

Persecution of Press in Sindh: Case Study of *Al-Waheed* and *Watan* Newspapers during Political Movements, 1920-22

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the persecution of press in Sindh during the currency of Pan-Indian political movements known as *Khilafat* and Non-Cooperation Movements, during 1920-22. In this regard the case study of two popular newspapers, *Al-Waheed* and *Watan*, were conducted to understand the mechanism of monitoring and controlling the newspapers in Sindh by the colonial rulers. The study explores the political landscape of Sindh in particular and India in general during those turbulent times as well as examines the state of journalism in the province at that time. With the help of the case study of two popular newspapers, the study highlights the mechanism adopted by the colonial government for monitoring and controlling the press in Sindh. In this regard the archival official records as well as translations of the critical articles published in those newspapers were accessed at the India Office Records (IOR) section of British Library, London. The methodology adopted for the current study mainly comprised historical, analytical and content analysis. The study concludes that the press in Sindh faced severe hardships at the hands of the British government through a coercive mechanism with active involvement and concurrence of all the capitals of Sindh's governance, i.e. Karachi, Bombay, Delhi and London. The study is first of its kind that highlights the role played and sacrifices rendered by press in Sindh for the freedom of press during colonial rule in 1920-22.

Introduction

Sindh, like rest of India, went through a heightened phase of political frenzy during the period from 1920 to 1922, in the aftermath of World War-I. This was the time when two political movements, the *Khilafat* and Non-Cooperation, having considerable following amongst Muslim and Hindu communities of India, respectively, had struck the subcontinent like a thunderbolt. As both the largest religious communities came on same page against the British government in India, the country went through a phase of political turbulence. The subcontinent 'experienced the politics of mass mobilization-large scale

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public meeting, *hartals* (strikes and shutdowns), *Satyagraha* (demonstrations and ‘sit-ins’), processions and protests’.¹

As far as the grievances of the Muslim community of Sindh were concerned, they were unhappy, like their brethren in the rest of India, over the government’s perceived non-fulfillment of the commitments relating to safeguarding the institution of *Khilafat* in Turkey after close of the World War.

When Turkey entered the First World War as a German ally, some Indian Muslims had raised objections to Muslim troops being used against their ‘spiritual leader’. The British had largely allayed these by insisting that the caliphate would be respected in any eventual peace treaty.²

However, the ‘Treaty of Sevres revealed that the caliph would indeed lose out the extent of ceding control over the holy places of Islam to the Arabs’.³ This prompted Muslims of Sindh as well as rest of India to swing into action under the leadership of Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar⁴ and Shoukat Ali Johar, popularly known as Ali Brothers.

An offshoot of the *Khilafat* Movement was the *Hijrat* Movement. Though Pan-Indian in nature, it had a strong following in Sindh.

The *ulema* pronounced *fatwas* that the territories ruled by the British were *Darul Harb* (the zone of war i.e. against the Muslims) and that it was the duty of Muslims to emigrate to *Darul Islam* (the zone of Islam or peace). As a result of this dictum thousands of Muslim families sold off their properties, particularly in Sind and Punjab, and set off for ‘zones of peace’, in this case, Afghanistan, to live in Muslim society.⁵

The sentiments amongst the Muslims in Sindh were so high that even some of the well-educated persons who had received their education in England also became part of the *Khilafat* Movement. One such case was that of Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo who led the *Khilafat* and its offshoot *Hijrat* Movements in Sindh.

¹ Hamida Khuhro, *Mohammad Ayub Khuhro: A Life of Courage in Politics* (Karachi: Ferozsons, 1998), 37.

² John Keay, *India: A History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2000), 479.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Allah Bakhsh Yusufi, *Maulana Mohammed Ali Jauhar: The Khilafat Movement* (Karachi: Mohamedali Educational Society, 1980), 5.

⁵ Khuhro, *Mohammad Ayub Khuhro*..., 38.

In June 1920, he organized a successful three days *Khilafat* conference in Larkana and played host to the luminaries of Indian politics, the Ali brothers, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad and many others.⁶

At the height of this movement, the first *Hijrat* train from India set off from Larkana under the leadership of Barrister Junejo, who had been declared as leader of the migrants under title '*Rais al Muhajireen*', amidst great emotional scenes on 9 July 1920.

Another movement that swayed India during that period, and considerably influenced the Hindu community of Sindh, was Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement. Hindus of Sindh were mostly backing it as it was couched in Hindu religious terms of *Swaraj* or *Ram Rajya*, for self-rule and ideal government. This 'did not echo in the heart of the Mussalmans of Sindh'.⁷ The aims and objectives of this movement were to completely isolate the British rulers and separate them from their sympathetic Indian aristocracy. Under this movement the 'medals were to be returned, appointments declined, schools and government institutions boycotted'.⁸ In fact, it challenged the entire edifice of the British government in India.

Like *Khilafat* Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement also drew roots from the World War.

At the outbreak of World War-I, the Indian political leadership had offered assistance to the colonial government in the war effort and they had hoped that India would be substantially advanced on the road to self-government after the war.⁹

However, the autonomy granted under Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 fell short of their expectations. Hence both the Muslim and Hindu communities of India were alienated from the British rulers for their separate sets of reasons. 'Hindus and Muslims were fairly launched not upon a common struggle but upon a joint struggle; they worked together but not as one'.¹⁰ Nevertheless, this brought a semblance of unity amongst the two largest religious communities of Sindh against the British rulers.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Keay, *India: A History*....

⁹ Khuhro, 37.

¹⁰ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

Journalistic horizons

Sindh had developed a vibrant press by that time, with Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and Shikarpur serving as the centers of journalism. In addition to English, several newspapers used to be published in Sindhi by both Muslim and Hindu publishers and editors. Barring a few, most of the newspapers were either neutral or had leanings towards the government. However, the launch of *Al-Waheed* newspaper, which 'came out in highly charged days of *Khilafat* movement',¹¹ changed the scenario as it published highly critical articles against government and its policies.

The name of *Al-Waheed* newspaper was drawn from the name of the then reigning caliph, Sultan Waheeduddin of Turkey. Businessman and philanthropist 'Haji Abdullah Haroon was to be the publisher of the paper'.¹² A person with name Shaikh Abdul Aziz, who owned a printing press in Sukkur, 'decided to shift the press to Karachi in order to bring out *Al-Waheed*.' The choice for the editor fell on 'young Qazi Abdur Rahman, a zealous worker of the *Khilafat* Movement who had just passed his B.A from Junagadh and was one of the only four persons from Sindh to have completed their graduation'.¹³ 'Maulana Din Mohammad Wafai was appointed as the first assistant editor of the paper and was later to become its editor'.¹⁴ With this composition and set up, '*Al-Waheed* came into existence on 15th March 1920'.¹⁵

Soon after its launch, *Al-Waheed* achieved unprecedented popularity among the people of Sindh.

Al-Waheed started having such a hold on the minds of the people that the sentiments of the writers became the sentiments of the Muslims of Sind. It became a requisite for all Sindhi Muslims to read *Al Waheed* and its circulation at that time in a backward province like Sind, with a low literacy rate, went up to 5,000.¹⁶

¹¹ Nisar Ahmed Zuberi, *Muslim Press in Sindh and Pakistan Movement: Role of Sindh in Creation of Pakistan* (Karachi: Sindh Madressatul Islam, 1998), 86.

¹² Keay, 91.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 92.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Keay, 93.

Since its inception the paper enjoyed great respect and credibility amongst masses. The paper was ‘venerated by the people in an almost religious way, whose every word was taken as gospel truth’.¹⁷

In order to counter the narrative given in *Al-Waheed* and other anti-government newspapers, the British government encouraged publication of pro-government newspapers. These newspapers used to immediately provide a counter narrative in response to the articles published in newspapers like *Al-Waheed* and *Watan*. Some important publications that followed government line were ‘Sindh Wasi, Khair Khoah, Daily Gazette and Al-Haq’.¹⁸ Another newspaper to counter the propaganda unleashed by *Al-Waheed* was launched by the *Zamindars* of Sindh under the title *Sachai*. But the handicap of these newspapers was that they had ‘very limited readership and were no substitute for *Al-Waheed* whose very name had become synonymous with Sind’.¹⁹

Case of *Al-Waheed* with Kazi Abdur Rehman as editor

From its very beginning, the tone and tenor of *Al-Waheed* newspaper was anti-government and critical of its policies. The first action against the paper was taken as early as July 1920, just four months after it started its publication. It was asked to furnish a security deposit of two thousand rupees, which was ‘a big amount at that time and difficult to raise for a paper like *Al-Waheed*’.²⁰ Finding no other way, the paper published an appeal in an editorial on 29th July requesting the people to contribute generously as to keep the paper alive. This appeal was responded to sympathetically by the people and the paper was able to raise enough funds to cater for its financial needs.

This had a tremendous effect and donations started pouring in from all parts of the province and a large amount was collected, not only enough to pay off the security deposit, but enough was left over to meet any similar situation in the future.²¹

But, these measures could not deter the paper from publishing the contents which were critical of the government. During succeeding few months, the Government in Sindh identified three articles that warranted legal action against the newspaper. These articles were ‘The

¹⁷ Zuberi, 89-90.

¹⁸ Shahida Kazi, *Role of Sindh in Creation of Pakistan* (Karachi: Sindh Madressatul Islam Press, 1998), 97.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 93.

²¹ Ibid.

condition of Muslims and their fate’;²² ‘Protection of Khilafat: An assembly of 30 thousand Mohammadans’;²³ and ‘The question of councils and titles to Mohammadans’.²⁴ The Government of Sindh forwarded these articles with their English translations to the Government of Bombay, which referred them to the Remembrancer of Legal Affairs (RLA) for legal opinion.

The acting RLA, Mr R. N. Milne, in his report dated 27th October 1920, regarding the first article, stated:

This asserts that the Government are guilty of barbarous atrocities comparable to those of mediaeval barbarians; they have broken their faith, insulted mosques and indulged in illegal measures of repression.²⁵

Giving his opinion he stated that the intention of the article ‘is clearly to excite hatred and disaffection against the Government and section 124-A of Indian Penal Code would apply’. Similarly, he found rest of the two articles also objectionable and advised for prosecution.²⁶

Based on these recommendations, on 15 November 1920 the Governor-in-Council of Bombay Presidency passed an order, which was notified by Mr. J. Crerar, Home Secretary of Bombay Government, authorizing the district Superintendent of Police (SP) Karachi to register a case against the editor of the newspaper. The Order read:

Under the provisions of section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, Mr. John Court Curry, Acting District Superintendent of Police, Karachi, is hereby authorised by his Excellency the Governor in Council to make a complaint against Abdur Rehman walad Muhammad Sidik, printer and publisher of the newspaper called the ‘Al Wahid’, under section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code in respect of the

²² *Al-Waheed*, Karachi. ‘The condition of Muslims and their fate’. Translation of article published on 14 September 1920. Folder ‘Sedicious literature: report on the prosecution of the printer and publisher of the Al-Waheed newspaper of Karachi, India Office Records File 8361 (IOR/L/PJ/6/1719)’ at British Library, London, UK.

²³ *Al-Waheed*, Karachi. ‘Protection of Khilafat: An assembly of thirty thousand Mohammadans’, translation of article published on 18 September 1920. India Office Records File, Ibid.

²⁴ *Al-Waheed*, Karachi. ‘The question of councils and titles to Mohammadans’. Translation of article published on 06th October 1920. Ibid.

²⁵ Remembrancer of Legal Affairs. *Opinion of the RLA dated 27th October 1920*, ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

three articles entitled (1) The condition of the Muslims and their fate, (2) Protection of Khilafat and (3) The question of Councils and titles to Mohammadans, published in the issues of the said newspaper dated, respectively, the 14th September 1920, the 18th September 1920, and the 6th October 1920.²⁷

Same day, i.e. on 15 November, the Home Secretary of the Bombay government wrote also to the Home Secretary of central government of India in Delhi, informing him about all the developments in the case with copies of all the relevant documents.²⁸ The letter must have taken some time in reaching Delhi from Bombay, keeping in view the communication systems of those times. Still within two weeks all the process and perusals of the documents had been carried out and on 30th November 1920, the Home Secretary of the central Indian government in Delhi wrote a letter to Sir William Duke in London who was serving as Under Secretary of State for India, informing him of the details of the case and enclosing complete set of documents.²⁹ Thus, all the four political capitals of colonial Sindh, Karachi, Bombay, Delhi and London, were on board regarding articles written in Sindhi against the government as well as the punitive action being taken against the offending newspapers and their editors/ publishers.

While the case forwarded by Commissioner in Sindh was still in process at Bombay, *Al-Waheed* continued publishing articles against the government. It compelled the Commissioner in Sindh to forward another case against the newspaper, this time with eight objectionable articles with their English translation. Same process followed and the RLA was asked about his opinion. Mr. A.C. Wild, who served as RLA at that time, opined in his note dated 10th December that out of eight referred articles, three with titles 'Why should government schools be boycotted', 'Hindu and Musalman Brethren' and 'The indispensability of Non-Cooperation,' two of them published on 16 October and third one on 2 November, were fit for prosecution.³⁰ The detailed opinion of the RLA was:

²⁷ Home Secretary, Government of Bombay to SP Karachi. *Order dated 15 November 1920 Under Section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898*, *ibid*.

²⁸ Home Secretary, Government of Bombay to Home Secretary, Government of India. *Letter dated 15th November 1920*, *ibid*.

²⁹ Home Secretary, Government of India to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India, London. *Letter dated 30th November 1920*, *ibid*.

³⁰ Remembrancer of Legal Affairs. *Opinion of the RLA dated 10th December 1920*. to Home Secretary, Government of India. *Letter dated 15th November 1920*, *ibid*.

The first article refers to Government as enemies of Islam, the tyrannous rulers of India and the enslavers of Mother India. It clearly falls under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code as an attempt to excite disaffection towards the Indian Government... The second article... says that Indian life commends no more respect in the estimation of Government than the life of animals, and gives instances of the Government's disregard for the feelings of Indians... The third article is mainly directed against England and the British government. It is not a suitable article for prosecution... The fourth article refers to Government as iniquitous, steeped in sin, etc. It clearly falls within the proviso of section 124-A.³¹

After giving opinion on all the articles, the RLA opined that On the whole it would appear proper to issue sanction in respect of articles 1, 2 and 4. The other articles may be referred to and probably will be referred to by the Prosecution to show the tone of the paper.³²

As the new articles were found more objectionable than the previous set of the three, the RLA was of the view that the 'former sanction order of November 15th 1920 will serve as a precedent for the sanction order on this case mutatis mutandis'.³³ Four days later, on 14 December 1920, the Home Secretary of Bombay government, on behalf of the Governor, issued sanction in the name of SP Karachi, James Barrow Jenkins, to register a complaint against editor Abdur Rehman on account of publishing three objectionable articles.³⁴ Same day, a set of entire correspondence was forwarded to the central Home Secretary in Delhi,³⁵ who forwarded the same to the Under Secretary for India in London on 23 December 1920.³⁶

On receiving the sanction orders from Bombay government, SP Karachi Jenkins filed the complaint on 23 December and the Commissioner in Sindh appointed an Indian Civil Service (ICS) Officer,

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Home Secretary, Government of Bombay to SP Karachi, *Sanction Order dated 14th December*, India Office Records File 8361.

³⁵ Home Secretary Government of Bombay to Home Secretary Government of India. *Confidential letter dated 14th December 1920*, *ibid.*

³⁶ Home Secretary Government of India to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for India, London. *Letter dated 23rd December 1920*, *ibid.*

Mr. Acott, who was serving as first class magistrate in Karachi, to proceed the case under title 'King Emperor versus Abdul Rehman'. The magistrate immediately issued a warrant of arrest of the editor, who was arrested by the police on Christmas day and put up in a lock-up, where he dwelled till the conclusion of the proceedings. After spending about ten days in lock-up during the Christmas holidays, when the business of the government started, 'the first hearing of the case took place on the 4 January'.³⁷

The accused editor, without a legal counsel to assist him, requested for postponement of the case hearing until the 15 January as he wished to have copies of all the documents placed on record against him. The request was granted, and a charge was framed against him in respect of the three offending articles. The editor pleaded 'non-guilty' in response to the allegations put forwarded by the public prosecutor for Sindh. The magistrate concluded the case in just one day and adjourned the court for pronouncement of the judgment, which was delivered on 20th January, 1921.³⁸

In the judgment, the magistrate, in line with the opinion of RLA, found objectionable material in the various issues of the newspaper and was convinced that the editor deserved strict punishment. But his age had a softening effect on him. 'The question of his sentence is a more difficult one. He is aged 22 and the whole of the evidence and his own behavior show that he has no mental balance, or discretion.... The offence of which he has been found guilty is an extremely serious one and is punishable with transportation for life... but I think that taking into consideration his youth, in-experience, and general circumstances... a comparatively light sentence will be sufficient to punish him for his offences and it is to be hoped deter him from committing others in future... I therefore order him to undergo twelve months rigorous imprisonment for each offence, the sentences to run concurrently' concluded the magistrate.³⁹

As if that was not enough, four days later, on 24 January the government also decided that the 'security of rupees two thousand (Rs. 2,000) deposited by you and all copies of the said issues of the said newspaper, wherever found, to be forfeited to His Majesty'. But the

³⁷ PA to the Collector and First Class Magistrate Karachi to the Government of Bombay. *Note dated 27th January 1921 on institution, progress and decision of the court*, *ibid*.

³⁸ Collector and First Class Magistrate, Karachi. *Judgement dated 27th January 1921 in the case 'King emperor versus Abdul Rehman*, *ibid*.

³⁹ *Ibid*.

severest of all these punitive actions perhaps was the banning of the newspaper by cancelling its declaration. In a notice dated 24 January 1921, issued by the Home Secretary of Bombay government, the editor was informed that his newspaper's 'declaration under the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867, will be deemed to be annulled after the expiry of ten days from the date thereof'.⁴⁰

On completion of the proceedings and other actions, the Home Secretary of Bombay government informed the central government of India in Delhi, on the same day through telegram stating that the 'publisher of '*Al Wahid*' newspaper convicted on all three charges and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment on each charge, sentences to run concurrently'.⁴¹ The subsequent letter gave complete information about forfeiting of security deposit, newspaper issues as well as annulment of the declaration of the newspaper. This entire information was again forwarded by the Indian central government to the Under Secretary of State for India in London.

Case of *Al-Waheed* with Din Mohammad Wafai as editor

After its closure for about one and a half year, when its editor Kazi Abdul Rahman came out of prison, *Al-Waheed* again started its publication in May 1922, initially with same editor. However, shortly afterwards editor Kazi left the paper in order to take up more active political work and was replaced by another stalwart of that time, Maulana Din Mohammad Wafai. But, the change of editor had no effect on the newspaper's anti-government policies. Under the new editor, the newspaper published several articles in its July and August issues, which were highly objectionable from the point of view of the Commissioner in Sindh.

The proverbial last straw on the back of camel proved to be an article published on 29 August 1922 under title 'The Government's Heroism on the Frontiers', which was highly critical of the government's act of bombing the Mahsood tribesmen in the frontier region. Accordingly, the Commissioner in Sindh wrote a confidential letter to the Home Secretary of Bombay government on 29 September 1922 stating that he had 'consulted the Public Prosecutor for Sind regarding this article, and that officer advises that it comes within the preview of section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code'. The Commissioner also

⁴⁰ Government of Bombay, Home Secretary. *Notice dated January 24, 1921 under section 4 of the Indian Press Act 1910*. India Office Records File 8361.

⁴¹ Ibid.

lamented the fact that despite the change of the editor, the paper's tone 'has been bitterly hostile to the British Government, which it attacks on the lines usual to the fanatical *Khilafatist* press'.⁴²

The Commissioner was of the opinion that the paper was 'doing an immense amount of mischief in stirring up hatred against Government among the Musalman Community in Sind' and recommended the prosecution of editor Din Muhammad under section 124.A Indian Penal Code. He requested the government to authorize the police to register a criminal case against the erring editor.⁴³ As usual the matter was referred to RLA who endorsed the opinion of the Commissioner. When the matter was put up to the Governor, he authorized SP Karachi for registration of case against Maulana Din Mohamed Wafai.⁴⁴ Henceforth same process of official communication from Government of Bombay to Government of India⁴⁵ and from Government of India to Under Secretary of State for India in London followed.⁴⁶

Case of Watan Shikarpur with Lilaram N. Pherwani as editor

The scrutiny of contents in Sindhi newspapers as well as punitive actions against them for being critical of the government was not just confined to the editors and publications published in capital of Sindh, Karachi, but even far off places like Shikarpur. One such case was that of *Watan* newspaper edited by Lilaram N. Pherwani, who was also elected President of the Shikarpur Congress Committee.⁴⁷ The local authorities found at least five articles of 'seditious nature' published in the newspaper during the months of April and May 1922. The identified

⁴² Commissioner-in-Sind. *Confidential letter No. S.171.C of 1922 dated 29th September, 1922*. India Office Records File 5972.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Home Secretary, Government of Bombay. *Order dated 1st October 1922 to the District Superintendent of Police (SP) Karachi to register case against Din Muhammad Wafai, editor Al-Waheed*. India Office Records File 5972....

⁴⁵ Home Secretary, Government of Bombay to Home Secretary Government of India. *Letter No. 2033.Poll dated Poona, the 12th October 1922*, *ibid*.

⁴⁶ Home Secretary, Government of India to His Majesty's Under Secretary for India, London. *Confidential letter no. 162, dated Simla, the 19th October 1922*, *ibid*.

⁴⁷ Commissioner in Sind to Home Secretary, Government of Bombay. *Confidential Memorandum No. 623 of 1922, dated 27th June 1922 on the subject of 'Prosecution of the editor of the Watan newspaper for sedition'* Folder under title 'Prosecution for sedition of L.N. Pherwani, editor of the Watan newspaper of Shikarpur, Sind. India Office Records File No. 4409 (IOR/L/PJ/6/1817) British Library, London, UK.

articles were: 'Map of India showing places where troops have fired on crowds' (5 April 1922), 'As is the King so are the subjects' (26 April 1922), 'Mahatma Gandhi' (26 April 1922), 'When should a Revolution be made' (24 May 1922) and 'the auspicious Id' (24 May 1922).⁴⁸

As per procedure, the Commissioner in Sindh approached the Government of Bombay vide his letter dated 27 June 1922, requesting for the requisite direction to the SP to get the case registered against the editor as well as permission for prosecution. He further informed that the editor in question was 'a well known Shikarpur agitator' and that the 'paper which he edits is consistently objectionable in tone'.⁴⁹ The governor duly allowed the request vide order dated 7 July.⁵⁰ This put into motion of the prescribed procedure of registration of case by SP against the editor and commencement of trial in the court of magistrate.

In Lilaram Narsinghdas Pherwani's case, the District Magistrate of Sukkur, Mr. J.E.B. Hoston, was appointed as the judge. During the proceedings of the case the accused editor was presented before the magistrate where he defended himself. However, the magistrate was not convinced with the defense of the accused and observed in his judgment that 'his sole object as Editor of the *Watan* has been to excite disaffection against the Government and to bring it into hatred and contempt'. Dissecting the contents of the articles, the magistrate observed that the

'purport of the second article is that all the sorrow of India, her sufferings, and the wrong doings of her children are due to the Raja – that is to say not to the ruler himself, His Majesty the King Emperor, but to the Government established under him. The Government are robbers, liars, dishonest, etc.'⁵¹

The magistrate also found objectionable content in the third article, for which the judge thought that the

...chief object is to arouse the Mohammadans, on the occasion of their Ramzan Id, to an appreciation of the Khilafat wrong. It is alleged that no self-respecting Mohammadan can say that his religion has not been most

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Home Secretary, Government of Bombay to Commissioner in Sind. Confidential letter no. SD 2240/1253. Poll dated 7th July 1922. India Office Records File 4409.

⁵¹ District Magistrate, Sukkur. Judgment dated 20th July, 1922 in case of the *Crown versus Lila Ram N. Pherwani*, *ibid*.

improperly interfered with, or that any regard is paid to his political or personal honour.⁵²

With these observation the magistrate came to conclusion that the 'intention of the accused is beyond doubt; and the publication of the articles is proof of an attempt to carry out that intention'.⁵³ Giving his judgment on 20 July 1922, the magistrate convicted Lilaram Narsinghdas Pherwani of charges brought against him and sentenced him to undergo rigorous imprisonment for eighteen months.⁵⁴ This information was promptly communicated to all the four capitals of British raj.

Discussion

From the above case studies, it is evident that the British colonial rulers had developed an elaborate and fairly punitive mechanism to monitor and control the press in the subcontinent, including Sindh. Under this system every newspaper was monitored and its contents were analyzed at the district level. The articles having presumably objectionable content from the point of view of the government were translated into English and were forwarded to the office of Commissioner in Sindh at Karachi. If the Commissioner also concurred with the opinion, the case used to be referred to the Home Secretary, Government of Bombay for approval of the Governor-in-Council regarding registration of the case by SP of the relevant district against the editor as well as initiation of proceedings in the court of a subordinate magistrate.

At Bombay, the case used to be referred for legal opinion to the office of Remembrancer of Legal Affairs who used to examine the contents of the objectionable articles in light of various sections of Indian Penal Code as well as other laws. The case was then put up for the orders of the Governor-in-Council who usually allowed the SP to register the case against the editor, printer and publisher as well as directed the Commissioner in Sindh to prosecute the offending editors and newspapers.

On receiving this authority, the case was registered, and the police would then arrest the offending editor and put him in a lock up till the magistrate would start the trial. Simultaneously, the Commissioner-in-Sindh used to appoint a magistrate for the case from amongst his subordinate collectors/ magistrates with direction to proceed with the case with the help of the local public prosecutor. For both the concerned magistrate as well as the public prosecutor, the opinion of the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Remembrancer of Legal Affairs mostly served as a sort of guideline for proceeding with the case. The verdict of the magistrate often resulted in various prison terms for the editor and publisher, confiscation of security deposits of the newspaper, imposition of fines and other such punishments.

As soon as the case used to be concluded and punishments pronounced, the relevant magistrate would report to the Commissioner-in-Sindh, who would immediately inform government of Bombay through a telegram, followed by a detailed report and set of relevant papers. In all this process, the government of Bombay kept in loop the central government of India with capital in Delhi, which in turn kept informed the government of United Kingdom through the office of Secretary of State for India, in London. The result of this elaborate mechanism was that even an article written in Sindhi, published in a local newspaper in a small town like Shikarpur, would not escape the gaze and resultant persecution, with all the power centers of colonial India acting in unison.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the present study that the popular press in Sindh, published and edited by both Muslims and Hindu, faced persecution at the hands of British colonial rulers, during *Khilafat*, *Hijrat* and Non-Cooperation Movements from 1920 to 1922. The colonial rulers of India had developed a very well-organized apparatus for monitoring and controlling the press, which extended to the farthest reaches of the subcontinent. This apparatus was so extensive that no published material could escape the gaze of the rulers. In the case of publication of objectionable material from the point of view of the government, it put into motion an elaborate mechanism of persecution that resulted in severe punishments for the offending newspapers and their editors/publishers. But, irrespective of the dire consequences, many of the editors in Sindh, both Muslims and Hindus, challenged the system and bore the brunt in form of imprisonments as well as confiscation of their property, presses and security deposits. Thus, those early torch-bearers of the freedom of press set examples to be followed by the succeeding generations of journalists in Sindh.