



ICRD Monthly Update

March 4, 2019

Dear friends,

During the month of Muharram, one of the most sacred times of year in Islam, Muslims around the world gather together in observation and religious ritual. Second only in regard to Ramadan, this month is a time of peace and piety for the Islamic community. However, although many around the world honor this holy month without incident, this is not always the case in areas with stark sectarian division – such as Pakistan. On the tenth day of Muharram, Yom Ashura, Shi'a Muslims perform public processions as part of their religious observance. Tragically, these processions are often the target of violent attacks. Each year, participants are left badly beaten or even killed as they perform their religious rites.

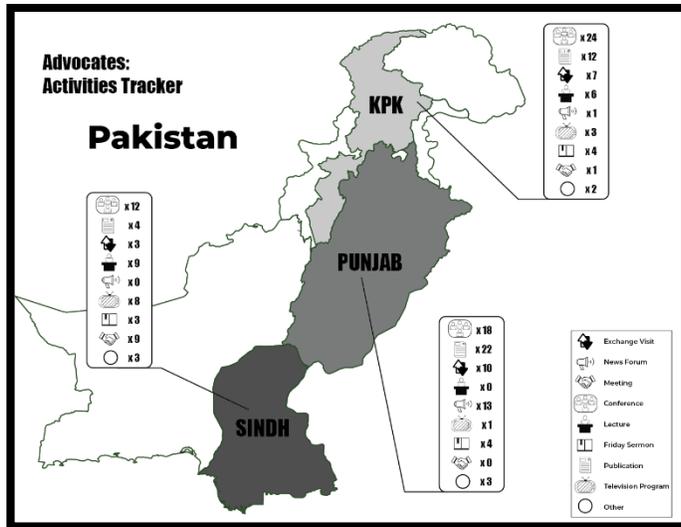
This violence draws deeper sectarian lines in local Pakistani communities, inspires retributive or revenge violence, and often shatters any previous progress made toward strengthening social cohesion. In response, Pakistani religious leaders – Sunni and Shi'a alike – are coming together to put an end to sectarian attitudes and sectarian violence in their communities. Recognizing the damage caused by sectarian conflict, these community leaders are hard at work, often putting their lives on the line, to be voices for sectarian harmony.



ICRD has spent the last several years supporting those Pakistani religious leaders who have committed their lives to ending sectarian violence. Beginning in 2015, ICRD began working alongside a network of Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith (Salafi), Barelvi, and Shi'a religious leaders to support their mission of countering sectarian attitudes in Pakistan. This network has written a narrative promoting religious tolerance, intersect harmony, and peace, and has spent the last few years sharing that message throughout the country. With ICRD support, network members have put on community dialogues, lectures, conferences, radio broadcasts, television programs, exchange visits, Friday sermons, and print media publications designed to spread the narrative.

“When Ulama of different sects visited to each other’s madrassahs (religious school) it created a lot of harmony, earlier on no one wanted to enter each other’s madrassah.”
– Participant from Punjab

In total, the network has conducted 183 outreach activities that have directly engaged 19,520 people. Indirect numbers of engagement have reached the millions when taking into account the impact of the narrative through television and radio broadcast. This fall, the network met for a



final meeting which was held in concert with high-level Pakistani government officials. Major figures, including representatives from the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), praised the efforts of the network.

In ICRD’s final evaluation of network activities, 90% of those interviewed acknowledged that sectarian violence and hatred had been reduced as a result of the network’s efforts. The group has firm plans to continue to spread the narrative and increase narrative outreach activities.

Religious leaders have a great capacity to inspire their communities to positive social action and collaborative peace efforts. Across sectarian divisions, people can come together and set aside their differences in service of peace. These network participants are the heroes of the work, standing side-by-side in the face of great adversity to proclaim that sectarian violence is not Islam and will not be allowed to win the day in Pakistan.

Warm regards,

James Patton

ICRD is making great strides in its February/March Giving Campaign! In these trying times and with the growing uncertainty caused by the government shutdown, ICRD has set a goal of raising \$100,000.00 by the end of March. As we continue to take our time-tested methodologies to new countries and prevent the spread of conflict and violent extremism around the world, there is increased pressure for our organization to staff-up, grow our office, and bring aboard new expert practitioners to build lasting and effective peace in the world. I implore you, using the “donate” button below, please give a gift today or sign up for our monthly recurring donor list. Together, we can help make faith part of the solution!

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