

PRESS RELEASE

Persecution on the basis of faith condemned

Commission for Peace and Human Development (CPHD) has condemned the persecution of religious communities based on faith.

Expressing grief on the incidents which took place in Nowshehra and Karachi, in which a Hindu temple is ransacked and a shop run by Christian nuns was raided by police, in the name of religion, Waseem Anthony, executive director of the Commission said that such religious intolerance is a daily practice in the country and measures are not taken to curb this heinous practice.

He said that ransacking a Hindu temple in Nowshehra on June 28, to even the score for an alleged discretion of the Holy Book, in no way present the picture of a civilized society having religious tolerance and space for other faiths. "The irrationality of the action touches its height as a Hindu temple is pillaged for an alleged discretion by a Christian," he said.

Earlier on June 13, a bookshop run by the Daughters of Saint Paul, a religious congregation of the Catholic Church, in Saddar, Karachi was raided by preedy Station police and some of the CDs and videos they sell within the confines of their shop were taken into possession. A male worker at the bookshop was held for questioning for more than 24 hours and the nuns were harassed and intimidated. This was the result of the publication of baseless and unfounded reports in a few Urdu-language newspapers during the month of June. Following the appearance of these reports, the incident took place.

Some Urdu newspapers ran front-page reports alleging that Pakistani Christians were selling in the open market CDs and video-tapes about lives of Prophets. The paper claimed that the video and CD material amounted to character assassination of the Prophets.

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“According to the Catholic Church in Pakistan, the bookshop offers faith-enriching material for Christians. This includes books and films about religious and moral teaching. The contents of the audio, video and text-based material sold at the bookshop are in complete conformity with Christian teachings,” he said

He urged the government to take serious notice of the facts and take measures at administrative level as well as concsintizing the people for having respect and tolerance for other faiths. The government should work to repeal the laws like Blasphemy law, which are used to tangle innocent people and promote enlightenment in true spirit. He demanded the immediate release of the accused in Nowshehra case as police itself admitted that he is innocent. He said that the government should sincerely work for the establishment of a pluralist society.

He also urged the news media to check and verify the facts before publishing any news item and be watchful of the religious sensibilities of all faiths.

Waseem Anthony
Executive Director

July 1, 2005