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Gujranwala Court Rejects Bail for Ahmadi Man Accused of Distributing Muharram Niaz

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On July 15, 2025, a Gujranwala court denied the post-arrest bail plea of Munawwar Ahmad, a member of the Ahmadiyya community, charged with blasphemy for distributing Niaz (free food and drinks) during Muharram, a significant Islamic mourning period. The ruling has sparked debate over Pakistan's blasphemy laws and their application, highlighting tensions surrounding religious identity and freedom. The court's decision, based

on the investigation's findings, underscores the challenges faced by religious minorities in navigating cultural and legal boundaries.

The case stems from an incident on July 6, 2025, when Ahmad, a 65-year-old Ahmadi, was reported distributing chicken biryani in Gujranwala's Satellite Town during Youm-i-Ashur, the 10th day of Muharram. A local resident filed a First Information Report (FIR) at the Satellite Town Police Station, alleging Ahmad was "posing as a Muslim" under Section 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which prohibits Ahmadis from engaging in acts perceived as Islamic. The court, in its ruling, stated that "sufficient material" connected Ahmad to the offense, with a silver cooking pot containing biryani seized as evidence, according to police reports. Muhammad Irfan, Gujranwala city police public relations officer, confirmed Ahmad remains in judicial remand.

Critics argue the case exemplifies the misuse of blasphemy laws to target minorities, particularly Ahmadis, who face systemic discrimination in Pakistan. The Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA) recently urged Punjab police to restrict Ahmadis from performing Islamic rituals, intensifying scrutiny on the community. Social media posts on X have decried the ruling as a "mockery of justice" for penalizing an act of charity. Yet, supporters of the decision maintain that strict enforcement of Section 298-C upholds Pakistan's legal framework, prioritizing religious sensitivities during sacred periods.

The Gujranwala ruling reflects broader societal divides, where acts of goodwill can be weaponized under stringent laws. As Ahmad awaits further legal proceedings, the case raises questions about balancing religious identity with individual freedoms, urging a reevaluation of how justice is administered in such sensitive contexts.

