



Pakistan Report

October 2020

Pakistan's Constitution allows freedom of religion or belief for minority groups. In addition, the country is also bound by numerous international treaties that guard the rights and religious liberty of minorities. Unfortunately, this is something established on paper. In reality, the continuing attacks on minorities narrate a different story. The attacks are manifested in various forms of targeted violence, abduction, conversion to Islam, extrajudicial killings.

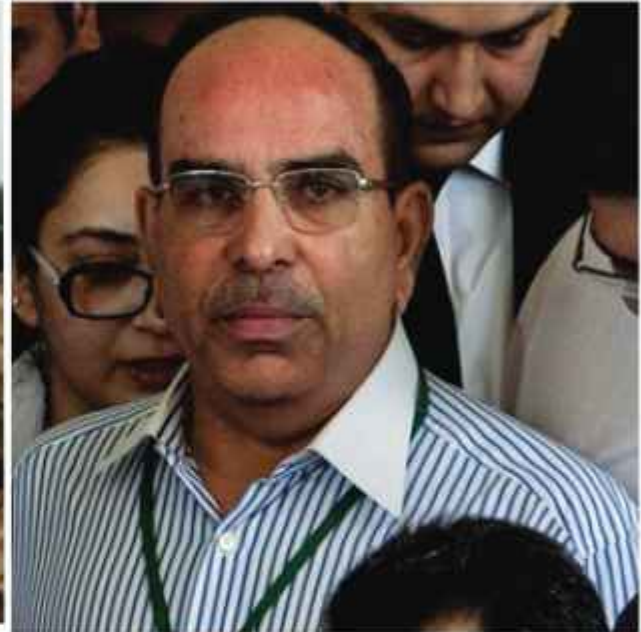
In October Pakistan, again has violated numerous human rights such as;

- Forceful occupation of land;
- In October, again, two Hindu temples have been destroyed by Muslim extremists. No action has been taken yet against the perpetrators;
- Repression on Human rights activist continues in Pakistan;
- Forced conversions of minors have become a routine in Pakistan, instead of reuniting the minor girls with their families, most of the time the Court sides perpetrators in their final decision.

This report is intended to raise awareness of the situation of minorities in Pakistan and encourage constructive policy change by national and international bodies.

Land grabbing

Bahria Town Personnel Terrorising Malir Villagers By Forcibly Taking Over Land



Forceful occupation and intimidation have been a tactic of Bahria Town for a long time now. The village Malir village was terrorized by Bahira town personnel last year. At that time, they marked homes and threatened to build a road in that area. In 2016 Bahira Town members demolished the village's local graveyard, destroyed poultry farms, and cut off the residents' access to drinking water. Even the police have been involved in this crime because the village residents have continuously been threatened and assaulted by policemen who have filed false criminal charges against them. This year Bahria Town administration forcibly took over land Haji Ali Muhammad Goth in district Malir, using bulldozers and excavators. A resident of the village stated that three men who claimed to be members of Bahria Town Karachi Limited (BTKL), accompanied by police officers, forcibly entered Haji Ali Mohammad Goth in DehLangeji, district Malir. When the residents resisted, they brought excavators and bulldozers and proceeded to take the land by force. The Bahira Town personnel further threatened that similar actions had been taken in other villages that had resisted them, he said.

Bahira Town has tormented these villagers for years. Various international and national laws have been violated by Bahria Town, including peoples' first right to determine land use, women's rights, environment, wildlife, heritage, and antiquities.

Source: Nayadaur

<https://nayadaur.tv/2020/10/bahria-town-personnel-terrorising-malir-villagers-by-forcibly-taking-over-land/>

Tempel vandalization

Hindu temple vandalized in Pakistan



Condemning the recent vandalism of Hindu Temple in Pakistan's Sindh region, London-based Pakistani human rights activist and spokeswoman for Justice for Minorities in Pakistan Anila Gulzar said that only 20 temples out of 428 are left.

"I strongly condemn the brutal act of vandalism committed against Shri Ram Mandir in Badin Sindh Pakistan on the 10th of October. Out of 428, only 20 mandirs are left in Sindh," Gulzar said in a Facebook post.

According to media reports, the Hindu temple was vandalized in KarioGhanwar area of Sindh's Badin province on Saturday (the 10th of October)

The case is yet another example of the deplorable conditions of minorities in the state of Pakistan.

Hindus constitute the largest minority community in Pakistan, but there have been repeated reports of vandalism committed against Hindu temples. The Hindu community has expressed anger and outrage at this attack.

It is notable here that the Sindh region has continuously been witnessing attacks on the minority Hindus over their faith. Hindu girls being raped or forcible conversion of Hindu girls.

Source: Newslive tv

<https://newslivetv.com/hindu-temple-vandalised-in-pakistan/>



During the nine-day Navratri festivities, a Hindu temple was vandalized, and the idol of the Goddess desecrated. This happened in the Nagarpakar area of Pakistan's Sindh province.

The attack reportedly took place on the 24th of October after the Hindu community had offered the day's prayer.

The vandals even desecrated the Goddess Durga idol in an apparent act of hate. According to news reports, senior Sindh police officials have, however, 'assured that they are aware' of the incident and will soon be making arrests of the people responsible for the disrespectful act. No updates have been reported so far

Source: DNA INDIA

<https://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-pakistan-chemical-weapons-to-silence-voices-of-activists-in-balochistan-and-sindh-alleges-dr-nazar-baloch-2848697>

Enforced conversion

Bill against forced religious conversions to be tabled again

The Sindh Government has said that it plans to present the legislation again in the Sindh Assembly to criminalize the instances of forced conversion of religion in the province.

Adviser to Sindh Chief Minister on Law and Environment Barrister Murtaza Wahab, who is also the spokesman for Sindh government, expressed the intention that the bill against forced conversion of religion would be presented again in the provincial assembly after consulting the concerned clerics and religious parties.

The Sindh Assembly in 2016 adopted the Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Bill-2015 against the acts of forced conversion of religion in the province. However, the then Sindh Governor Justice (retd) Saeeduzzaman Siddiqui returned the bill to the provincial assembly without his assent following objections to the newly passed law by the concerned religious parties. The provincial assembly later did not get the chance to reconsider the bill following the governor's objections. The most controversial section of the bill related to the prohibition of religion conversion before 18 years of age.

Even though Sindh had already imposed a ban on girls' marriages having an age less than 18 years, the cases of conversion of religion involved instances in which girls of religious minorities were taken to other provinces where these marriages took place easily. People took advantage of the fact that other provinces allowed marriages of girls having an age less than 18.

Source: Gulf

<https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pakistan/pakistan-bill-against-forced-religious-conversions-to-be-tabled-again-1.74517716lfnews>

Parliamentary Committee in Pakistan Meets with Minorities on Issue of Forced Conversions



According to Dawn, several members of the Parliamentary Committee to Protect Minorities from Forced Conversions met with representatives of minority communities in Pakistan's Sindh province to discuss the issue of forced conversions on the 8th of October.

During the meeting, the committee claimed the government was fully committed to protecting the fundamental rights of religious minorities as provided by Pakistan's Constitution. It also claimed that several steps had been taken to stop abductions, forced conversions, and forced marriages.

Speaking about the issue of forced conversions, Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, Federal Minister for Religious and Inter-Faith Harmony, said, "We bring religion into everything. But our religion is against forceful conversions. The issue here is the non-implementation of laws to stop such wrongdoing. Awareness is also needed regarding the issue of forced conversions."

According to a study by the Movement for Solidarity and Peace Pakistan, an estimated 1,000 Christian and Hindu women are abducted, forcefully married, and forcefully converted to Islam every year. Perpetrators use sexual assaults and fraudulent marriages to entrap victims and authorities are often complicit.

Religion is also often injected into cases of sexual assault to place victims from religious minority communities at a disadvantage. Playing upon religious biases, perpetrators know they can cover up and justify their crimes by introducing an element of religion.

Source: The persecution
<https://www.persecution.org/2020/10/12/parliamentary-committee-pakistan-meets-minorities-issue-forced-conversions/>

Court approves the conversion and marriage of 13-year-old Arzoo Raja.



The High Court of Sindh in Karachi has agreed with the kidnappers of Arzoo Raja, a 13-year-old girl who, after being kidnapped, was converted to Islam and forced into a forced marriage with a 44-year-old man.

The court, to which the kidnappers had turned after being accused by the girl's family, agreed with them, stating that Arzoo had freely accepted Islam and freely married 44-year-old Ali Azhar. The court also ordered that no arrests be made.

During the court proceedings, Arzoo's mother, Rita Masih, burst into tears. "Let me see my daughter, she is in there, but they [the kidnappers, the police, and the court] will not allow me to see my innocent little daughter. Arzoo, my sweetheart, come to your mom and give me a big hug, my dear daughter. Your sister got sick from what happened to you; your brother no longer eats because they want you home. My daughter is only 13, she is innocent. They [the kidnappers] keep lying and will not let me meet my little girl. I want my daughter back! Please, please, help me!"

Then Rita Masih passed out, but the court, the police and the kidnappers did not allow her to meet her daughter. In another room, Arzoo was crying (see photo) and spread her arms as if to hug her mother, but the police blocked her and kept her away.

In recent days, demonstrations were held throughout the country to denounce the violence against minorities, forced marriages, and the specific case of Arzoo Raja.

The National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) has condemned this injustice, another example of the growing religious intolerance in Pakistan, where forced conversions have become a privileged tool of persecution against Christians and Hindus. In a joint statement by the president of the NCJP, Msgr. Joseph Arshad and the director Fr. Emmanuel Yousaf (Mani), say that intolerance towards religious minorities “has become an enormous challenge. At least the case of Arzoo has been recorded, but many other incidents of this type are not reported. Arzoo’s family showed her birth certificate, which proves that she is 13 and that her marriage to Azhar violates the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act.”

The NCJP asks the government to intervene in this incident that has offended the entire Christian community in Pakistan.

The bishop of Islamabad Rawalpindi calls on the government to ensure justice in the case of Arzoo and to ensure that these incidents end. “It is the responsibility of the state to legislate to protect its citizens, especially underage girls,” he said.

In 2016, a law against forced conversions was introduced at the Provincial Assembly of Sindh, but it is still under discussion. The government must work to guarantee the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan, as in the Constitution”.

Source: Asia news

Enforced disappearance

Massive protests in Gilgit-Baltistan against Pakistan Army government's human rights violations



out in the Gilgit-Baltistan area in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) against the atrocities by Pakistan Army and government. The protestors have demanded the release of political prisoners and have alleged that the state machinery has been violating the human rights of the local population.

Raising slogans of - Ye jo dehshatgardihain, uskepeechhevardihain (Administration/ uniform is behind the violation) - thousands of protestors have taken to streets for the past four days. Visuals showed political leaders, men, women, and people from across strata taking to the streets against the Pakistan government's suppression.

India snubs Pakistan at UN platforms

The protests may be viewed against the Pakistan government's newfound attempts to project itself as the defender of human rights at global platforms such as the United Nations. Islamabad has vehemently attacked New Delhi, alleging human rights violations in Kashmir. At the same time, India has vociferously thrashed Pakistan's attempts by highlighting how the minorities in that country have been reduced from 23 percent at the time of independence to merely three-four percent by now.

Source: timesnownews

<https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/protests-by-people-in-gilgit-baltistan-against-pakistan-army-govt-alleging-human-rights-violation-watch/664571>

Tagar returns home



Gulsher Tagar, a student activist and three-time gold medalist in Sindhi literature, has returned home to his village in Matiari district 39 months after his alleged abduction from Karachi in 2017.

Gulsher Tagar, said to be a worker of the nationalist JSQM (Arisar) party, was abducted from Malir's Ghaghar Phatak in Karachi 30th of July, 2017. There have been many demonstrations calling for Gulsher Tagar's recovery as part of protests highlighting scores of enforced disappearances in Sindh. Upon his arrival in his ancestral village Soomar, residents say Tagar's mother, sisters, and villagers' scores had tears in their eyes seeing him alive.

Speaking to Voicepk.net, Ali Sher Tagar, brother of Gulsher Tagar, confirms his brother's return saying Tagar appeared healthy and in high spirits despite his 39-month incarceration. "Gulsher first reached his brother's house in Hyderabad and later came to his ancestral village in Matiari," he says. Ali Sher Tagar says his brother has refused to speak to media persons, adding that Tagar has not spoken to family members about his ordeal's details yet.

According to Voice of Missing Persons of Sindh representative Inaam Abbasi, Tagar had been awarded gold medals thrice by the University of Sindh for excellent performance in Sindhi literature. Besides, he was an editor of a magazine. Tagar was studying as a second-year law student at Sindh Law College in Hyderabad when he went missing from Karachi in 2017. Abbasi says many victims of enforced disappearances have returned home in recent days, adding that the victims were tight-lipped about speaking about their ordeal.

Asad Butt, the vice-chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, says most victims of enforced disappearances in Sindh are affiliated with nationalist groups. State authorities often detain such individuals accusing them of sabotage, espionage, and receiving funding from India. Butt says enforced disappearances spread anarchy in society and push citizens into a blind alley.

Source: VoicePK

<https://voicepk.net/2020/10/31/gulshan-tagar-in-high-spirits-says-family/>

Blasphemy

Professor belonging to Ahmadi community shot dead in Peshawar allegedly after a religious argument



A professor belonging to the Ahmadiya community was shot dead in a targeted attack in Peshawar on Monday (the 5th of October), allegedly over his religious beliefs.

Police identified the deceased as Prof Dr. Naeemuddin Khattak, a faculty member at the Government Superior Science College Peshawar.

Naeemuddin, 57, whose death coincided with International Teachers Day being observed today, held a Ph.D. degree in zoology, according to the Anjuman Ahmadiyya Pakistan.

Bhana Mari police, in whose limits the incident took place, registered a first information report (FIR) on the deceased's brother's complaint.

According to the FIR, the complainant told police that he had paid a visit to his brother Naeemuddin at the latter's college, and the duo later left for home.

Naeemuddin was driving his car, and his brother was on his motorcycle. While they passed through the Wazir Bagh area around 1:30pm, two men riding a motorcycle stopped the professor's car, opened fire on him, and fled, the FIR said.

Moharrar Ashoor Khan said the professor received five bullets and died on the spot.

The complainant nominated a friend of the deceased who is a lecturer at the University of Agriculture, Peshawar, and another man as suspects behind the murder. According to the FIR, Naeemuddin and his alleged killer (the lecturer) had a heated argument over a religious issue a day earlier.

Source: Dawn news

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1583413?ref=whatsapp>

Human rights hails acquittal of Pakistani Christian for blasphemy.



Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP) hailed the Lahore High Court (LHC) verdict of acquitting Sawan Masih, a Christian man on death row for the last eight years.

Sawan Masih belonged to Joseph Colony Lahore and was a sanitary worker and a father of three children, having a wife and old parents. He was convicted of insulting the prophet Muhammad.

A First Information Report (FIR) was lodged on the 8th of March, 2013, in which the applicant stated that Sawan used derogatory remarks against Prophet Muhammad. He was then arrested and sent to judicial lock-up first in Lahore and then to Faisalabad.

The attached steel market of Badami Bagh's workers in collusion with extremists in the mob attacked Joseph Colony for revenge from Christians and demanded to hand over Sawan Masih for execution at the spot. The residents had no option but to vacate the colony leaving behind their hard-earned valuables. Most of the families fled, around 200 houses were burnt and looted, including Sawan's house.

Sawan Masih was convicted on the 27th of March, 2014, in the court of Ch. Ghulam Murtaza, Additional Sessions Judge Lahore for offense u/s 295-C PPC and sentenced to death along with a fine was imposed.

Naveed Walter, President of Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP) said that blasphemy charges are the results of personal grudges, biased behaviors, discriminatory practices, and the verdict on the Sawan Masih case has proved again after Asia bibi's case.

He added, "The blasphemy cases processed slower because the free and fair trials also become a challenge in such cases.

The basic principles of criminal justice are ignored, as in Sawan's case. The trial court completely ignored a serious lapse in the prosecution case of 33 hours of unexplained inordinate delay of recording the FIR over such a sensitive issue by the complainant.

Naveed Walter said that the victims of blasphemy face exacerbated trauma amid delays in their cases reaching trial and justice, bear spitting and abusive arguments like infidels and inhuman insulting behaviors, violent attitudes, sufferings face extreme hardships. He said the blasphemy victims need proper diets, health, and safety in prisons and court hearings. The HRFP has raised a voice for justice to blasphemy victims and against all discriminatory practices against minorities in Pakistan. (ANI)

Source: Central Asia News
<https://www.centralasianews.net/news/266632380/human-rights-hails-acquittal-of-pakistani-christian-for-blasphemy>

Other human rights issues

Pakistan law ministry seeks discontinuation of two-finger test on rape victims

The Pakistan government has disapproved of the two-finger test (TFT) performed on rape victims and recommended that it should not be part of any medico-legal examination report in sexual assault cases. The Ministry of Law and Justice has intimated the Additional Attorney General at Lahore, Chaudhry Ishtiaq Ahmed Khan, about the recommendation. He will now inform the Lahore High Court about the federal government's stance, the Dawn News reported. The court sought the law ministry's response after going through a statement

by the World Health Organisation, which has declared virginity testing as "unscientific, medically unnecessary and unreliable." In a statement, the law ministry observed that the TFT was an "inconclusive test". Also, how the test was conducted violated Article 14 of the Constitution, which lays down that human dignity and the home's privacy must be respected under all circumstances. The right to privacy would take precedence over any other inconsistent provisions of the law, the daily said.

One petition was filed by a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) member of the National Assembly and the other by a group of women's rights activists, academics, journalists, and advocates. The petitioners contended that the TFT was "disrespectful, inhumane and violated women's fundamental rights". The petitioners sought a declaration that these practices constituted a violation of women's fundamental rights, including the rights to life, privacy, dignity, bodily integrity, access to justice, protection from cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. The petitioners called upon governments to take measures to ensure the physical and mental health of all women undergoing the medico-legal examination and to adopt scientific methods of investigating claims of rape and sexual assault.

Source: Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/pakistan/pakistan-law-ministry-seeks-discontinuation-of-two-finger-test-on-rape-victims-6719547/>

Pakistan: Chemical weapons used to silence voices of activists in Balochistan and Sindh, alleges Dr Nazar Baloch

Pakistan has been involved in war crimes, human rights violations and genocide for a long time. However, the barbarism and inhumanity level depicted recently in Balochistan and Sindh are too shocking as thousands of Baloch nationalist activists have disappeared from Balochistan, and hundreds of young Sindhi and Urdu-speaking local workers from Sindh have been abducted by Pakistani agencies.

They remain traceless, supposedly kept in torture chambers for years. Furthermore, the Pakistani Army does not hand over the dead bodies of the Baloch activists who get killed in action by the Army. This is entirely unethical and in complete violation of international rules of war by itself.

As per a recent disclosure by Baloch national leader Dr. Allah Nazar Baloch, using chemical weapons by the Pakistan Army reinforces the belief of their heinous acts. "Not handing over the dead bodies of martyrs to their families raises the suspicion that Pakistan had used chemical weapons," alleges Dr Nazar Baloch in a statement published on the news intervention portal.

Baloch said that Pakistan's barbarism makes the belief stronger that living a life within this state is an utmost humiliation and disgrace for the Baloch people. The relatives of the killed activists are put under threat when they ask for the body of their loved ones

Source: Indian Express

<https://indianexpress.com/article/pakistan/pakistan-law-ministry-seeks-discontinuation-of-two-finger-test-on-rape-victims-6719547/>



Pakistan Monthly Report October 2020

Referential

This report aims to highlight the various human rights violations in Pakistan during October (2020). In compiling this report, GHRD used information from various sources that covered these grave inhuman violations.

Therefore GHRD wants to pay their gratitude to the following sources:

Nayadaur

Digital media platform covering news from Pakistan

Central news Asia

English news channel based in Singapore, reports latest news Asia and around the world

Dawn News

Pakistan's English-language paper, published by Pakistan Herald Publications

The persecution

Online newspaper that highlights all the human rights violations against Christians

Times now news

A 24-hour English news channel in India owned and operated by the times group