



Hindu American Foundation
Promoting dignity, mutual respect, and pluralism.

Hindus in Pakistan

A SURVEY OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 2020

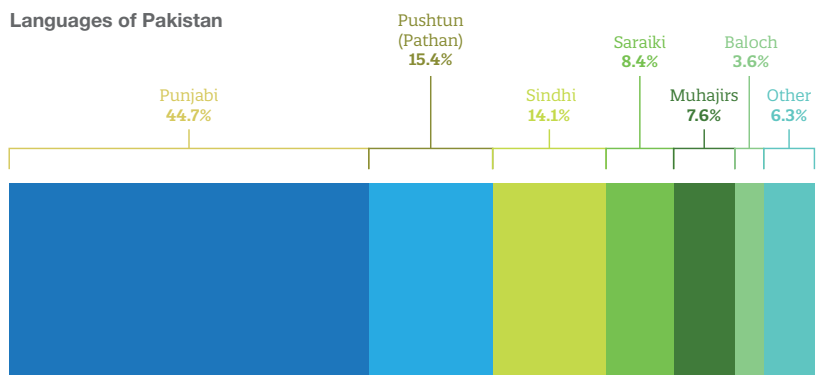
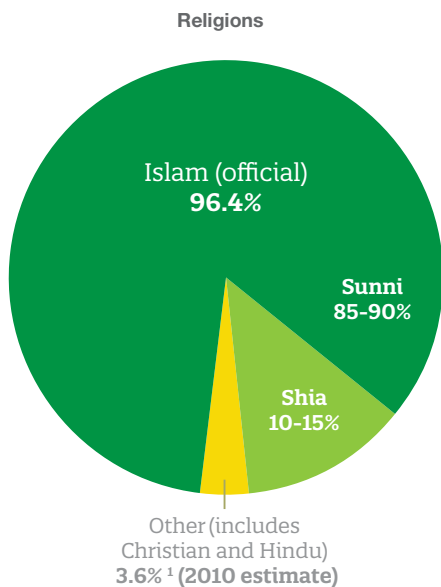
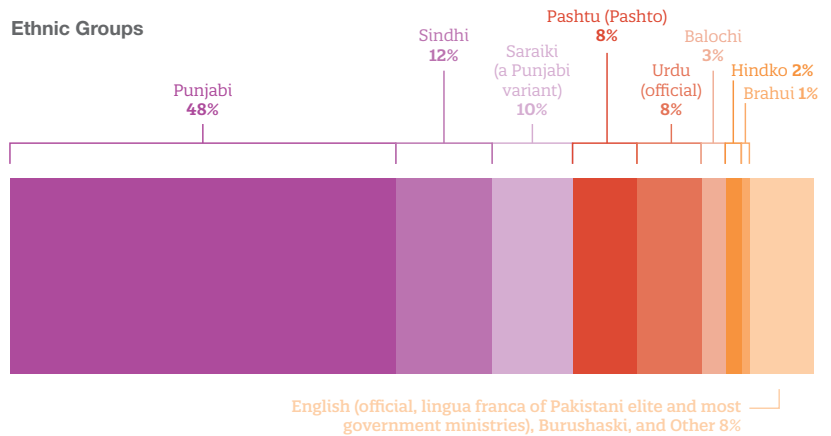


Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Area: 796,095 sq km

Population: 233,500,636 (July, 2020 estimate).
Demographic information is based on the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook (Central Intelligence Agency, 2020)

Location: Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea, bordering India on the east, Iran to the south-west, Afghanistan to the north-west, and China in the north.



¹ There are no clear statistics on the Hindu groups, but estimates put them anywhere between 1.6% to 5.5% according to Hindu community groups.

Human rights and religious freedom conditions continued to deteriorate at an unprecedented rate in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan during 2019 - 2020. Pakistan's widespread violation of human rights and its tolerance of human rights violations by non-state actors demonstrate a blatant disregard for its obligations under international human rights norms.

As a result, Pakistan remained on the U.S. State Department's list of Countries of Particular Concern under the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, for its "systematic, ongoing, [and] egregious violations of religious freedom" against its religious minorities including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Ahmadiyya Muslims, and Shia Muslims (U.S. Department of State, 2018; Pompeo, 2019).

The blasphemy laws, restrictions on the Ahmadiyya Muslim faith, and forced conversions of Hindu and Christian girls particularly plagued religious minorities. According to Human Rights Watch's 2019 Country Report on Pakistan, an estimated 1,000 Christian and Hindu women are abducted and forcibly converted to Islam every year, and the government does little to stop such incidents (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Often, after being abducted, these girls are forcibly married to unknown men, raped, sold off, or forced into prostitution.

Moreover, the constitutional preference for Islam and religious identification laws institutionalized the discrimination and second-class status of minorities. Legislation requiring Compulsory courses on the Quran at all public universities in Punjab province was passed in 2020 and secondary school textbooks continued to include inflammatory content on religious minorities.

Hindus and other minorities remain enslaved by the bonded labor system, and are subjected to attacks on religious sites and the illegal occupation of temples, and other acts

of intolerance at the hands of non-state actors with complicit or implicit support of government officials.

In order to escape these rampant religious freedom violations, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and Ahmaddiya Muslims have increasingly fled the country in the last several years. The annual influx of religious refugees from Pakistan, along with those from Afghanistan and Bangladesh, into India led to the passage of India's Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019 to provide them with fast track citizenship.

Large-scale sectarian violence also continued as militant groups operated freely and targeted minorities, as well as minority Muslims sects with impunity. In September 2020, Sunni Islamists and militant groups with links to the government and military led mass anti-Shia Muslim demonstrations of up to 30,000 people, accusing Shias of being heretics (Shahid, 2020).

The Pakistani military establishment has long utilized many terrorist/militant groups and Islamists to both pursue its domestic political priorities as well as foment violence in India and Afghanistan. This led to a number of

cross-border attacks in the Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistani sponsored terrorist groups, including the February 2019 attack by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) in Pulwama that killed over 40 Indian security personnel (McDermott, 2019).

Subsequent to the Pulwama attack, Pakistan attempted to protect JeM leader, Maulana Azhar, from censure at the United Nations and carried out an international propaganda campaign on Kashmir. Government officials, such as Prime Minister Imran Khan, further exacerbated tensions with India by unilaterally threatening nuclear war after India fully and democratically integrated Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union through the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution (ANI, 2019).

Finally, the Pakistani military and government's suppression of the civil and human rights of ethnic minorities continued unabated.

History/ Background

The modern Pakistani state was created by partitioning India in 1947, after the British granted independence from colonial rule. The mass violence caused by the Muslim League's demands for a separate homeland for South Asian Muslims forced millions of Hindus and Sikhs to flee the West and East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh) for the safety of India. Consequently, the number of Hindus declined from 15% in West Pakistan at the time of Partition to approximately 2% in 1951. The last time Pakistan conducted a Census, in 1998, Hindus made up 1.6% of the population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). The

province of Sindh has the highest percentage of Hindus, 6.51% of the total population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). However, according to data from the 2017 Census that was made unofficially available to a lawmaker, the Hindu population may have decreased by 0.19% from 1998 (Goyal, 2020).

There has been an even greater decline in major cities with historically large Hindu populations. In Lahore, for instance, the Hindu/Sikh community comprised approximately 40% in 1941 and today, makes up less than 1%, with only two functioning Hindu temples remaining (Ahmad et al., 2020). Similarly, in the city of Karachi, the Hindu population decreased from 51% in 1947 to only 2% in 1951, while the Muslim population in the city went from 42% to 96% during that same period (Hasan et al., 1999). Notwithstanding its recent decline, Hindu civilization and culture flourished in Pakistan for thousands of years.

In contrast, although many Muslims left India for Pakistan at the time of partition, the percentage of Muslims continued to increase in independent India. According to India's 1951 census, Muslims accounted for 9.8% of the population. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims constituted 14.23% of the population, and are projected to increase their share of the total population to 18% by 2050 (Indian Census, 2011; Majumdar, 2018).

Pakistan's path to becoming an Islamic Republic began before the promulgation of its post-independence constitution, with the Objectives Resolution in 1949, under the influence of unelected Islamic extremists (Younus, 2014). The Pakistani constitution adopted in 1956 declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic. Although

anti-Ahmadiyya riots occurred from the 1950s until the 1970s, and an anti-Hindu riot in 1964 led to the migration of thousands of Hindus to India, Pakistan's turn toward Islamization hardened during the military dictatorship of Mohammad Ziaul Haq in the 1980s (Baabar & Mir, 2006).

Despite rampant human rights violations and war crimes (during Bangladesh's 1971 War of Independence) committed by numerous Pakistani regimes, historically, Pakistan's actions have largely been tolerated by the international community due to the country's strategic location and perceived importance in the region.

Status of Human Rights 2019-2020

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Discriminatory laws and constitutional injunctions in Pakistan have reduced religious minorities to second-class citizens, leading to gross human rights violations by both the state and non-state actors.

Although the Constitution purportedly guarantees religious freedom to its citizens under Articles 20-22, (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012) minorities have been unable to freely practice their faith without fear of attacks or persecution. For example, Article 20 which states, "Every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion; and every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish,

maintain and manage its religious institutions," has proven meaningless (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012).

Furthermore, many of the rights theoretically provided for in the Constitution are subordinated to government regulations and constitutional injunctions shaped by Islamic law first introduced in 1977, thereby denying equal protection and religious freedom to non-Muslims.

Specific laws protecting the equal rights of Pakistani citizens are similarly absent from the legal system, including laws protecting underage minority girls from forced conversions and marriages.

And although a law officially recognizing Hindu marriages, the Hindu Marriage Act, was finally passed in 2017, (PTI, 2017) it has yet to be implemented.

Discriminatory Provisions in the Legal System

Islam has been institutionalized in the Constitution and pervades all aspects of the legal system. Article 2 of the Constitution proclaims that Islam is "the State religion of Pakistan" and recognizes the Koran and Sunnah as the highest sources of law, not to be contradicted by secular laws, while Article 31 protects and promotes the Islamic way of life and moral standards, among many other provisions (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). In July 2020, the Punjab Provincial Assembly went even further by passing the Protection of Islam Foundation Bill, which made Sunni Islam as the only viable form of Islam for Pakistanis (Shahid, 2020).

Additionally, Article 203A - J establishes the power and jurisdiction of the Federal Shariat Courts, while Articles

227 - 231 provide that all laws must be in conformity with Islamic injunctions and create an Islamic Council to advise Parliament and Provincial Assemblies on whether laws contradict Islamic injunctions (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). The Islamicization of laws has also affected women's rights in Pakistan across religions by increasing the bar against rape, punishments for adultery, and reducing the relative weight of women as witnesses (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

The Pakistani Constitution lays out explicit restrictions on non-Muslims, such as Article 41(2), which provides that an individual must be Muslim in order to hold the office of President of Pakistan (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). Similarly, it requires that high office holders must take the oath of office by invoking an Islamic prayer, regardless of whether they are Muslim. The oath starts with, "In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful," and ends with "May Allah Almighty help and guide me, (A'meen)" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012).

Furthermore, freedom of religion is severely limited and "subject to law, public order and morality" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). Consequently, actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or the Prophet Mohammed are not protected. Moreover, the Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and non-Muslims alike (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012).

And freedom of speech under Article 19 of the Constitution is "subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam

or the integrity, security or defense of Pakistan" (National Assembly of Pakistan, 2012). This constitutional clause provides in part the justification for criminalizing blasphemy under the penal code.

The Blasphemy Laws

The blasphemy laws codified by Pakistan's Penal Code (Sections 295B and C, and 298A-C), impose severe punishments for perceived insults to the Prophet Mohammed or desecration of the Koran, and prohibit Ahmadiyyas from using Islamic terminology and symbols and from "preaching their faith or pos[ing] as Muslims" (Pakistan Penal Code). Punishments range from imprisonment for three years and a fine to life imprisonment and the death penalty (Pakistan Penal Code).

The blasphemy laws, which enjoy widespread support in Pakistan, have had a disproportionate impact on religious minorities (BBC, May 8, 2019). Over 1,500 people have been charged and imprisoned under the blasphemy laws since 1987 (BBC, May 8, 2019). In August 2020, there were a string of 42 blasphemy cases targeting the Shia Muslim community, including a three year old child (Shahid, 2020).

According to the U.S. Department of State, in 2019 "at least 84 individuals were imprisoned on blasphemy charges, at least 29 of whom had received death sentences..." (U.S. Department of State, 2019). For instance, Shagufta Kausar, a Christian woman is on death row for allegedly sending out so-called blasphemous text messages (Aqeel, 2019). On a rare positive note, in response to international pressure, on January 29, 2019, the Supreme Court upheld its

decision overturning the conviction of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman who was on death row for alleged blasphemy. Bibi, however, was forced to leave Pakistan on May 7, 2019, after death threats made it unsafe for her to remain (Sherwood, 2019).

Pakistan's blasphemy laws have emboldened Muslim extremists and the mere allegation of blasphemy is used as a pretext to attack and kill minorities (Ahmad, 2014). On September 16, 2019, for instance, a mob in the town of Ghotki, in the province of Sindh, attacked three Hindu temples, shops, and a school after a Muslim pupil accused the Hindu principal of making blasphemous comments about Prophet Mohammad. The Principal was taken into protective custody by the local police (BBC, September 18, 2019; Shahid, 2019).

On May 30, 2019, a Hindu veterinarian was accused of blasphemy against Islam after a cleric accused him of delivering medicine wrapped in verses of Quran. Riots broke out in the veterinarian's neighborhood, shops owned by Hindus were burnt by the protestors, and the accused was taken into judicial custody (Masood, 2019).

Kidnapping and Forced Conversions

Abductions and forced conversions continue to haunt minority communities in Pakistan, and have particularly targeted young Hindu and Christian girls. Often, after being abducted, these girls are forcibly married to random men, raped, sold into human trafficking rings, or forced into prostitution. Several Islamic seminaries in Sindh incite their Muslim students to convert Hindu girls, telling them that it is the equivalent of Haj-e-Akbari, or the greatest religious

duty for Muslims. These seminaries hold the kidnapped Hindu girls against their will, convert them to Islam, and subsequently force them to marry Muslim men, often twice their age. Threatened into silence and fearful for the safety of their families, the girls are then taken to a local court by their abductors, where a judge usually sanctions the legality of the marriage and conversion (The Express Tribune, 2012) (Rodriguez, 2012).

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Human rights groups such as the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) have estimated that more than 1,000 Hindu and Christian young girls across the country are stolen from their families and forced to convert to Islam annually (Inayat, 2019). And between January 2004 and May 2018, there were 7,430 reported cases of abductions of Hindu girls in Sindh province, while the actual number of cases are estimated to be much higher (Sindhi Foundation, 2020).

In July 2019, several hundred Hindus from Kohistan, Sindh, held a demonstration against the surge in kidnappings and conversions, alleging that 50 non-Muslim girls had been kidnapped in the previous four months (Dawn, 2019). These and other protests, however, have fallen on deaf ears, as government officials,

the police, and the judiciary have often perpetuated the problem. The following are just a few high profile examples that are intended to demonstrate the extent of the problem and the role of Islamic extremists.

On January 27, 2020, a 24 year old Hindu woman, Bharti Bai, was kidnapped from her wedding ceremony—at Hala town in Matiari district in Sindh—by unknown assailants with the involvement of local

police (The Week, 2020). According to reports, Bharti Bai was then forcefully converted to Islam and married to a Muslim man named Shah Rukh Gul, who had led the kidnapping. The certificate of conversion produced by the Jamiat-ul-Uloom (Islamic seminary), which was circulated widely over the internet, however, dates the conversion to December 1, 2019. This enabled Shah Rukh Gul to claim that Bharti Bai was already his wife, and it was her parents who were forcibly marrying her to a Hindu man (Ameer, 2020). The outcome of the case was unclear at the time of the writing of this report.

On January 15, 2020, a 15-year-old student, Mehak Kumari, was kidnapped and married to a Muslim man, Ali Raza Solangi, in Jacobabad district, Sindh. The victim and her abductor were

presented at a court, and Mehak Kumari was sent to a women's police protection center, while the court directed a local medical college to ascertain the victim's age (PTI, 2020). The court later nullified the marriage on grounds of Mehak Kumari being underage, and thus unfit for marriage under Sections 3 and 4 of the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act (Press Trust of India, 2020).

It is important to note, however, that although the court nullified the marriage, it did so on technical grounds that ignored the religious aspects of the kidnapping and forcible conversion. And despite the decision, Mehak was sent to a shelter home, rather than back to her parents. She also received death threats from some religious clerics after she rescinded her prior statement saying she willingly accepted Islam (Tandon, 2020).

And in March 2019, two sisters Reena and Raveena, ages 13 and 15 respectively, were kidnapped from their home in Ghotki, Sindh, converted to Islam, and married to two Muslim men. The girls were then taken to Punjab province, where they were married to two Muslim men at the headquarters of a religious political party, Sunni Tehreek. After initially disregarding the girls' family's complaints, the police registered a formal case and arrested twelve people. The Islamabad High Court, however, eventually ruled against the family and found that the girls were above the legal mariagable age of 16 and that the girls converted to Islam out of their own free will (U.S. Department of State, 2019).

There were also several incidents involving other non-Muslim girls during the reporting period. On August 2019, a Sikh girl, Jagjit Kaur, was abducted by a Muslim man, Mohammad Hassan, who

was a member of the fundamentalist Jamaat-ud-Dawa organization (Chaudhury, 2019). After the victim's brother lodged a complaint with the police, an Islamic mob attacked and vandalized the local Sikh holy site, the Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, in January 2020 (Rana, 2020; Times of India, 2020). There have also been a number of Christian girls abducted and forcibly converted to Islam, including Myra Shehbaz in April 2020 and Huma Younus in October 2019 (Ochab, 2020). Other cases include that of four Christian girls, between 13 and 16 years of age, who were kidnapped together and gangraped by Muslim men, and an 11-year-old Christian girl who was kidnapped and gangraped for three days (Ochab, 2020).

ISLAMIC EXTREMISM AND SECTARIAN VIOLENCE

The Pakistani military establishment has long utilized terrorist/militant groups to pursue its foreign policy interests in India and Afghanistan, as well as in support of its domestic priorities. Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment has engaged in a proxy war in India's state of Jammu and Kashmir since the late 1980s by supporting terrorist groups there. In addition, it has supported Khalistan militants seeking to create an independent Sikh nation in the Indian state of Punjab. Moreover, there are a number of groups operating freely throughout the country, who promote Islamic rule, violent jihad (holy war), and hatred towards non-Muslims.

The following are a few of the extremist groups based in or with a large presence in Pakistan (Zavadski, 2014; SATP, 2017)²:

- › Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) – Sunni sectarian group that frequently attacks Shias;
- › Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) – State Department designated FTO and anti-India group operating in Kashmir;
- › Lashkar-e-Omar – a loose coalition of several militant groups;
- › Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi – militant group seeking to enforce sharia law;
- › Muslim United Army – an umbrella organization consisting of several extremist groups;
- › Hizb-ul-Mujahideen – State Department designated FTO and anti-India group operating in Kashmir;
- › Jaish-e-Mohammed – State Department designated FTO and anti-India group operating in Kashmir;
- › Afghan Taliban groups (ex: Quetta Shura and the Haqqani Network);
- › Tehreek-e-Taliban (Pakistani Taliban) – launched attacks on the Pakistani state;
- › Al Qaeda – maintains several bases in Pakistan and functions with the tacit support and assistance of the Pakistani military establishment;
- › ISIS – significantly expanding in Pakistan and recruiting Pakistani Taliban members;
- › Jundallah and Tehreek-e-Khilafat – militant groups allied to ISIS/ Islamic State.

Many of these groups have launched large-scale terror attacks in Pakistan on religious minorities and Muslims who

do not ascribe to their extremist views. In 2019, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for a bomb attack in an open air market targeting Shia Muslims from the Hazara community in Quetta, killing 24 innocent people and injuring dozens, as well as for an attack on a major Sufi shrine in Lahore, killing at least ten people (BBC, September 18, 2019; Bukhari, 2019).

Islamists have also increasingly created an intolerant and repressive atmosphere, and exerted extensive influence over government officials and policies. Furthermore, Islamist groups have imposed Islamic law in areas under their control, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the tribal areas. Militants in the tribal areas, including Khyber Agency, have forced Hindus and Sikhs to pay a punitive tax known as jizya (a tax historically imposed on non-Muslims living under Islamic rule) in return for their protection.

SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

Hindus, along with other religious and ethnic minorities, face systemic economic, political, and educational discrimination in Pakistan. Even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, Hindu and Christian laborers in the Lyari area of Karachi were denied emergency food aid by the Saylani Trust Fund, a local charity coordinating its activities with the Sindh provincial government. According to several Hindu laborers, Saylani Trust workers outrightly denied the distribution of rations to Hindus, as they claimed that rations were specifically for Muslims (ANI, 2020). Though they eventually

received some rations, the assistance was not nearly enough.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimates that there are between three and eight million bonded laborers who have been enslaved by the debt-bondage system in Pakistan (The Express Tribune, 2012). The system is characterized by patterns of abuse, detention, and exploitation, and enslaves mostly poor Hindus in Sindh and Christians in Punjab. Federal laws and provincial legislation have been ineffective in addressing the issue, while local police and government authorities have perpetuated the problem by refusing to register complaints against abusive landowners (Kalra, 2013, 5-6).

Furthermore, the education system continues to teach hatred towards religious minorities and promote violent jihad. A 2016 study conducted by the Pakistan-based NGO Peace and Education Foundation (PEF), “Teaching Intolerance in Pakistan: Religious Bias in Public School Textbooks”, notes that religious minorities are consistently described as “untrustworthy, religiously inferior, and ideologically scheming” across textbooks. A seventh grade textbook in Sindh province, for instance, claims that Hindus planned to “enslave Muslims,” while an eighth grade textbook in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa encourages students to “financially help in preparation of Jihad” if they cannot participate in Jihad themselves (Andrei, 2016).

Recently, the National Assembly of Pakistan approved the Compulsory Teaching of the Holy Quran Bill on April 19, 2017. The bill made Quranic education compulsory from Grade 1 through 12 in all federal educational institutions in Pakistan (Bilal, 2017).

It was passed by the Senate and made into law on August 31, 2017. On June 15, 2020, compulsory courses in the Quran were also introduced at the university-level in the Punjab, making it a prerequisite for graduation. The provincial government took this measure allegedly under pressure from an Islamic student organization, Islami-Jamiat Talaba, affiliated to the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami party (Ahmed, 2020).

Beyond the public school system, there has been a proliferation of Islamic schools, Madrasas, that further perpetuate hatred towards minorities. Although exact figures are unavailable, there are between 13,000 to 20,000 madrasas—most teaching the fundamentalist Deobandi approach to Islam—that provide basic schooling, religious education, as well as boarding and lodging to approximately 1 million boys from lower income families (Reuters, 2007).

Finally, remedial measures to purportedly increase the political representation of religious minorities—through reserving 10 seats in the national parliament—have been ineffective. This is due in part to the President’s ability to disband the legislature at his discretion, which may preemptively curtail demands for major constitutional changes (The Institute on Religion & Public Policy, 2013). Moreover, political parties, including Islamic fundamentalist ones, select minority candidates for reserved seats rather than the minority communities themselves that the candidates represent (Shakir, 2016).

SUPPRESSION OF ETHNIC MINORITY RIGHTS

In addition to religious freedom violations, the government’s suppression of the civil and human rights of ethnic minorities continues unabated. Human rights activists and organizations have long reported on the forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and torture of political and ethnic rights activists across Pakistan. According to Pakistan’s own state run agency, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, there are 2,178 unresolved cases of enforced disappearances (Amnesty International, 2019), though estimates from rights groups are much higher.

Moreover, a recent report from the Federal Human Rights Ministry found that close to 1,000 dead bodies of Baloch activists and separatists have been recovered in Balochistan province between 2010 and 2016, pointing to a pattern of extrajudicial killings and abuses by security forces (BBC, 2016). And Baloch rights’ groups allege that in the first six months of 2019 alone there were an estimated 371 enforced disappearances and at least 158 extra-judicial killings of activists in Balochistan by Pakistani security forces (Baloch Human Rights Organization, 2019). Similarly, in Sindh province, there have been a reported 1,200 cases of enforced disappearances of human rights defenders, activists, and journalists since 2010 (International Human Rights Council, 2018).

In Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the interim constitution places legal restrictions on political rights and freedom of expression by banning

parties that do not explicitly endorse Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. Similarly, government employees are required to express their support for accession. At least 100 Kashmiri civil rights activists have been killed in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir in the last two years, a region ranked by Freedom House as "Not Free" in their 2020 Freedom in the World Report (Freedom House, 2020).

Pakistan's military-intelligence apparatus has further settled large numbers of Sunni Muslims in Gilgit-Baltistan, a predominantly Shia Muslim area, to irreversibly change the demographics, leading to sectarian clashes and massacres of Shias (Chaudhuri, 2012; Rubin, 2020). According to Shia Rights Watch, there have been at least 23 targeted attacks on Shias in Gilgit-Baltistan between 2012 and 2016 (Shia Rights Watch, 2017).

REFUGEES

According to Hindu community leaders in Pakistan and NGOs in India, approximately 5,000 Hindus take refuge in India annually. Similarly, nearly 12,000 Pakistanis (mainly Christians) filed asylum claims in Thailand, many of whom are threatened with deportation, and an estimated 10,000 Ahmadiyyas have sought asylum in Germany, UK, and the US (Rabwah Times, 2016; SATP, 2017) .

Pakistani Christian refugees in Thailand faced legal limbo in terms of their residency status and were placed in overcrowded camps (Bandow, 2018). The Thai government has even convicted Pakistani asylum seekers for overstaying their visas and sent them

back to Pakistan (Outlook India, 2018).

Finally, conditions in India where most Pakistani Hindus flee as refugees were no better. Some have settled in overcrowded makeshift camps that lack potable water and formal electric connections (Habib, 2019; Raj, 2019). Until the 2019 passing of India's Citizenship Amendment Act, which expedites the path to citizenship for persecuted non-Muslim religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, they lacked the requisite legal status to apply for jobs, acquire bank loans, and buy property (Johari & Lalwani, 2019). The law only provides relief to those refugees that were already settled in India before 2015.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Religious minorities continued to suffer at an alarming rate in 2019-2020, with several high-profile attacks on religious communities. Women of minority faiths, particularly Hindus, endured rape and forced conversions, before forced marriages to Muslim men. Draconian blasphemy and apostasy laws are used to harass Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians. Such harassment, including long periods of pre-trial imprisonment, is done in collaboration with local judicial and law enforcement authorities. These and other discriminatory laws have left minorities as second class citizens and vulnerable to attacks by non-state actors. The Hindu American Foundation recommends the following policies:

FOR THE UNITED STATES:

The United States should impose targeted sanctions on Pakistan and Pakistani officials under the International Religious Freedom Act as a Country of Particular Concern for its "systematic, ongoing, [and] egregious violations of religious freedom" (Pompeo, 2019) against religious minorities, which include systematic persecution, as well as physical and sexual violence.

Current USAID teacher training programs should require revamping the textbook curriculum and incorporate sensitivity training to address discriminatory attitudes towards religious minorities and support for violent extremism among many teachers.

Civilian assistance should be focused on meaningful constitutional and legal reform to provide equality and religious freedom for minorities. And a portion of humanitarian and economic assistance should be earmarked for the benefit of the country's marginalized minorities.

FOR PAKISTAN:

The number of reserved seats for religious minorities in both federal and provincial legislatures should be increased and directly elected from minority communities.

Train local law enforcement to better deal with vigilante justice and mob attacks on individuals accused of committing blasphemy.

Train local law enforcement on how to deal with kidnappings, forced conversions, and involuntary marriages

of Hindu and Christian girls. Police must also crackdown on mosques that promote such activities.

Pass the Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Bill to criminalize forced conversions and protect the rights of Hindu (and other non-Muslim) girls, without making amendments and watering down provisions.

Enhance the protection of Hindu and Sikh religious sites and prevent non-state actors from vandalizing, attacking, illegally occupying, or destroying them

Inflammatory anti-minority content must be removed from public school textbooks and exemptions from Quranic courses at public schools and universities should be allowed for religious minorities.

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