



## women's action forum خواتین محاذِ عمل پاکستان

Women's Action Forum Lahore, draws the PTI government's attention to incidents of criminal acts of violence committed against non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan including the violation of Article 20 of the Constitution by extremist groups. On June 29<sup>th</sup>, 50 year old Nadeem Joseph, succumbed to gunshot wounds at the Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar. A new resident in the Sawati Phattak area of Peshawar, where he had recently bought a house, Nadeem was first harassed by neighbours to leave the vicinity and then shot on grounds of being a non-Muslim. In purchasing property in the country of his birth, Nadeem Joseph exercised the right guaranteed to all citizens of Pakistan under Article 23 of the Constitution to acquire and manage movable and immovable property.

WAF is greatly surprised that political parties like PML- Q and JUI-F have challenged the building of the Mandir in Islamabad, thereby revealing their total disregard to the Constitution. In backing the forceful stoppage of work by extremist groups on the construction of the wall at the Shri Krishna Mandir's legally allocated site in Islamabad, these parties in fact have gone against Article 20 whereby (a) every citizen (has) the right to profess, practice and propagate his/her religion; and (b) every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions. Following a request by the Hindu residents of Islamabad, the Shri Krishna Mandir had been approved and sanctioned by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Under these circumstances, for the Prime Minister to retract his decision after protests by the religious lobby and to refer the matter to the Council of Islamic Ideology while citing lack of CDA approval of plans as a reason to stop construction, at best argues mala fide intentions and at worst the government's inability to maintain its own writ, particularly as provided under Article 20 of the Constitution, the CII has no role to play in this matter. WAF would like to remind the Prime Minister and the sitting government of their responsibility to ensure the safety, security and fundamental rights of all citizens regardless of difference of religious and sectarian differences. The government cannot run with the hare and in the same breath, hunt with the hounds; it cannot vociferously condemn the persecution of Muslim minority populations in Modi's India and violate the rights of non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan.

WAF urges the government to remove all blocks to the construction of the Shri Krishna Mandir, ensure justice for Nadeem Joseph, and protect the rights of citizens belonging to minority religions. It must also take effective steps to prevent further acts of such violence. The government cannot abdicate its responsibility towards its citizens. To do so is to condemn non-Muslim minority populations to a lifetime of insecurity and violence; grant impunity to perpetrators; promote extremist terrorism; and undermine its own credibility as an elected government.

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