



## The Peaceful Month of Muharram in Pakistan

**PEF 'Peace Advocates' mobilize their Communities to raise awareness and stop violent  
Sectarianism**

Pakistan has witnessed violence and bloodshed in the month of Muharram ul-Haram (first month of a Muslim Calendar) in recent years where the Shia processions were targeted by terrorists in major cities of Pakistan. This year, the Muharram processions in all major cities of Pakistan culminated peacefully. Besides foolproof security measures by the state, religious leaders, members of peace committees and elected representatives were involved to promote religious harmony and utilize their capabilities to maintain the environment of brotherhood, accommodation and tolerance in this month.



لاہور جامعہ احسان الرحیم میں کل مساکین پورڈ کے اجلاس کے موقع پر مختلف مذاہب کے علماء کرام ہاتھوں میں ہاتھ ڈالے اظہارِ یکجہتی کر رہے ہیں

PEF Peace advocate from Salafi school of thought is addressing Shia community at their Imam Bargah in Gujranwala.

Peace advocates from all Muslim sects expressing commitment to stand together to preserve peace and fight sectarianism in the month of Muharram ul Haram in Lahore

PEF 'Peace Advocates' (religious leaders who are extensively trained by PEF on Sectarian reconciliation) organized more than 200 community-based activities to curtail the sectarian violence, hate speech, incitement to violence against any sect and maintain peace during the month of Muharram-ul-Haram. These religious scholars from diverse sects from Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhunkhawa provinces, actively worked for disseminating a Narrative of Sectarian Reconciliation and organized community based teams to report any trouble or potential conflicts. Peace advocates also wrote articles in their local newspapers and utilized social media to amplify the narrative of peaceful coexistence and respect for religious freedom of all faiths .

*"I had several stereotypical and biased images of people who belong to other sects, those who have studied in modern secular institutes, those who wear modern dress and those who have no beard. I used to think that these people are not to be talked with. Through this workshop I have discovered that the people who belong to other sects can also lead a moral life and they too had valuable knowledge which I badly lack. I have discovered humanity and great learning in my Shiite brothers. I have made a promise with myself that I would dedicate my whole life, my madaris and my every moment to spread message of peace, harmony and brotherhood. This workshop has been a turning point in my life."* **(Israr Gul Haqqani, Teacher at Madrassa Taleem ul Quran)**



## Narrative for Sectarian Reconciliation

### Religious Leaders Advocating and Strengthening Democracy in Pakistan

The Peace and Education Foundation is successfully mobilising Pakistani religious leaders to advocate for democratic values in local communities. The purpose of the project is to address the misperceptions of the democratic system and values by the religious community. Often, the religious community and a large number of religious leaders perceive the democratic system as an innovation of the West, working against Islamic values. In the first phase of the project, PEF conducted a series of capacity-building workshops in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Islamabad region to engage madrasah teachers and mosque leaders. Scholars, print and electronic media professionals, and analysts delivered various sessions during these workshops.

The trained advocates conducted Understanding Democracy workshops within their communities and engaged more than 750 members of their communities thus far. Moreover, through media

articles, social media and blogs published in regional or national news forums reached well over 25,000 people.

## Religious Leaders participating at PEF Seminar on Democracy and Pluralism

PEF is now working to engage more religious leaders for deeper and wider level of awareness building, focusing on democratic citizenship, democratic values and increasing support for democracy and human rights.



## Eliminating the Sectarian Hatred and Space Through Intersect Exposure Visits to Madrasahs in Faisalabad

*“The sectarian divisions has deepened in our society and even the followers of one sect do not like to meet the followers of other sects, often resulting in violent confrontation. Urgency is in promoting intra-sectarian reconciliation and harmony in the society at large. Working as a Peace champion for PEF in local community, I observed that PEF training workshops, and seminars provide a platform for religious leaders of diverse sect to interact with each other. Opposing sectarian leaders now visit each other Mosques and madrassah which provides them with deeper exposure and insights which is significant in reducing the sectarian prejudices and violence.” (Dr. Abdul Hafeez, a PEF peace champion from Faisalabad)*



Dr. Abdul Hafeez organized a series of four exposure visits to the prominent madrasahs of Faisalabad belong to all major Muslim sects. He faced numerous challenges as the administration

of these madrasahs was hesitant to invite people of other sects and the selected participants from all sects were also reluctant to visit the madrasah of the other sect. This hesitance and reluctance was due to the prevailing mutual misperceptions of religious community. But, it was made possible due to his constant efforts and trust building measures. This experience was not only unique for the madrasah teachers but also for their students who were amazed to see prominent madrasah heads and teachers from other sect among them and their own teachers are giving them respect, since they were told that followers of other sects are not good Muslims. Dr. Abdul Hafeez acknowledged that the seemingly impossible experience happened due to the leadership skills provided by PEF to Imams and other religious leaders.

## University and Madrasah Youth Engagement

*“All my thinking about universities and my approach towards society has changed”*

Umair from Jamia Usmaniya

### Building Bridges and restoring trust between madrassa and university students

Traditional Madrassah and modern Universities in Pakistan have had troubled relations for decades that have lead to trust deficit between two systems of education and extreme isolation resulted in millions of youths to spend their energies in forming hate groups and wreaking havoc in society. To bridge this gap of madrasah and modern education



system, the Peace and Education Foundation (PEF) through its Youth Engagement program called Society for Peace and Conflict Resolution (SPACM) conducted a range of activities engaging more than 800 students from madrassahs and universities. These interactive activities provided exposure and skill-building opportunities for madrassah and university students. While gaining greater appreciation for modern education, most madrassah students who participated in this project desire to attend the university for further their education and carriers. This program is



building the foundation for university and madrassah youth to learn from each other, to work together to serve their communities and to combat their prejudices about each other. Through this project hundreds of University and madrassah students serve their communities together by cleaning communities to holding sporting events together. PEF is planning to continue such interactions between University and madrassah youth in coming years.



**Madrassa & University students volunteering together to clean their communities**

## **List of Partner universities**

- International Islamic University
- University of Haripur
- University of Malakand
- Government college university Faisalabad
- University of Peshawar
- University of Kohat
- Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan