

Muslim Mob Beats Christians With Clubs at Pakistani Church

Good fences may make good neighbors, but in countries like Pakistan where religious tensions are high, even a simple dispute can become an excuse for violence.

Our international affiliate, the European Center for Law and Justice's (ECLJ) office in Pakistan, the Organization for Legal Aid (OLA), reported that on March 4, 2018, during a Sunday-morning service, a group of about 11 Muslim men wielding clubs attacked a group of about four Christians who were building a boundary wall around their church in Sahiwal, about 170 km south of Lahore, Pakistan.

The church itself is built on land owned by the provincial government, but the government has given possession of the land to the church. The Christians of the area had filed an application to the Board of Revenue to allot the land to build a church. The board agreed to sell the land to the Christians. While the process of the land transfer is still pending, the board gave possession of the land to the Christian community.

The incident arose after a local man named Rao Muhammad Tufail claimed that part of the land the church was built on belonged to him. Just over a week ago, on Sunday, he gathered a group of Muslim men armed with clubs to prevent the building of the church's perimeter wall.

A handful of Christians were working on the wall while a few others prayed inside. After hearing the shouts and insults targeted at the Christians working outside, those who were praying rushed outdoors to find their fellow believers being beaten with clubs. The police were called, but the attackers had dispersed by the time the police arrived.

Some Christians sustained injuries from the incident, but thankfully none of the injuries is major. Neither the wall nor the church sustained any damage. The members of the church were able to continue to erect wall in the presence of police after the legal possession of the land had been verified.

Various charges have been filed against the attackers, including trespass, assault, wrongful restrain, assault on women with intent to outrage their modesty, rioting with deadly weapons and unlawful assembly. However, no arrests have been made so far. Two days after the attack, the district police officer called Christian and Muslims together in his office and made the Muslims agree not to interfere in the church's property matter.

The OLA team is scheduled to meet with the pastor to discuss any legal assistance our team can provide.

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