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The angry mob blocked streets in protest

Islamic students have gone on a rampage in Pakistan over an allegedly blasphemous letter published in a newspaper on Monday.

The students, belonging to the hardline Islamic Jamaat-e-Islami party, burned down a cinema and rioted on the streets of Peshawar, close to the Afghan border.

The offices of the Frontier Post newspaper were set on fire on Tuesday in anger over the letter, which criticised the Prophet Mohammad's dealing's with Jews nearly 14 centuries ago.

Seven staff members, including two editors, were charged with blasphemy - an offence punishable by death in Pakistan.

Riot

Hundreds of Islamic students blocked roads and then attacked the cinema which they consider to be "un-Islamic".

Reports say they ripped out seats and destroyed the screen and projecting equipment, before setting the theatre on fire.

Police fired teargas and used batons to disperse the rioters.

One report said the mob blocked the main highway leading from Peshawar to the Pakistani capital, Islamabad, and forced several schools to close.

They chanted slogans such as "hang the culprits" and "blasphemy



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not allowed".

Controversy

Religious parties in Pakistan have been angered by the publication of the letter - apparently sent by e-mail - headed Why Muslims Hate Jews.

They said the letter attacked the founder of Islam, the Prophet Mohammad.

The Frontier Post has since publicly apologised for publishing the letter which, they said, was part of a conspiracy against the paper and the people of Pakistan.

The editor said he suspected two disgruntled staff members may have inserted the letter in the newspaper to harm it.

Pakistan's independent Human Rights Commission has condemned the letter but said the government needed to take a stand against the riots.

"When all is said and done, it is for the administration and the courts to determine the action that needs to be taken," the Commission said.

Under Pakistani law, if anyone is accused of blasphemy, the police are obliged to register a case and make an arrest.

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A man is rescued from the rubble in Anjar

Among those caught up in the Gujarat earthquake disaster is Vivek Iyer, a doctor based in the city of Ahmedabad. This is the second of his moving descriptions of the tragedy which has been forwarded to BBC News Online by his brother Vikram in the United States:

Dear Viki,

People are still scared of getting into high rises and are sleeping the whole night out in the open.

We had a tremor on monday morning at 6.30am which measured 5.9 on the Richter scale.

Things in Bhuj and Kutch are beyond description. The total population of Kutch may be 5-5.5 lakhs [500,00 and 550,000] so even considering a very conservative 20% dead, then the total figure would be one lakh [100,000].

There are some talukas [districts] like Rapar, Bhachau and Anjar where nothing is left standing in the whole place - not a single building so the death toll may be anywhere up to 300,000.

Avni's grandparents and mama were in Gandhidham. Avni's mama's house which was a four-storeyed flat has been reduced to rubble. However the news is that they are safe.

Avni's house in Ahmedabad has been declared unsafe by the municipal structural engineers.

They are carrying out some reinforcement with girders and may be it will be okay.

The building has developed cracks around the supporting pillars and so no one is taking any chances - otherwise the building is

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not as bad as it sounds.

The main reason why everyone is sleeping outside the high rise buildings is the fear of aftershocks.



“
 These things are really sad and no amount of money can ever cure them
 ”

Vivek Iyer



A collapsed religious monument in Bhuj

There have been hundreds of aftershocks felt in Bhuj and a few in Ahmedabad. Generally aftershocks are mild but no-one wants to take chances and so everyone is sleeping outside.

Another reason for concern is the amount of illegal construction. People have gone on to build 10 storeys when given permission for eight.

All the builders have gone underground and cannot be traced.

Our hospital is filling up with all the quake victims from Bhuj etc. Most of them have head and spinal injuries.

Just think about all those small kids who have lost both parents and have no-one to take care of them. Then there are old and feeble people.

These things are really sad and no amount of money can ever cure them.

Let's hope that the international community comes together irrespective of past problems and tries to help us out of a real big mess.

Food riots seem to have hit many places.

People are feeling afraid, but I am sure that as usual India will ride through this one also.

Hope and pray that help comes in time for many who are still buried alive under concrete.

Bye, Vivi.

“
 Just think about all those small kids who have lost both parents
 ”

Vivek Iyer

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