



HRFP Fact-Finding Report on Francis-abad attack, Gujranwala

Proceedings of HRFP:

On 3rd April 2013, a mob of extremists and fundamentalists attacked on a Christian Colony named Francis-abad, Gujranwala (Punjab). HRFP conducted a fact-finding visit to Francis-abad, Gujranwala on 4th April, 2013 to monitor and report the actual situation of the prevailing threats and damages occurred to the Christian colony/community. The fact-finding visit was lead by the President HRFP with two HRFP staff members. The fact-finding team reached Francis-abad, Gujranwala at 3: 00 pm on Thursday 4th April and collected the facts and findings.

Francis-abad is a Christian concentrated colony of Gujranwala city located at Sheikhpura Road and it is the fourth biggest colony of Christian minority in Province Punjab. More than 3,000 Christian families are residing in this area. The population of the Christian colony living in locality is more than 25,000. There are three Churches in the Francis-abad colony and their names are 1. St. Francis Catholic Church, 2. Church of Pakistan, 3. Kingsway Presbyterian Church.



When the team of HRFP entered the locality of Francis-abad there was a situation of annoyance and fear in the environment and moving police vans were seen in the main street. The Christian residents of the colony were standing in the form of groups at different corners of their streets. The team while moving through the colony witnessed the grocery shops, vegetable shops, electronic shops, mobile shops, carpenter shops, hair salons, beauty salons and vehicles of the Christian people that were badly destroyed by the group of extremists. The stones and wooden

rods were seen near the walls and gate of Church. In the fact-finding visit, HRFP team met with the following persons in Francis-abad who shared their views,

a. Interview with Local Resident and Security Guard, Mr. Maqsood Bhatti:

To collect the detailed information about the incident, HRFP met with the local resident named Mr. Maqsood Bhatti aged 29, a security guard of St. Francis Catholic Church, Francis-abad. Maqsood Bhatti shared that On 2nd April, 2013 three residents of Francis-abad named Mehran Masih, Timothius Masih and Waqas Masih while coming back from Lahore to Gujranwala took motorized rickshaw (Qinqi) from bus stop to Francis-abad Colony. In their way to Francis-abad Colony, four Muslim men residents of neighbor village Naroki also sit on the same rickshaw. The clash between both the parties arose when one of the Christian boys asked the driver to turn on the Music. Meanwhile a Muslim passenger named Muhammad Mushtaq stopped them from playing music, saying it was forbidden in Islam, and that he should not show disrespect to the Muslim's faith. During this process, the driver turn on the music at which the Muslim boys said to the driver "Why you disregard our words and pay attention to the words of Chura's (Insulting word used for the Christians)". On this, an argument between both the parties took place which later turned into a scuffle between both the parties. HRFP came to know that Christian boys were beaten by them. In the meanwhile, passerby intervened and the Christian boys went to their homes, but the Muslim youth mobilized their friends from Naroki village by alleging that the Christian boys have disrespected Islam. Soon in the evening a mob from Naroki of around 50 boys came in Francis-abad Colony and they began shouting derogatory slogans against Christianity and Christians and they tried to provoke residents. After shouting and threatening to take revenge from the residents of Francis-abad, the Muslim youth returned to their village Naroki. After their warning, the Church and Christian community leaders of Francis-abad went to the nearby Police Post located in their area and informed the Police to provide protection to the residents of the colony as the extremists of Naroki Village has threatened them for taking revenge. The police ensured to Christian leaders that they would not let any person harm the colony and Churches and the matter would be resolved amicably. On this assurance they returned to their homes in Francis-abad colony.

Mr. Maqsood further shared with HRFP team that on 3rd April, 2013 at around 2:00 pm incited by calls from Mosque loudspeakers, the extremists of Naroki Village gathered and attacked the locality of Francis-abad. He shared that the mob were more than 500 in numbers. He shared they brutally attacked on the grocery shops, vegetable shops, electronic shops, mobile shops, carpenter shops, hair saloons, beauty saloons and vehicles of the Christian Community. He said the mob also made an attempt to attack on the St. Francis Catholic Church and other two Churches but the local Christian community gathered in huge numbers almost 400 to 500 and protect the boundaries of the Church.

Mr. Maqsood also reported to HRFP team that during the attack of extremists, numbers of Christians were injured and three persons of Francis-abad were badly tortured that causes serious injuries to them, their names are Asher Ashiq, Amin Masih and Shamoon Masih.

b. Interview with Local Resident Emmanuel Barkat:

The team of HRFP met with the local resident of Francis-abad named Mr. Emmanuel Barkat aged 49 and a government employee. On asking about the estimated amount of loss occurred to the residents of the colony, Emmanuel Barkat shared that mob has destroyed 18-20 shops, 2 Suzuki Bolans (vehicles), 12-15 Motorcycles and 2 Beauty Parlors of the Christian community. He further shared that the extremists also tried to attack on the Churches but the Christian community failed their plan by getting united in big numbers to protect the Churches. However they attacked on the people, homes and their businesses.

c. Interview with Local Resident Rehmat Khokar:

Rehmat Khokar, aged 55 is a resident of Francis-abad who shared that he is running the shop of vegetables and fruits and the extremists destroyed the counter of his shop and threw all vegetables in the air while they looted the money and fruits from my shop. He further shared that when he saw a mob equipped with weapons, stones and steel & wooden rods he fled away successfully.

d. Interview with Local Resident Raja Masih:

HRFP also talked with Raja Masih, aged 21. He shared that when the mob attacked on our colony my electronic accessories shop was luckily closed. He said, the extremist's mob broke our shops and vehicles in front of my eyes and "No one tried to stop the mobs from damaging our properties". He shared; on this situation some of the Christian residents came into the main Street and shouts loudly to scare them away. Our youth also came on the roads and confronted the extremists by standing in front of their doors and Church gates. He shared; the youth who confronted were of the view that, this time we are not going to let them repeat the tragedy of Gojra and Joseph Colony (Lahore) in our colony.

2. Participation in the Public Meeting at St. Francis Catholic Church:

After collecting information from the local witnessed persons the team of HRFP visited the St. Francis Catholic Church where the public meeting of Christian community was being held to strategize in tackling the situation. In the meeting, Parish Priest of St. Francis Catholic Church Fr. Ashraf Gill, Fr. Shakeel Ashraf, Pastor Akram Masih, Pastor Aslam and Local community leaders Mushtaq Masih, Emmanuel Barkat, Dr. Samuel John, S.P John, Shamaun Joseph and Emmanuel Atar Julius were present. More than 200 community members were present in the meeting. Parish Priest Rev. Fr. Ashraf Gill was giving briefing to the community to remain peaceful, calm and non-violent during this difficult time. Fr. Ashraf Gill told the participants that

he has met with Higher Police officials and Authorities and discuss the reservations and security concerns of Christian community that are related to their lives, properties, businesses and Churches.



Fr. Ashraf Gill also advised the Christian community to mobilize themselves and play their role in creating peace in the society. During the meeting, President HRFP Mr. Naveed Water also talked with local community and assures every possible support to the victims of this incident. He condemned the incident and said, together with the Civil Society Groups and local community, HRFP will work to expose the perpetrators of this incident.

3. Meeting with Church and Community Leaders:



The team of HRFP met with Church leaders and community leaders to discuss the issue. Fr. Ashraf Gill and Fr. Shakkell Inayat were met by HRFP team to know the actual happenings of the incident. Both Priests narrated the whole story of the incident. In the meeting, the HRFP team asked to Fr. Ashraf Gill about the role of Higher Police officials and authorities in decreasing the aggressive intensity of this incident. Fr. Ashraf Gill shared that CPO (City Police Officer) Gujranwala Mr. Abdul Razzaq Cheema promised to take serious looking into the matter and has ensured safety to Christian community and Churches. Fr. Ashraf Gill also shared that due to

previous many experiences of police negligence in different incidents against religious minorities, we have formed a Committee of 7 members who will coordinate with the community of Francis-abad and will make essential security arrangements for the residents and Churches. HRFP team met with the committee and discussed the circumstances with the following committee members, 1.Mr. Shamoon Joseph , 2.Mr. Emmanuel Atar Julius, 3.Dr. Samuel Julius, 4.Mr.Sadiq Khadim, 5.Pastor Aslam, 6. Fr. Ashraf Gill , 7.Fr. Phillip John

4. Meeting with the Victims and their families:

a. Meeting with the Victim Asher Ashiq and family:



The team of HRFP met with the Victim Asher Ashiq aged 18 and his family. Asher Ashiq is a son of Ashiq Masih. Ashiq Masih is a labor by profession and is having 6 Children named Asher 18 years (son), Asif 16 years (son), Mahanoor 12 years(daughter), Nisha 10 years(daughter), Anmol 8 years(daughter) and Ibrahim 6 years(son). Ashiq Masih shared with HRFP that his son (Asher Ashiq) was badly tortured by the group of extremists. He said that the head of his son was badly injured through stones and wooden rods by the extremists. A severe bleeding flows out from his head. After this injury, Asher was taken to District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital of Gujranwala and 15 stitches were given to his head. Ashiq also shared with HRFP in grief that when Doctors came to know about the incident's reasons, they refused to provide medication to his son. However on repeated requests and critical situation of Asher Ashiq, medication was provided to him.

b. Meeting with the Victim Amin Masih and family:

The team of HRFP also met with the Victim Amin Masih aged 28, owner of electronics shop. When the extremists attacked, Amin was busy in working at his shop. On seeing the aggressive mob, Amin Masih run towards his house without closing his shop for securing his live. While running towards his home one of the attackers threw hard wooden rod on him due to which he falls on the ground and his left leg was fractured. The mob also broke all the televisions of his shop.



c. Meeting with the Victim Shamoon Masih at DHQ Hospital:



HRFP visited District Headquarter (DHQ) Hospital of Gujranwala to meet with the victim Shamoon Masih aged 45 years who was affected badly by the extremist's mob and with the torture of two police men. Shamoon Masih shared with the team of HRFP that on 3rd April, 2013 when he was providing security to Francis-abad colony and Churches the mob attacked on him and other community. He further shared, the extremists threw him on the ground and starts kicking on his head, body and face. While he was in unconsciousness by the violence of mob, the two police men again beat him. At this, Shamoon Masih got faint and was taken to DHQ Hospital for medical treatment. Shamoon Masih was in the state of blood vomiting and nasal vomiting when he was brought to the hospital. The team also met with the wife of Shamoon Masih named Asia bibi and his brother Abbas Masih with his wife Gulshan bibi who shared their experience with us.

5.Meeting with on Duty Doctor Ijaz and a Staff Nurse Mrs. Zaree (Supervisor) of District Headquarter (DHQ) Hospital:

To ensure proper care and medication of the Victim Shamoon Masih, HRF team met with staff Nurse Zareen (supervisor) and on duty doctor Ijaz who shared the medical treatment proceedings and status of patient.

6.HRFP Findings:

1. Francis-abad a Christian populated colony was attacked by the 500 extremists of Naroki Village and around, on Wednesday 3rd April, 2013.
2. The argument between Christian and Muslim youth started on Tuesday 2nd April, 2013 due to playing of music.
3. Three Christian boys Mehran Masih, Timothius Masih and Waqas Masih were beaten on 2nd April, by the Muslim boys of Naroki village.
4. The mob looted & damaged 15 shops, damaged 2 Suzuki Balons, damaged 12 Motorcycles and looted & damaged 2 Beauty Parlors of the Francis-abad, Colony.
5. The mob attacked on St. Francis Catholic Church but the residents and youth gathered there and protected the Church.
6. The youth provided the security to the Church of Pakistan and Kingsway Presbyterian Church to protect them.
7. After attacking at the Francis-abad colony, the mob of extremists went to the nearby Police Post and asked them to lodge FIR against the Christian youth for disrespecting Islam. When the Police refused to lodge FIR, the mob attacked on the Police Post as well.
8. The number of people including the three residents of Francis-abad named Asher Ashiq, Amin Masih and shamoon Masih were badly tortured by the mob. Asher Ashiq got head injury and 15 stitches were given, Amin Masih's leg was fractured and Shamoon Masih got head & face injury and got number of injuries at his body.
9. Asher Ashiq and Amin Masih were injured due to attack of extremists, while Shamoon Masih was brutally beaten by mob and repeatedly beaten by two police men.
10. The police authorities were failed to provide proper security to the residents of Francis-abad on the day of attack on Christian community resulting in damage to properties and injuries to number of people.
11. When injured persons were brought to the DHQ hospital, the doctors refused to provide medication to the patients on knowing the happenings and that the patients belonging to Francis-abad colony. However after the continuous request of their parents, families and acquaintances, they were admitted and medication was provided to them.

12. The collective efforts are being made by the Gujranwala Police, higher authorities, Church leaders, community leaders, community and youth with some Islamic Clerics cooperation to normalize the situation.
13. A peace committee comprising of 7 members has been formed in Francis-abad colony to ensure peace, safety & security and strategize the situation.

Report Prepared & Issued by:

Human Rights Focus Pakistan
P.O.Box 295, GPO.Faisalabad.
Pakistan
www.hrfngo.org

Dated: April 10, 2013