

Snapshot: Sectarianism in Pakistan

As of the end February 2009.

Pakistan is again coming in the grip of savage sectarian violence. According to various reports, the sectarian violence sharply increased by 55% from year 2004 and the 18% of the victims include women and children. In the mid 1980s, this all started as an ideological discussion that was followed by sporadic acts of violence. But now, this has converted in a large scale and fully blown war all across Pakistan in which tens of thousands have been killed and hundreds die every year. This violence has killed everybody from children to elderly and successive governments have clearly failed to control this menace that is a smudge on the face of an Islamic Republic. Governments have tried to cap this menace by establishing many peace committees but these efforts appear to have born little fruit.

In year 1989, a total of 67 incidents of sectarian violence were reported that claimed 51 lives including 18 women and children while 102 were reported injured. Five years later in 1994, 162 incidents were reported in which 73 persons lost their lives while 326 were severely injured.

Figures reported in 2004 were even greater: 187 were killed and 350 were reported injured in nearly 200 attacks all across Pakistan.

Reports in 2008 stated that there were a total 306 number of sectarian attacks were carried out, nearly 500 people lost their lives and 800 were reported injured. The casualty rate of women and children was 40% of the total victims.

According to a report of the Interior Ministry, 5,000 persons applied for asylum in foreign countries citing the threat to their lives in Pakistan because of their religious views.

What are the society and the government doing about it?