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## Islamia College Lahore: Cradle of Muslim Political Leadership (1900–1947)

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### Abstract

This article explores the pivotal role of Islamia College Lahore in shaping the political consciousness and leadership of Indian Muslims during the colonial period from 1900 to 1947. As an institution founded under the aegis of Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore AHIL, Islamia College functioned not merely as a center of higher education but as a dynamic incubator for Muslim political leadership. It provided an intellectual and ideological space where students imbibed nationalist sentiments, engaged with Islamic modernism, and became actively involved in anti-colonial and pro-Muslim League politics. The study highlights how the college's curriculum, faculty, student societies, and connection with key political movements fostered a generation of leaders who later played significant roles in the Pakistan Movement. By examining archival sources, speeches, memoirs, and institutional records, the article situates Islamia College Lahore within the broader context of Muslim political mobilization in colonial Punjab, demonstrating how educational institutions served as critical arenas for the negotiation of identity, ideology, and leadership.

**Keywords:** Islamia College Lahore, Muslim Political Leadership, Political Mobilization, Student Activism, Colonial Punjab, Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, Pakistan Movement

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## Introduction

Despite the despair and setbacks of the 19th century, the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent preserved their distinct identity through religious and scientific revival movements. The Aligarh Movement was a significant initiative for scientific and intellectual development, while the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam in Lahore, Punjab, focused on social welfare and educational uplift.<sup>1</sup> Both served as prime examples of these revival efforts. Initially founded as a welfare, reform, and educational movement, the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam later became influenced by the growing political consciousness within the Muslim Ummah. Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam had never been directly involved in political activities, but its educational institution, Islamia College Lahore, had played an important and unforgettable role in protecting the political interests of Muslims.

The establishment of Islamia College Lahore in 1892 marked a pivotal moment in the socio-political development of Muslim India Punjab during the late colonial period. Founded by the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, a reformist and educational organization established in Lahore in 1884, the college was initially intended to promote the educational and moral uplift of Muslim youth, particularly in response to the British colonial dismantling of Muslim political authority following the War of 1857. Over time, Islamia College grew beyond its original educational purpose to become an important platform for fostering political awareness, Islamic identity, and anti-colonial activism among Indian Muslims. This article examines how educational institutions like Islamia College Lahore helped mobilize Muslim political action in Punjab.

Through this analysis, the article places the college's role within the broader history of political activism in British India and highlights its part in the

<sup>1</sup> John Nicol Farquhar, *Modern religious movements in India*. (Macmillan: 1915)

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development of Muslim political thought and activity. The study argues that Islamia College Lahore was not merely an academic institution but a dynamic incubator of Muslim political leadership in colonial Punjab. Its active participation in nationalist movements such as the Khilafat Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Pakistan Movement offered a unique intellectual and ideological training ground for future Muslim leaders. Students of the college played vanguard roles in shaping Muslim identity, resisting colonial hegemony, and laying the groundwork for the creation of Pakistan.

### **Methodology**

This research adopts a historical-analytical methodology to investigate the role of Islamia College Lahore as a site of Muslim political awakening and leadership development from 1900 to 1947. The study is grounded in qualitative analysis of both primary and secondary sources, and it seeks to construct a narrative that reflects the institutional, intellectual, and activist dimensions of the college's evolution and its contributions to Muslim political mobilization. The study relies extensively on primary historical documents, including archival records from the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, minutes of General Council meetings, reports of the Islamia College Committee, and speeches delivered during key political events. Official correspondence and fatwas issued during the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movements provide insight into the ideological and religious debates among college faculty and council members. The study also utilizes letters exchanged between key figures such as Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, and other leaders of the Anjuman and the Muslim League.

Contemporary newspapers such as *Zamindar*, *Paisa Akhbar*, and the *Civil and Military Gazette* have been employed to trace public opinion, student activism,

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and the socio-political climate in colonial Punjab. These periodicals offer real-time commentary and reportage on protests, strikes, speeches, and college closures, offering valuable context to institutional decisions. Secondary sources include scholarly books and journal articles on the history of colonial Punjab, the Khilafat Movement, the Muslim League, and Islamic reform movements. In particular, works by Gail Minault, Francis Robinson, and Ayesha Jalal offer theoretical frameworks for understanding Islamic modernism, Muslim identity formation, and the politics of education in British India. These secondary sources support the interpretation of events and contextualize the role of Islamia College within broader movements such as Islamic revivalism and nationalist resistance.

### **Analytical Framework**

This study employs a discourse analysis framework to assess how Islamia College Lahore functioned as a site for the articulation of Muslim political identity and anti-colonial resistance. The approach is influenced by Michel Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and Edward Said's analysis of discourse and resistance, which help to interpret how the college's educational practices, student societies, and administrative decisions contributed to the creation of counter-narratives challenging British hegemony. Theoretical insights into Islamic modernism are also used to examine how the college balanced religious tradition with modern political thought.

The temporal scope of this study is confined to the period from 1900 to 1947, encompassing key events such as the Khilafat Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Pakistan Movement. The geographical focus remains primarily on Punjab, especially Lahore, although references are made to allied institutions in Aligarh, Peshawar, and Bengal when necessary. While the study

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draws from rich archival material and press sources, the lack of preserved institutional records of the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam poses a limitation. As such, the narrative relies heavily on contemporary newspaper reports and personal memoirs, which, while valuable, must be critically analyzed for potential bias.

### Results and Discussions

Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam Lahore was a moderate organization that focused on educational advancement and socio-religious changes in the Muslim community of Punjab. Although AHIL had never been directly involved in politics, its educational institution, Islamia College Lahore, had played a significant and lasting role in defending Muslims' political interests. The institution instilled desired beliefs in the Muslims and provided alternative narratives for them to express themselves and their rights.<sup>2</sup> The political role of this educational institution of AHIL first came to the fore during the *Tark-i-Muwālāt* (Urdu: disconnect the relations) movement. Islamia College Lahore, a prestigious institution, was part of the *Tehreek-e-Azadi* (Urdu: a struggle for national identity).<sup>3</sup> It emerged as a capital for a new generation of defenders of Islamic civilization and culture, fostering pride in national identity. *Tark-i-Muwālāt* movement polarized Muslims into pro and anti-members, where some of the Anjuman members were favorable towards the movement. Mian Sir Fazal Hussian and Sheikh Abdul Qadir were against *Tark-i-Muwālāt* because Muslim students were at an educational disadvantage.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Saifuddin Kichlow, Molana

<sup>2</sup> Maqbool Ahmad Awan, "Role of the Muslim Anjumans for the Promotion of Education in the Colonial Punjab: A Historical Analysis," *Bulletin of Education and Research* 41, no. 3 (December 2019): 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Paisa Akhbar*, December 07, 1920).

<sup>4</sup> *Zamindar*, December 12, 1920.

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Zafar Ali Johar, Molana Shoqat Ali Johar, and Abul Kalam Azad were in favor of *Tark-i-Muwālāt*.<sup>5</sup>

The Treaty of Sèvres<sup>6</sup>, signed on August 10, 1920, resulted in the fall of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey's relinquishment of Arab Asia and North Africa. This led to widespread indignation among Muslims in the subcontinent. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the ulema argued that the British government's failure to fulfill its pledges towards Muslims and their rights led to a "*Darul Harb* دار الحرب, (Urdu: Abode of War), where pious Muslims were forced to migrate to *Darul Islam* دار الإسلام (Arabic: Abode of Islam). Scholars emphasized the religious duty of Muslims to leave the subcontinent and seek safe countries.<sup>7</sup> The College students took an active part in the migration movement. Mr. A. R. Changez, retired judge of the High Court of West Pakistan, who is an old boy of the College, was among those who migrated to Afghanistan. 24 and Maulana Ahmad Ali, an eminent scholar of Hadith and Vice-President of the Anjuman were in the vanguard of this movement in Lahore.<sup>8</sup> Several Muslims from different areas of the Subcontinent led to Afghanistan due to religious fervor, but the movement failed due to the Afghanistan government's refusal to provide shelter.<sup>9</sup> Many Muslims returned home. Management of Islamia College and Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam provided assistance and employment to those affected by the migration movement. Maulvi

<sup>5</sup>Proceedings of General council Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam Lahore, (1921).

<sup>6</sup> The **Treaty of Sèvres** was a peace treaty signed on **August 10, 1920**, between the **Allied Powers** (primarily Britain, France, and Italy) and the **Ottoman Empire** after World War I.

<sup>7</sup>Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 177–185.

<sup>8</sup> Khawaja Mohammad Aslam, "Islamia College contributes to Pakistan Movement" Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, Diamond Jubilee (March, 1967), 47.

<sup>9</sup>The Crescent, Centenary Number. 1892-1992. (Lahore :Govt. Islamia College), 69

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Sardar Muhammad, who worked in AG's office before emigrating, was promoted to Accountant at Islamia College and continued working until his death.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Shareef Halali, “Threek-e-Pakistan myn Islamia College ka kirdar”, The Crescent Centenary Number, 1892-1992, (Lahore: Govt Islamia College 1992), 65.

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## CONTRIBUTES TO PAKISTAN MOVEMENT

Islamia College students actively engaged in the freedom movement of Pakistan, specifically in Punjab. They played a special part in ensuring Tehreek-e-Pakistan's victory. Students of Islamia College offered pivotal educational, political, and cultural services before and after the creation of Pakistan. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a prominent figure in the Muslim League, recognized the importance of Muslim students' support in winning the war of independence. Islamia College, a historical institution and a center of Tehreek-e-Pakistan, was a significant center of this movement. The college's teachers and students demonstrated exceptional courage, initiating rallies, processions, and facing arrests. Quaid-e-Azam credited the Islamia College students for their support during the nation's struggle for survival.<sup>11</sup> Quaid-e-Azam's quotes can be used to measure the historical contribution of Islamia College students in Tehreek-e-Pakistan. Quaid-e-Azam's quotes can be used to measure the historical contribution of Islamia College students in Tehreek-e-Pakistan as when the higher classes of the country did not stand by me, then the youth stood by me. The reality is that before the subcontinent was divided, when the country was facing a war of death and rebirth, the students were highly supportive of Quaid-e-Azam. "Now or Never" is an excellent piece of Tehreek-e-Pakistan. It was published by an ex student of Islamia College.<sup>12</sup>

## ALL INDIA MUSLIM STUDENTS' FEDERATION

Bengal Muslim students established the Bengal Muslim Students Federation with an aim to dislodge Congress pressure and provide an Islamic environment. But a countrywide Muslim student organization had to work in

<sup>11</sup>Khawaja Mohammad Aslam, "Islamia College contributes to Pakistan Movement.47

<sup>12</sup>Shareef Halali, "Threek-e-Pakistan myn Islamia",71.



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favor of the All India Muslim League and promote cohesion among students from various areas. The educational schemes introduced by Congress ministries, including the Vidya Mandar Scheme and War Dhaha Scheme, made Muslim students feel disconnected from their religion and culture. In 1937, the All India Muslim Students Federation was established under Raja Sahib Mahmoodabad's leadership, chaired by Quaid-e-Azam. The association was born simultaneously with the idea of forming an association for Muslim students from Punjab, U.P., Bihar, and Bengal, with the aim of holding meetings, seminars, and circulating literature among Muslim students.<sup>13</sup>

The Punjab Muslim Students Federation, established in 1937, was a student organization led by prominent figures from Islamia College, including Hameed Nizami, Supreme Court Chief Justice Sheikh Anwar ul Haq, Dr. Abdul Salam Khurshid, and Iqbal Hussain. The first formal session took place on September 1, 1937, in the staff room of Islamia College Lahore. The Punjab Muslim Students Federation was established on August 8, 1937, with Hamid Nizami as president, Sheikh Anwar-ul-Haq as vice president, and Dr. Abdul Salam Khurshid as secretary. A rally on October 7, 1937, drew students' attention, leading to the slogan "بٹ کے رہے گاہندوستان"<sup>14</sup>

Allama Iqbal welcomed the establishment of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation. On the behest of Allama Iqbal; the Punjab Muslim Students Federation announced the task of creating an independent and sovereign Muslim National State in North West British India as their mission. Thus, for the first time in the Indian subcontinent, the Muslim Students Federation announced an independent

<sup>13</sup> Muhammad Ahmad Makhdoom, "Historical role of Islamia College students in Tehreek-e-Pakistan" The Crescent 125 years issue.1892-2017, Lahore: Govt.Islamia College 2017), 47.

<sup>14</sup> Khawaja Mohammad Aslam. Islamia College contributes to Pakistan Movement, 50.

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state of Pakistan in British India. Students of Islamia College Lahore took the lead in projecting the demand of Pakistan. Islamia College students went to Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Gujranwala, and Sialkot to widen the sphere of Punjab Muslim Students Federation. Some prominent students were Hameed Nizami, Zaki-ud-Din Pal Makhdoom Abbasi, Zafar Qureshi, Abdul Rashid Arshad Ikram-ul-Haq, Sheikh Anwar-ul-Haq, and Dr. Abdul Salam Khurshid. The movement spread to the entire province, with more than two thousand members and students from Sindh, Balochistan, Kashmir, and NWFP affiliating them. 16 branches were organized in Punjab, and Islamia College Lahore students and Punjab students welcomed leadership from the Muslim League leaders, who now had an active organization of Muslims.<sup>15</sup>

In 1940, the All India Muslim League had its annual session on March 22-24 in Lahore. The students tried their best to make it a grand success, right from the reception of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah from the Lahore railway station until the closing of the session, they displayed complete devotion and love. The spirit of the organizing of the Punjab Muslim Students Federation unfolded after the realization of Pakistan. The Punjab Muslim Students Federation held the Pakistan Conference on March 2, 1941, at Islamia College, Lahore, generating activity in Lahore and Punjab. The conference marked the first time the "Lahore Resolution" was renamed "Pakistan Resolution." The conference was organized by students of Islamia College, who protected Quaid-e-Azam and organized his three-day visit to Lahore. The students even scheduled the visit's time, and even Chief Minister Khidr Hayat Towana had to meet the Quaid-e-Azam. Provincial Muslim League leaders were not allowed to intervene. The conference also featured a large number of Muslim female students, who were welcomed by Lady

<sup>15</sup>ibid

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Abdul Qadir, Fatima Begum, Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain, and Miss Qureshi.<sup>16</sup> This event generated new enthusiasm and passion among the students, leading to a doubled devotion to work. Mian Bashir Ahmed, Zahoor Hussain Dar, and Dr. Ilyas prepared a routine program for the students, spreading Quaid-e-Azam's message throughout the country. In 1942, the Congress initiated the "Quit India" movement, with Quaid-e-Azam instructing Muslims to distance themselves. Islamia College students dispersed and aimed to dissuade Muslims, inspiring Tehreek-e-Pakistan and Muslim League members. The Muslim Students Federation held their second annual conference in Rawalpindi, inspiring Muslim leaders. In 1944, the Muslim League Punjab requested the Habiba Hall for its yearly meeting, but the All-India Muslim League Council declined. The Pakistan movement's genesis came in July 1945 with the Shimla Conference.

The year was crucial for the Pakistan movement, and elections to central and provincial legislatures were scheduled for the following winter. The Muslim League announced elections on Pakistan's demand. Quaid-i-Azam invited Indian Muslims to vote for a Muslim League candidate, even if he was a lamp-post. He went to Islamia College and appealed to students to work for the country. 800 volunteers spread all over the country, and the Muslim League secured 100% of the seats in the Central Assembly Elections, gaining an overwhelming majority in most provinces.<sup>17</sup>

In Punjab, the British Governor used Machiavellian tactics to impose a Unionist ministry, leading to the death of Abdul Malik. This sparked a mass civil disobedience movement, with Muslim leaders arrested and The Dawn banned. The movement continued, with Muslim women participating for the first time in

<sup>16</sup>ibid

<sup>17</sup> Syed Noor Ahmad, *Martial law sy Martial law tak*, (Lahore: Maktaba Aaliyah, 1993), 229.

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Punjab history. The movement was supported by public force and involved women in various cities, including Lahore, who marched on the streets, confronting police with tear gas. The movement aimed to express dissatisfaction with the Unionist, Akali, and Congress Coalition Ministries. Women like Mumtaz, Fatima, Salma Tassaduq Hussain, and Lady Feroz Khan Noon were at the forefront of organizing the women's demonstrations. In 1947, students from Islamia College launched a movement against Section 144 in Lahore, leading to arrests and marking a significant turning point in the civil disobedience movement in Punjab. They staged a sit-in at Government House, leading to police arrests and arrests.

In February 1947, students climbed the prison wall and waved the Muslim League flag, leading to the release of prisoners. The government reached an agreement with the Muslim League leaders, and on March 5, 1947, Victory Day was celebrated. Quaid-e-Azam was affectionate towards the younger generation, particularly students, and had a special rapport with educational centers like the Muslim University Aligarh, Sindh Madrasa Islamia College Peshawar, and Islamia College Lahore. He visited these institutions regularly, giving speeches and hosting meetings, including the Punjab Muslim Students Federation's annual meeting in March 1944.<sup>18</sup>

Islamia College played a significant role in Quaid-e-Azam's gatherings in Lahore, and the college's students responded to his calls and protected him. In 1945, Quaid-e-Azam stayed in Mamdut Villa, and some armed attackers drew near. Islamia College students, understanding that he wasn't safe, formed an armed hand group to guard his residence at night, and they stayed there day and night. This was a turning point in college history. Quaid Azam was impressed

<sup>18</sup> ibid

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with Islamia College's security team. Conditions were charged, and Muslim elders feared for his life. Quaid did not agree to make security arrangements, but when his friends pressed him harder, he proposed calling Islamia College's Mujahid students of Islam who had served as his bodyguards in Lahore. This move caused Islamia College to have joy again, and the bodyguard members guarded Quaid-e-Azam in Shimla for as long as he stayed in Shimla in 1946, providing him with protection. In his endeavor to unite Muslims under one flag and present the Muslim League to the masses, Islamia College students organized the visits. Islamia College students welcomed Quaid-e-Azam on his second visit to Lahore with drawn naked swords. It should be noted here that Abdul Malik, who was a student of Islamia College Lahore, was the very first Shaheed (Urdu: Martyr) of Tehreek-e-Pakistan. The funeral of Malik Shaheed was like that of Ghazi Alimuddin in 1929.

The Daily Inqilab reported that on 9 March, Muslim students of nearby colleges held a funeral procession celebrating the political death day of the Unionist Party. The procession was designed to protest against the residence of Mian Muhammad Rafiq, who had joined the Ahrar after winning the Muslim League ticket. But the moment the procession entered Sanatan Dharma College, the students started pelting stones and acid rain and soda water bottles at Muslim students. The police opened fire in vain, and two Satan Dharma College students got seriously injured. Approximately one and a half dozen Muslim students were injured in the clash, leading Muslim markets to shut down and Hindu shopkeepers to close their shops. The district magistrate and SSP soon arrived at the scene, and Muslim League leaders Sardar Shaukat Hayat, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Mian Mumtaz Ahmad Khan Daultana, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, and some League MLAs

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also reached the spot. There, thousands of Muslims had gathered, and Muslim League leaders requested the Muslim crowd to remain calm. 11 injured individuals were admitted to the hospital, seven of whom were discharged after receiving treatment, and four others in critical condition. One student, Muhammad Malik, sustained severe head injuries and died in a coma. There was a large turnout of Muslims at the funeral of the deceased, including Nawab Mamdoot, Sarferoz Khan Noon, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, Sardar Shaukat Hayat, Sir Mohammad Jamal Khan Leghari, and Nawab Ashiq Hussain Khan.

On 10th March 1946, a rally in Lahore with 1.5 million participants saw Muslim League leaders making speeches and passing a condolence resolution for the martyrdom of Muhammad Malik. The Unionist parties and Congress faced criticism, while the Muslim League organization received heightened attention. Students from Islamia College Lahore played an active role in the 1946 elections, heading to cities and streets and informing Muslims of the significance of Pakistan. The Punjab Muslim League secured 79 out of 86 seats, winning all the seats in the Central Assembly and 428 out of 492 seats in the Provincial Assembly. Islamia College was the only college where Quaid-e-Azam tasked students with participating in the 1945-46 election campaign. Jinnah saw the seriousness and passion of the students to believe that the Punjab Provincial Muslim League could not challenge the Unionists and feudal lords. Politics at Islamia College remained stable until the student's became popular. Punjab politics became.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

Muslim Anjumans in the Indian subcontinent played a crucial role in fostering nationalism and Pan-Islamism among Indian Muslims by providing effective

<sup>19</sup> Syed Noor Ahmad, Martial law sy Martial law tak,

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educational systems and fostering mass-level harmony. Their religious policies strengthened feelings of nationalism and national identity, fostering cooperation and resilient nationalism among different Colonial Punjab communities. Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam was a moderate and loyalist organization focused on educational advancement and socio-religious changes in the Muslim community. As a product of the Anjuman Himayat-i-Islam, Islamia College, Railway Road, Lahore, was influential in British India's political landscape, especially in Punjab.

The article contends that Islamia College Lahore was not just an educational institution but a vibrant incubator of Muslim political leadership in colonial Punjab. Its energetic involvement in nationalist movements like the Khilafat Movement, the Non-Cooperation Movement, and the Pakistan Movement provided a distinct intellectual and ideological training ground for emergent Muslim leaders. The college students were at the vanguard of fashioning Muslim identity, anti-colonial resistance, and laying the foundations for Pakistan's creation. The *Tarke Mawalat* movement in 1920 was a critical and trying period for Islamia College, as it demanded boycotts of English courts, councils, and jobs, as well as educational institutions affiliated with the university

Students of Islamia College played a significant role in South Asia's independence movement, particularly in Punjab. Tehreek-e-Pakistan had a unique status due to its unique nature and importance. Before and after Pakistan's establishment, Islamia College provided exceptional educational, literary, political, and cultural services. It participated intellectually and practically in all political, religious, and educational activities of Muslims in the Subcontinent. The students of Islamia College organized a vanguard for every Muslim world welfare movement, becoming a shining chapter in Pakistan's history. Islamia

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College was the hub of the Pakistan movement in the last decades of the movement, fighting against the British and Hindus. In Islamia College Railway Road, Lahore, the first Pakistan Conference was held in 1941.

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