. **Nine Shias and seven Sunnis** were reportedly killed in different villages of the Kurram Agency. The Shias who died included four in Pekar village, two in Chardiwar and Jalamay, two in Mallikhel and one in Karman. The dead Sunnis included five in the Boshera village and two in Sadda town. Among the five casualties in Boshera were three women and two children, all struck by mortar shells.

April 7: At least 40 persons were killed and an unspecified number of them wounded at **Parachinar and other parts of the Kurram tribal agency** in the FATA on the second day of sectarian clashes. Unconfirmed reports said the death toll was more than 40 and it was increasing due to the continuing clashes and the spread of fighting to hitherto peaceful villages.

April 6: ...Authorities imposed a curfew in Kurram Agency following sectarian violence in which three people were killed and the Army was called out to control the situation. Hospital sources said that three people were killed and 13 injured when **Shias** were attacked in an imambargah in the morning. Trouble erupted when **Shias** staged a demonstration outside their mosque against local Sunnis who allegedly chanted anti-**Shia** slogans during a religious rally last week ('Major incidents of terrorist violence in Pakistan, 1988-2007' (undated), South Asia Terrorist portal website <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/majorincidents.htm> – Accessed 25 June 2007 – Attachment 31).

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