

No burial for Ghazi on land 'encroached' by Lal Masjid

The Pakistan government's plan to reclaim the land encroached upon by the Lal Masjid complex has put paid to the desire of deputy chief cleric Abdul Rashid Ghazi, killed during the storming of the mosque, that he be buried there.

Ghazi's desire, according to his will, was to be buried at the boys' seminary Jamia Fareedia, alongside his father who was the founder of the mosque, reported the private Geo TV channel.

However, his body was flown by a special helicopter to his hometown of Rojhan Mazari in Rajanpur district.

Ghazi's elder brother and Lal Masjid chief cleric Maulana Abdul Aziz, who was arrested on July 5 while trying to escape disguised as a woman, was released on parole so that he could accompany the body along with senior security officials.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is waiting for the conclusion of Operation Silence to reclaim the government land encroached upon by Jamia Hafsa, the girls' seminary, and the Jamia Fareedia, where boys - mostly from conservative and impoverished families from North West Frontier Province and tribal areas - studied and were also inducted into militancy.

Over 100 people died in the operation, ending a six-month siege led by the clerics of the Lal Masjid in the heart of the Pakistan capital.

The security forces and the government agencies are still in the process of clearing the complex of dead bodies and rubble.

The siege had begun in January to protest the demolition by the CDA of seven mosques, built on encroached land, as part of town planning.

CDA Member (Estates) Brig (retd.) Asad Munir told Daily Times on Wednesday that the interior ministry had directed the CDA on July 4 to demolish the structures built illegally at Jamia Hafsa.

He said the CDA would also clear the land encroached on by Jamia Fareedia, but the government had not issued orders for this yet.

'The two madrassas encroached on a total of 9,094.45 square yards (18 acres),' Munir said, adding that the CDA had been struggling to get back the encroached land since 2001 when the Lal Masjid started building illegal structures on government land.

The government had initially allotted 660 square yards of land to Lal Masjid in 1988 to establish a madrasa for women. An additional 138.8 square yards were allotted to Jamia Hafsa in 1993.

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