

19 Reported Dead as Pakistanis Protest Muhammad Video

Monday 24 September 2012, by [TARIQ Farooq](#), [WALSH Declan](#) (Date first published: 22 September 2012).

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Violent crowds furious over an anti-Islamic video made in the United States convulsed Pakistan's largest cities on Friday, leaving up to 19 people dead and more than 160 injured in a day of government-sanctioned protests.

It was the worst single day of violence in a Muslim country over the video, "Innocence of Muslims," since protests began nearly two weeks ago in Egypt, before spreading to two dozen countries. Protesters have ignored the United States government's denunciation of the video.

Peaceful protests had been approved by Pakistan's government, which declared Friday a national holiday, the Day of Love for the Prophet Muhammad. The move was part of an effort to either control or politically capitalize on rage against the inflammatory video, which depicts Muhammad, the founder of Islam, as a sexually perverted buffoon.

Friday's violence began with the fatal shooting of a television station employee during a protest in the northwestern city of Peshawar, and was amplified through armed protests in the southern port city of Karachi that left 12 to 14 people dead, Pakistani news media reported.

By nightfall Geo, the leading television station, was reporting 19 deaths around the country.

Less violent protests occurred in other Muslim countries, exacerbated by the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad in a French satirical weekly.

In Bangladesh, several thousand Islamist activists took to the streets of the capital, Dhaka, waving banners and burning a symbolic coffin for President Obama that was covered with the American flag. "Death to the United States and death to French," they chanted.

Local television networks reported that a mob had ransacked and burned an Anglican church in Mardan in northwestern Pakistan. There were no reports that Christians had been killed or wounded.

In Tunisia, the government invoked emergency powers to outlaw all demonstrations, and American diplomatic posts in India, Indonesia and elsewhere closed for the day.

France closed embassies and other institutions in 20 countries while, in Paris, some Muslim leaders urged their followers to heed a government ban on weekend demonstrations.

In Pakistan, the streets started erupting early in Peshawar, where protesters burned two movie theaters. Two people, including the television employee, Muhammad Amir, were killed.

Mr. Amir's employer televised graphic footage of hospital staff members as they gave him emergency treatment shortly before he died, a broadcast that other Pakistani journalists condemned as insensitive and irresponsible.

Some protesters tried to reach the city's heavily guarded American Consulate, which has a strong Central Intelligence Agency component. By evening, hospital officials said, at least five people were dead and more than 50 wounded.

After Friday Prayer, more severe violence erupted in Islamabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan and Karachi, where normally bustling streets were instead filled with clouds of tear gas and the sound of gunfire.

Protesters in Karachi burned effigies, stoned a KFC and engaged in armed clashes with the police that left 14 people dead and more than 80 wounded by evening.

"An attack on the holy prophet is an attack on the core belief of 1.5 billion Muslims," Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf said in an address at a religious conference Friday morning in Islamabad. "Therefore, this is something that is unacceptable."

Mr. Ashraf called on the United Nations and the international community to formulate a law outlawing hate speech across the world. "Blasphemy of the kind witnessed in this case is nothing short of hate speech, equal to the worst kind of anti-Semitism or other kind of bigotry," he said.

But chaotic scenes in the streets outside suggested that if the government had aimed to harness public anger on the issue, it had failed.

In contrast, the day passed peacefully in neighboring Afghanistan, where officials had been preparing for the protests for days. Clerics at major mosques in the capital, Kabul, acceded to official requests that they preach peace, or another topic entirely. Police officers set checkpoints to search cars, and no street violence occurred.

A senior American official in Kabul said his Afghan counterparts had worked hard to mute the impact of the video through the week. That was, in part, a product of their previous experience with what he called "a desecration or religious event."

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Reporting was contributed by Alan Cowell from Paris; Julfikar Ali Manik from Dhaka, Bangladesh; Alissa J. Rubin from Kabul, Afghanistan; Salman Masood from Rawalpindi, Pakistan; Zia ur-Rehman from Karachi, Pakistan; and Waqar Gillani from Lahore, Pakistan.

* A version of this article appeared in print on September 22, 2012, on page A9 of the New York edition with the headline: Deadly Violence Erupts in Pakistan on a Day Reserved for Peaceful Protests.

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/22/world/asia/protests-in-pakistan-over-anti-islam-film.html?_r=0

A letter from Lahore: It is total madness out there

21 septembre 2012

Dear all,

It is total madness outside today in almost all the cities, The religious parties found an excuse in the shape of the disgraced film to make their political agenda public, burning of cinemas, attack on Press Clubs, burning of ordinary people,s motor bikes, cars, damaging private and public properties, attack on police, killing several in Karachi, Peshawar and other cities. This is not a protest but a sheer violence.

This is not a protest against a film by an American religious fanatic, this is a political agitation of the right wing parties on the name of religion to terrifying ordinary public about their power and violent tactics.

The Pakistan government has also to be blamed for this madness. Instead of a concrete action regarding the film, they went along with the fanatics to please them and declare today as a holiday for demonstrations and rallies. PPP government has learnt nothing. It is making one mistake after another [1].

Labour Party Pakistan condemn the violence against ordinary people and public property, press clubs and so on. It sympathise with those who lost their lives today in the violence generated by the religious parties.

We are totally against this film, this a provocative film and whole Pakistan is protesting, but the method of the religious parties had to be exposed.

Farooq Tariq

Footnotes

[1] See also on ESSF (article 26429): [Anti-Islam film: Pakistan minister offers bounty](#).