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MONTHLY REPORT TEAM PAKISTAN

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Table of Contents

Sr. No.	Topic	Page Number
1.	Aim of the Report	1
2.	Overview of the Country	2
3.	Overview of the country's minorities groups & religions	3
4.	National Law	4
5.	International Law	6
6.	Children's Rights	7
7.	Women's Rights	9
8.	Religious Minorities	11
9.	LGBTQ+	13
10.	Positive developments	15
11.	Conclusion	16
12.	Bibliography	17

Aim of the Report

The aim of this monthly report is to provide an overview of the human rights abuses concerning minority and marginalised groups in Pakistan in the month of July 2022. The report will begin with an overview of Pakistan touching upon its history and current political structure. It will then briefly examine the country's minority groups and religions. The report will then provide an analysis of Pakistan's national and international legal frameworks. It will provide an overview of significant human rights abuses that occurred during July 2022. The report will cover specific categories, namely, children's rights, women's rights, religious minority rights and LGBTQ+ rights as well as highlighting positive developments within Pakistan regarding minority and marginalised groups in July 2022.

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Overview of the Country

The country of Pakistan, officially the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is located in the southern region of Asia. It is the fifth-highest populated country in the world, with an estimated population of 243 million people (CIA.gov, 2022). Following the dissipation of the British Empire in India in 1947, Pakistan arose from the movement for a homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent. The struggle for statehood and the ensuing movement of people led to the displacement of 15 million people and the estimated deaths of up to two million Indians and Pakistanis (Stanford University, 2019).

Pakistan is a Muslim-majority country with the Constitution of Pakistan recognising Islam as the State religion, yet stipulating that “every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice, propagate his religion” (Pakistan Constitution, Article 20(a)). Pakistan is ethnically and linguistically diverse, with a majority of Punjabis and Pashtuns, as well as smaller populations of Sindhis, Balochis, and other ethnic groups. Urdu is the national language, but English is also widely spoken.

Pakistan is a federal parliamentary republic, with President (Arif Alvi) as the head of State and Prime Minister (Shehbaz Sharif) as the head of the government. The Parliament of Pakistan is bicameral, composed of the Senate and the National Assembly. The country has a multi-party system, with several major parties, including the Pakistan People's Party, the Pakistan Muslim League (N), and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Pakistan is a nuclear power and a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. It is also a founding member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

Overview of the country's minorities groups & religions

Although Islam is the official religion enclosed in the Constitution under Article 2, Pakistan is characterised by a multitude of cultures, languages and ethnicities (Minority Rights Group, 2020). Article 20 of the Pakistani Constitution proclaims the freedom of religion and presents every citizen with the right to practise and promote their religions. Nevertheless, there is no specific definition of the term “minority” in the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, creating a substantial lacuna, especially in the field of human rights (Human rights Watch, 2020). In 2022, for instance, the government passed a new National Security Policy for the year 2022-2026, labelling “minorities” as “sub-national narratives” and characterising them as dangerous (National Security of Pakistan, 2022).

In a recent statistic, 96.28 percent of the population is Muslim (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). However, Muslims are not a monolithic group; a vast majority of this population professes Sunni Islam and has links with the Hanafi school of thought (Minority Rights Group, 2020). Non-Muslims constitute 3.72 percent of the total population. This consists of 1.59 percent Christians, 1.6 percent Hindus and 0.22 percent Ahmadis (Minority Rights Group, 2020). As the report will demonstrate, the proportion of religious minorities in the country is having a huge impact due to widespread religious persecution, such as forced religious conversion (Boone, 2017; Singh, 2022). Indeed, religious minorities have tremendously suffered this rise of nationalism and the preservation of the Islamic character in any sector of the society perpetrated by the actual government, like the infamous case of Pooja Kumari (The Tribune, 2022). Pooja was an 18-year-old Hindu girl, who was killed by a Muslim man. This man wanted to marry her after converting her to Islam, however, the poor girl showed resistance, enraging the man to shoot her, which left her dead on the spot (The Tribune, 2022).

National Law

4.1 Minorities and Freedom of Religion

Although Islam is the official religion enclosed in the Constitution in Article 2, Pakistan is characterised by many cultures, languages and ethnicities (Minority Rights Group, 2020). Article 20 of the Pakistani Constitution proclaims the freedom of religion and presents every citizen with the right to practise and promote their religions. Nevertheless, there is no specific definition of the term "minority" in the 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, creating a substantial lacuna, especially in the field of human rights (Human rights Watch, 2020). In 2022, for instance, the government passed a new National Security Policy for the year 2022-2026, labelling "minorities" as "sub-national narratives" and characterising them as dangerous (National Security of Pakistan, 2022).

4.2 Blasphemy Laws

Pakistan's laws on offences related to religion are often referred to as blasphemy laws (Commission of Jurists, 2015). Sections 295-A to 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code lay down crimes deemed to be offences against religion.¹ They include misusing religious appellations, defiling the Quran, outraging religious sentiment, using derogatory remarks against the Prophet, uttering words to wound religious feelings, etc.² The sentences for these offences range from fines to life imprisonment and the death sentence (Commission of Jurists, 2015). For the majority of these offences, bail cannot be claimed as a matter of right but only at the discretion of the court, allowing the police to start investigations and arrest alleged suspects without a warrant (Commission of Jurists, 2015). The Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997 includes Section 295-A of the Pakistan Penal Code, enabling special antiterrorism courts to try blasphemy offences.³

Blasphemy laws have often been misused to oppress minorities and marginalised groups and are therefore frequently denounced by civil society and human rights activists (Commission of Jurists, 2015). According to a Report by the UN Special Rapporteur, these laws run counter to the Constitution of Pakistan, as well as the rights under international human rights law, such as non-discrimination and freedom of expression.⁴ According to the International Commission of Jurists, many blasphemy allegations are raised out of personal vendetta or political motives (Commission of Jurists, 2015).

1. Pakistan Penal Code, Section 295-298 C.

2. Pakistan Penal Code, Section 295-298 C.

3. Pakistan Penal Code, Section 295-298 C.

4. For further information, see Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression and opinion, 'International Community must pay attention to the persecution of Ahmadi Muslims Worldwide' (Report), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/taxonomy/term/1284?page=11/>.

4.3 Children Rights

Article 25 (1) of the Constitution of Pakistan states, "all citizens are equal before law and entitled to equal protection of law".⁵ Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises "that every child has the inherent right to life"⁶ and as a State party, Pakistan is obliged to ensure the "maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child". Article 37 (a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states "No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment".⁷

4.4 Women Rights

In the 20th and now 21st century, however, numerous laws have been passed to guarantee women's rights from a legal point of view. The legislative assembly of Pakistan has enacted several measures designed to give women more power in the areas of family, inheritance, revenue, and civil and criminal laws, while also attempting to safeguard their right to freedom of speech and expression without gender discrimination, seeing this as required by the Quran. For instance, Sections 8 to 28 of the Constitution of Pakistan, in principle, assure equal opportunities and fundamental rights to all, without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, sex or gender (with some limitations in regard to minorities as previously explained). On the other hand, continued violence against women has resulted in the creation of laws such as the Muslim Personal Law of Sharia (addressing a woman's right to inherit all forms of property), the Muslim Family Law Ordinance or MFLO (intended to protect women against unjust but prevailing practices in regard to marriage, divorce, polygamy and other personal relationships), and the Hudood Ordinance. The latter was seen as working at cross-purposes to the rights of women by victimising women only, which the more recent Women's Protection Bill was introduced to correct.

5. Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 10 April 1973, Article 21 (1).

6. Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 UNTS 3 (CRC) Article 6.

7. Convention on the Rights of the Child (adopted 20 November 1989, entered into force 2 September 1990) 1577 UNTS 3 (CRC) Article 37 (a).

International Law

While international law seeks to regulate the behaviour between States, its legal framework is also relevant to individuals as they can derive their legal rights from international treaties. Therefore, victims of human rights violations are protected under international law. Minority groups are protected under the core international human rights treaties, some of which are more thematic than others. Children's rights for example are regulated by the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which is the most widely ratified human rights treaty. Whereas women are protected under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Religious rights are not afforded a thematic treaty however can be found throughout most of the human rights treaties in general. The International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) for example holds that it is prohibited to discriminate against one's religious beliefs.⁸ However, since religious rights are characterised as political rights it is thus mostly regulated under the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which lays down under Article 18 that “everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”.⁹

The core international human rights law treaties do not have a separate treaty dedicated to LGBTQ+ rights, however minorities belonging to the LGBTQ+ community are nevertheless protected under the core treaties as being free from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender. States, therefore, have the negative obligation not to interfere with nor violate the rights of LGBTQ+ citizens and have the positive obligations to ensure that mechanisms are provided for the enjoyment of their rights. Despite international law still having to develop in protecting LGBTQ+ thematic treaties, member states nevertheless have shown a great commitment to inclusive societies by adopting recommendations and resolutions.¹⁰ Pakistan is a party to all the core human rights treaties and by having ratified them, the rights protected under them apply in full effect to its nationals, unless a reservation is explicitly made by Pakistan.

8. ICERD, Article 5.

9. ICCPR, Article 18.

10 UNDP, 'Advancing the human rights and inclusion of LGBTI people' 2022, Retrieved from: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-03/UNDP_LGBTI_Handbook_Part_II_EN.pdf#page=4.

Children's Rights

One of the main violations faced by the children in Pakistan is sexual exploitation, including child pornography. In 2021, more than two million images of minors related to sexual exploitation were reported on Facebook in Pakistan.¹¹ Children in Pakistan belong to one of the minority groups and are every person below the age of 16. This age differs from the international definition of a child, which sets the age at 18.¹² However, States are free to set this age limit according to their own standards. Sexual exploitation is defined by the UNHCR as “[...] and actual or attempted abuse of someone's position of vulnerability [...] differential power or trust, to obtain sexual favours [...]”. Often acts are related to gaining financial profit and may also include human trafficking and prostitution.¹³

The increasing dangers that children in Pakistan are faced with recently revolves around the digital context. Despite the many advantages of the internet, it may also be a dangerous place for minors due to the effectiveness of websites being able to spread information fast and to a wider audience, and being mostly unregulated. This leads to an environment on which people can get profit by posting videos in which minors are sexually abused. In July 2022, the FIA made a discovery of a gang consisting of members who would sexually exploit minors and record videos of them, and posting them on the internet. Minors were lured and abused of their vulnerability and exploiters often threaten them in order to get their way, if these children do not listen, then they are threatened with their videos being published on social media platforms (Opinia, 2022).

Due to Pakistan's geographical position, it is seen as a transit and destination country for child trafficking of children. It is therefore seen as attractive for many countries in the Middle East and the UAE. However, it remains an increasing concern also on the national level.

The reason why child abuse is so problematic in Pakistan is because of its child labour laws. The Constitution of Pakistan together with labour legislation allows for children above 14 years to be affiliated with labour. Child labour is defined by the ILO as “work that has the potential to deprive children of their childhood, their dignity and is also harmful for their physical, moral and mental development and it interferes with their education”.

11. Salman Ahmed, 'Only 343 cases reported in Pakistan despite 2 million images of child abuse on Facebook, July 22, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://propakistani.pk/2022/07/22/only-343-cases-reported-in-pakistan-despite-2-million-images-of-child-abuse-on-facebook/>.

12. International Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1

13. UNHCR, 'What is sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment?' Retrieved from: <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.html>.

Child abuse can have a variety of negative consequences which are felt both on the individual as well as societal level. According to research, children who have been abused are at a risk of suffering mental as well as physical health complexities. As a result of this, children often hide the issues they experience which may cause the problem to only grow. Furthermore, children who are deprived from their childhood and thus do not attend school, may encounter difficulties to enter the job market. Consequently, these children may undergo drug problems and crimes.

As a result of the increasing worrying events of sexual exploitation of minors, in July 2022, an Amendment was passed by the KB Assembly, also referred to as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Child Protection and Welfare Act 2022, which gives more severe punishments to offenders related with sexual exploitation of minors. For example, the Bill introduced the death penalty for child abuse and also a higher prison sentence for child pornography, up to 14 years which can be extended to 20 years. Also people who indirectly are affiliated with child pornography are covered by the new legislation, for example ten years imprisonment is given to anyone who blackmails children with videos or shares such material.¹⁴ Even though this new legislation does not alter the child labour laws, making it easier for the rise of child abuse. It, nevertheless, makes it less attractive for offenders due to the strict punishments.

14. Newsweek Pakistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Passes Bill Seeking Capital Punishment for Child Abusers, 1 June 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.newsweekpakistan.com/khyber-pakhtunkhwa-passes-bill-seeking-capital-punishment-for-child-abusers/>

Women's Rights

July 2022 in Pakistan also marked violations of women's rights, including but not limited to kidnapping, human trafficking, rape, femicide and forced marriage of underage girls. On July 16th, it was reported that a 16-year-old Hindu girl named Karreena has allegedly been abducted and converted to Islam in Kazi Ahmed. According to her relative, she was converted on the same day and was married to a Muslim man named Khaliqz Zamaan but police did not take any actions (Express Tribune, 2022a). According to the FIR, Kareena was abducted by Khaliqz Zamaan along with his father. It said that the kidnappers barged into their home and abducted the girl (Express Tribune, 2022a). Even though the girl's family tried to approach local influential persons for help, it is said that the police still did not pay serious attention and adequate effort to address the difficult issues faced by Hindu community in Pakistan (Express Tribune, 2022a).

Another case happened on July 27th, in which another 16-year-old Norwegian girl named Zainab was kidnapped from Gulberg by a student of intermediate (Express Tribune, 2022b). Three days later, the police managed to arrest the accused and recover Zainab (Express Tribune, 2022b). There are also cases where sexual crimes against women often appear together with kidnappings. On July 5th, it is reported that four men abducted a woman and continued to rape her for several days, later she was moved to another house where the men continued to sexually assault her (Express Tribune, 2022c). After the victim escaped and reached the police station, the police registered the case but were not able to arrest the suspects despite their identification by the victim (Express Tribune, 2022c).

There is even a case in which the suspect masqueraded as police official, kidnapped and raped a 14-year-old girl named Sadaf at gunpoint (Pakistan Today, 2022a). The victim girl started raising an alarm and screaming, finally she was rescued by the locals from further suffering. It is said that the accused even hurled life threats to the girl's father, and the police were trying to protect the rapist by not registering the case, which was denied by the police station (Pakistan Today, 2022a). However, according to police sources, many individuals who pretend to be police officials and take advantage of it have got favour of some real police officials in the department (Pakistan Today, 2022a).

In Pakistan, the victims of sexual crimes are not limited to Pakistani women, but also women of other nationalities. In one case, a 21-year-old American vlogger was raped by three men on the night of July 17th, in a hotel room (Express Tribune, 2022d). According to the victim, one of the men had also recorded her video and threatened her afterwards (Express Tribune, 2022d). According to the police, the suspects have

been arrested and the complainant was sent to a hospital for medico-legal proceedings (Express Tribune, 2022). In addition to kidnapping, trafficking, and sex crimes, there is more brutal violence against women in Pakistan including femicide, in which women are mostly killed due to gender issues. Also in July, police claimed to have solved a murder of an unidentified woman and arrested the suspect who confessed to the crime (Time of Pakistan, 2022). According to the suspect, he suffocated the victim to death simply because she refused his marriage proposal (Time of Pakistan, 2022).

The same tragedy also happened to minor girls in Pakistan. Still in July, it was reported that an 11-year-old girl named Mahnoor was killed at the Railway Quarters in the Cantt area with her body showing signs of violence (The Nation, 2022). The locals blocked the main road and demanded immediate arrest of the murderers, but the police has failed so far to solve this case (The Nation, 2022). Meanwhile, a minor girl was also killed by her own father in Charsadda district, according to the police, the suspects said that the girl was killed in the name of honour (The Nation, 2022). Although Pakistan's protection of women's rights has always been unsatisfactory, it is undeniable that the government authority is also taking measures to improve the status quo. It was reported on July 13th that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province had announced free transportation for female students within the province (Pakistan Today, 2022b). According to the press, many female students in KP province were stopped from continuing their education each year because of the long distances between homes and schools and the lack of affordable transportation options for them to travel (Pakistan Today, 2022b).

In conclusion, a series of brutal violence of women's rights in July have shown systematic defects of women's protection in Pakistan. Sexual violence and kidnapping against women, especially minor girls remained to be the most pressing problems. Women in Pakistan, whether they are Pakistani nationals or not, are subject to indiscriminate threats to their personal safety. In an environment where the rights to life and freedom cannot even be protected, the rights to development, work and education will all become empty talk. Although the government has made some positive changes in ensuring women's right to education, the overall cultural environment and the long-standing tradition of gender discrimination still play dominant roles in the Pakistani society, and the protection of women's rights still needs more efforts and struggles.

Religious Minorities

Every person has equal rights, according to the 1973 constitution. They are free to worship their spiritual patrimony and practice it. The constitution of 1973 grants the religious minorities fundamental rights, as follows (Pakistan National Assembly 1973). Protests broke out in Sindh Province following the alleged kidnapping of Shrimati Kareena, a Hindu girl from the locality (Dawn, 2022). The protesters chanted slogans against police and demanded former president Asif Ali Zardari intervene to help them recover the girl, who was allegedly kidnapped in Unnar Muhalla. The police and SSP¹⁵ combatted the claims, stating that she had filed marriage with a muslim man in Karachi, and promised to present Kareena in the Sindh High Court. This narrative was rejected Hindu Panchayat vice president Lajpat Rai stating that police had registered an FIR¹⁶ but failed to help a delegation sent by the Hindu community. Another Panchayat leader, Manomal, argued that the abducted girl had been under pressure to change religion and was not going to be produced in any court.

In Lahore, Ashfaq Masih, a Christian mechanic was sentenced to death for blasphemy after being arrested in 2017 (Sayeed, 2022). The reason for his arrest arose from a verbal dispute at Masih's repair shop following a customer being denied a faith-based discount. The customer had demanded a reduction in the cost of repairs, and had explained that he was a devout Muslim. Masih had allegedly responded by explaining that he also needed the money and that he believed in Jesus Christ and was not interested if the customer happened to be Muslim. He said later in court: 'I insisted on my bill and said that I don't follow anyone other than Jesus, and so wasn't interested in the man's religious status'. Nasir Saeed, the director of the Centre for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, a Christian legal defence charity underlined 'Because of pressure from the Islamic groups, lower courts' judges are always hesitant to free the victims but make popular decisions to save their skin and shift their burden to the high court'.

He went on to add that 'The vigilante killing, and misuse of the blasphemy law continues to grow in Pakistan, especially against religious minorities. Several innocent people have been killed and their worship places are attacked merely on allegations of blasphemy'.

Finally, he stated that 'The National Assembly has passed a resolution calling for the law not to be abused in ways like this, but failed to bring any changes or legislation to stop the ongoing misuse of the blasphemy law. Also, concerning abuses involving Pakistan's Christian minority, 14-year-old Nayab Gill was

15. Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP, سپاہ صحابہ پاکستان-Guardians of the Prophet's Companions): Islamist organisation in Pakistan, which also functions as a political party.

16. First Incident Report.

allegedly forcibly converted and 'sold off' by her husband in Gujranwala district. District police have only now been authorised to recover and present the girl in court after the family of the victim accused her husband Saddam Hayat of the crime nearly a year ago. Shahid Gill, the father of the girl, has expressed his concern over the whereabouts of his daughter, and highlighted that Hayat has repeatedly changed his statements involving her disappearance. Gill told the news agency ANI that 'It is now nearly a year that we have filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against the high court's decision to hand Nayab's custody to Saddam, but the court has not taken up our case'.

It is also vital to note the attempted removal of rights in regard to Pakistan's Ahmadi minority, as Malik Ilyas Awan, deputy president of the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid has called for the withdrawal of security provided to Ahmadis in Jauharabad town (Chaudry, 2022). This withdrawal was demanded in an application to the deputy commissioner in Khushab district in Punjab province on July 30th, 2022. The politician referenced the previously existing frameworks, saying “They cannot worship openly in the Islamic state of Pakistan. They were granted a place in Chenab Nagar during the government of [Zulfiqar Ali] Bhutto. They cannot hold any kind of worship outside.” Ahmadiyya people make up 0.09 percent of Pakistan's population of 207.68 million.

In response to the statement, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan “strongly” condemned the demand of the PML-Q leader (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2022).

On June 2022, 13 Ahmadis were arrested for sacrificing animals during Eid al-Adha, or the Festival of Sacrifice, in four cities including Rabwah, demonstrating that the threat faced by the community is both immediate and brutal.

LGBTQ+

With the adoption of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act¹⁷ in 2018, Pakistan established a law that prohibits discrimination against transgender people in schools, workplaces and public places as well as guaranteeing them the right to choose their gender on official documents (The New York Times, 2022). For Pakistan's transgender community, Khawaja Sira, this piece of legislation is a big step forward considering Pakistan as a nation known for religious conservatism and still outlawing same-sex relations.

However, the enforcement of this 2018 legislation is lacking as well as it is seen as legislated without recourse to local realities, cultural implications and judicial safeguards as expressed during a roundtable consultation at the Institute of Policy Studies in collaboration with the Shaybani Foundation and National Law College (Pakistan Today, 2022). A major issue is the enforcement of the law which has been inconsistent throughout Pakistan's provinces which are responsible for the local implementation of federal policies across fields such as health, education, security and family law (The New York Times, 2022). As an example, while the piece of legislation includes provisions requiring the establishment of protection centres where transgender people can access mental health service, legal services and temporary housing, only one has been opened so far in Islamabad.

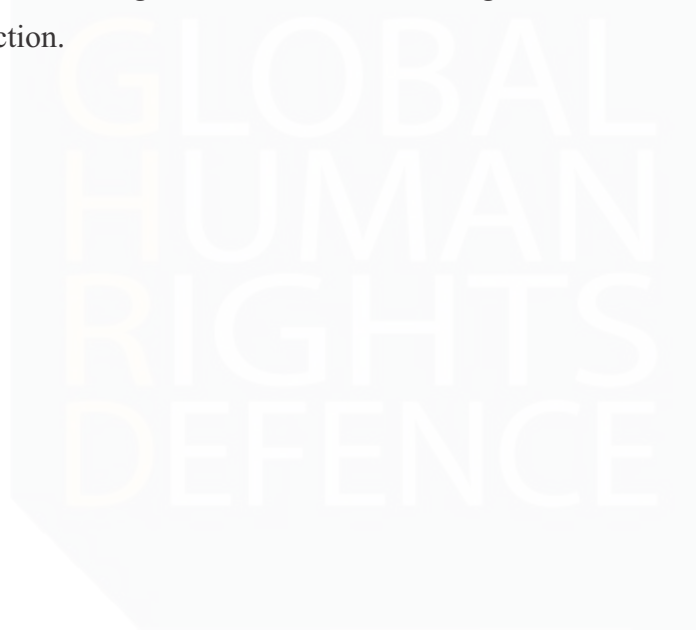
Further, as a transgender community leader in Karachi, Bindiya Rana, expressed, that the adoption of the 2018 legislation protecting the transgender community's rights is not sufficient to overcome the challenge changing the society's mind-set as a section of people still considers transgender persons as either their property or as less human (The New York Times, 2022). In this regard, prominent conservatives have denounced the law calling the push for transgender rights anti-Muslim and a liberal Western conspiracy. Qari Bashir Qadri, an Islamic cleric in Karachi, stated that the 2018 legislation is the result of the West pressuring Pakistan to promote vulgarity and that the country's Muslim population, however, will not allow the conspiracy to make the country liberal through such measures (The New York Times, 2022).

Furthermore, regarding the enforcement of the legislation, Saroop Ijaz, the senior counsel in the Asian division of Human Rights Watch, expressed that in order for the continuing brutal attack on transgender individuals to end, authorities will need to signal to perpetrators that they will actually be held accountable and enforce the established law (The New York Times, 2022). Moreover, Dr. Sarah Gill, a transgender physician, who recently began working in Karachi's major public hospital stated that even though the

17. Transgender rights codified by the Transgender Act 2018 (For the full text of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018, please follow this link: http://www.senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1536559131_237.pdf.)

transgender community is more included towards getting educational and respectable jobs, enormous obstacles still remain (The New York Times, 2022).

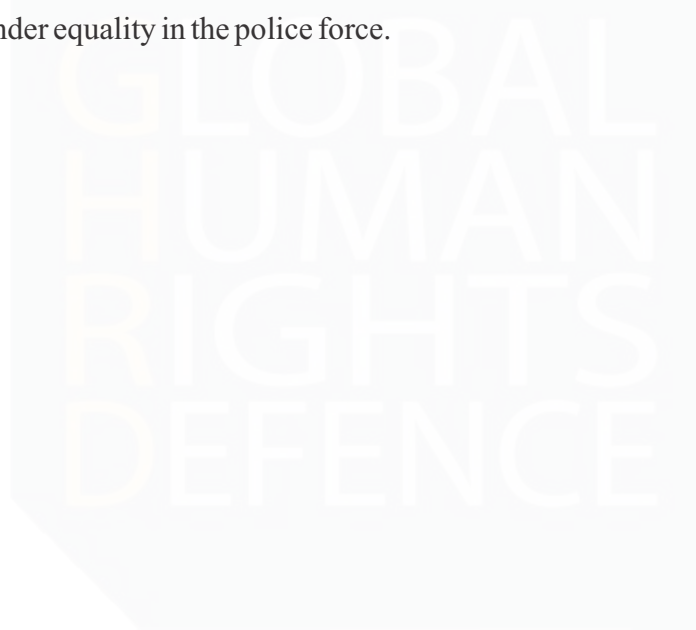
Therefore, as transgender persons are still facing discrimination and violence, many live as they did before the adoption of the 2018 legislation hiding their identities, shunned by their families, being violently attacked, denied medical care and huddling together in group homes for safety (The New York Times, 2022). In fact, on July 25th, 2022, a transgender person was shot dead in Peshawar the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkwa (Dawn, 2022). The Faqirabad police stated that the transgender person was shot dead in the Dalazak road area by an attacker after arguments. During the incident, the deceased was accompanied by another transgender person who expressed to the police that they were having tea at a stall when the now identified attacker arrived at the scene, got into an argument with the victim and finally opened fire. Furthermore, the police declared the possession of collected evidence as well as they had registered an FIR against the suspected murdered. With regard to this incident, the president of the Transgender Association in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Arzoo Khan, expressed that this was not an isolated case as seven transgender individuals had been killed in the province over the past five months showing that the discrimination and violence transgender individuals are facing are continuous issues despite the legislation adopted for their protection.



Positive developments

The Sindh Assembly passed a law that fixed half percent of a quota for transgender persons in the government as well as private sector. Whilst a five percent quota already existed for minorities and persons with disabilities, the growing population of transgenders in Pakistan calls for a higher representation in the public sphere, and this law comes at a time of great marginalisation of them. The Sindh Civil Servants Act of 1973 will be amended to include this change.

The government of Gilgit Baltistan launched a program that would cover lunch meals for children in all primary schools, six days a week. On top of that, it will also cover their health, and provide free testing. The UK launched a new programme in Pakistan that would support education for girls in Pakistan across the least developed districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The programme, titled Girls and Out of School: Action for Learning, will directly support 250,000 marginalised children to enrol and stay in school, whilst also supporting 150,000 girls to read by the age of ten. Twenty-six-years-old Manisha Ropeta became the first Hindu woman in Pakistan to become a deputy superintendent of police. Belonging to a middle-class family in Sindh, she entered the police force after a failed medical entrance exam and hopes to encourage gender equality in the police force.



Conclusion

Considering all that happened in July 2022, it is obvious that Pakistan still has a long way to go, especially in preventing violations against women, children, religious and gender minorities. The government authorities must immediately fulfil their positive obligations to protect human rights. From the reports mentioned above, the protection for vulnerable groups in Pakistan remains inadequate, especially for the protection of women and children. Sex crimes against women and children, human trafficking, femicide, forced marriage, and sexual exploitation against children, such as child pornography and child labour, are still prevalent in Pakistan. It is upsetting that Pakistan remains one of the most dangerous countries for women and children. It seems that the governments hardly made any progress in changing the situation. Although the government's protection of children's rights is still insufficient, the rights to education, life and health, especially for girls' rights to develop, are constantly improving.

In addition, discrimination, including but not limited to persecution, lynching and other abuses against religious minorities, remain widespread. The vigilante killing and misuse of the blasphemy law continue to grow in Pakistan. Even though freedom of religion is written in the Constitution, the government keeps establishing new legislation to achieve it, and the reality remains serious. As for gender minorities, with the adoption of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act in 2018, Pakistan established a law that prohibits discrimination against transgender people in public. However, the Act's enforcement was never satisfying, neither it is seen as legislated without recourse to local realities, cultural implications and judicial safeguards. Due to social disapproval of sexual minorities, many of them cannot continue their normal lives and face more dangers than the sexual majority, including systemic discrimination in housing, work, education, and health care.

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