

DAWN

Over 100 JuD offices sealed amid govt crackdown

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ISLAMABAD The government has not issued a formal notification to proscribe charity organization Jammaat ud Dawa (JuD) which has already been banned by United Nations for its alleged involvement in terrorist activities and links with Al-Qaeda.

‘There is no need to issue any such notification against the organisation once it is banned by the UN,’ a senior official of the interior ministry who did not want to be named told Dawn on Saturday.

Pakistan, he said, had not banned the organisation but being a signatory of the UN charter, the government was under obligation to implement the decisions of the world body and take action against JuD that resulted sealing of its over 100 offices throughout the country, detention of over 50 leaders and putting names of its 11 leaders on Exit Control List (ECL).

The official said following the imposition of sanctions on JuD by the UN, Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry has issued a SRO that confirmed banning of the charity organisation.

He said two other charity organisations Al-Rashid Trust and Al-Akhtar Trust had already been banned in the past by the UN under article 1267 of its charter. ‘In that case no notification was issued from the government to further proscribe the two trusts,’ the official said.

‘Even the restriction imposed against the JuD were spelled out in article 1267 of the UN which suggests freezing of bank accounts, detentions, ban of travelling, arms embargo etc,’ the official said.

Giving further details about the operation against JuD, the official said so far 100 offices had been sealed across the

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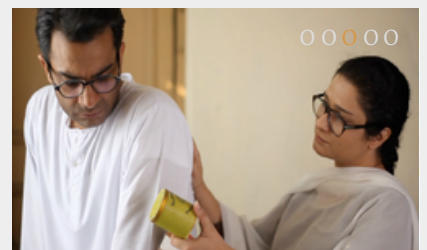
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official said 30 of the 109 offices had been sealed across the country, 52 leaders had been detained, the names of 11 members including JuD chief Hafiz Saeed had been placed on the exit control list and over 250 activists of the organisation had been detained for questioning.

Police say that members of Jamaat-ud-Dawa have been detained in Sindh, Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Pakistani-administered Kashmir.

Sindh Home Secretary Arif Ahmed Khan said more than 40 people had been detained and 30 Jamaat-ud-Dawa offices had been sealed.

A spokesman for the charity in NWFP said that 150 people had been arrested and 42 offices closed.

GOVERNMENT TAKEOVER

A source in the interior ministry also said the government was considering taking over of public welfare institutions of JuD to run them for the benefit of the people.

In this connection, the federal government is likely to contact provincial governments in the near future to receive proposals on how these institutions could be run.

‘IN IT’S INTEREST’

Pakistan Defence Minister Ahmed Mukhtar said it had responded to the UN move because ‘we are part of the international community and cannot afford confrontation with the whole world’.

He added ‘Had we not implemented the resolution we would have been declared a terrorist state.’

However, at a Friday afternoon briefing, US State department spokesman Sean McCormack noted that Pakistan banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa because it felt it was in its interest to do so and not because it felt that the United States was about to declare it a terrorist state.

‘The Pakistani defence minister has said that Pakistan had to ban the Jamaat because if that hadn’t happened it would have been branded a terrorist state. Is that the message the US has sent out?’ Mr McCormack was asked.

‘No,’ he replied. ‘Pakistan did this because it saw it in its interest.’

‘NORMALISATION TAKES TIME’

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said international diplomacy is helping defuse tension with India after the Mumbai tragedy.

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In an interview with Reuters, Gilani said prospects of a military confrontation between the nuclear-armed neighbours have receded in the two weeks. 'Normalisation takes time,' Gilani said.

Pakistan has repeatedly said that it would extend a hand of cooperation to India in investigations if evidence is presented to it. Both countries have held a number of rounds of composite dialogue to resolve issues including the long-standing dispute of Kashmir.

Gilani said Pakistan was taking action against groups and people put on a UN terrorist list.

The prime minister said the chances of India resorting to air strikes in Pakistan were remote.

He said action against groups should reassure New Delhi of Pakistan's desire to cooperate with India. 'I think India is equally responsible and they won't. There is no fear of anything like that,' Gilani said.

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