

How social media became a deadly trap for a minority group in Pakistan | Rest of World

By Alizeh Kohari

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Last fall, in a corporate office in Lahore, 25-year-old Siraj, a fintech professional just two months into his new job, listened in as his colleagues discussed a murder over lunch. Two months earlier, a teenage boy had walked into a judicial complex in Peshawar and shot 57-year-old Tahir Ahmad Naseem several times as Naseem stood trial for alleged blasphemy. Naseem, a U.S. citizen, died on the spot, his blood spattering upon onlookers.

Naseem had been born into the Ahmadiyya religious community, which emerged in the late 19th century in the Indian subcontinent, and currently counts upwards of four million members in Pakistan. Although Ahmadis identify as Muslim, the state of Pakistan has essentially labeled them heretics, and prejudice against the community is exceedingly common: A 2011 Pew survey found only 7% of Pakistanis considered Ahmadis to be Muslims. (Among those surveyed, 26% had never heard of the group or had no interest in commenting.)

[...]

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