

HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

PAKISTAN



**Centre For Democracy,
Pluralism And Human Rights**

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About CDPHR



Introduction

Centre for Democracy, Pluralism and Human Rights (CDPHR) is a public charitable trust registered in 2020. Our motto is- equality, dignity and justice for every individual on this planet. We are committed to uphold values of democracy, pluralism and human rights. We endeavour to voice out human rights violations of individuals, groups or community. We dream of a world that accepts pluralistic ways of life, faith and worship through democratic means and practices.

Vision

CDPHR envisions an equitable and inclusive society based on dignity, justice, liberty, freedom, trust, hope, peace, prosperity and adherence to law of land. We believe that multiple sections of societies are deprived of basic human rights and violation of their social, political, economic, religious and developmental rights is a sad reality. We consider that advocacy, education and intervention are required from multiple fronts to ensure an all-inclusive and just society.



Our mission is to promote and aid in establishing democratic and pluralistic structures and realisation of human rights.

To achieve this, broadly the following specific objectives have been set:

- a) To espouse all adoptable frameworks of advocacy, education and policy intervention to realise the stated mission.
- b) To promote and advocate human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any discrimination of race, religion, caste, gender, colour, and language.
- c) To keep a watch on issues of human rights violations globally and present their authentic analytical documentation.
- d) To use conferences, seminars, meetings, discussions, debates, study courses, collection of statistics, exhibitions, shows, tour trips, publications etc. for ensuring education, advocacy and outreach.
- e) To engage actively with governments, international organisations and human rights organisations to promote national integration, communal harmony, universal fellowship and global peace.
- f) To develop and mobilise community and natural resources so as to be harnessed for sustainable overall development of the marginalised and economically weaker sections of the society.
- g) To promote a culture of democratic values and pluralism in the face of particularistic tensions related to religion, caste, gender, class.
- h) To study the effects of draconian laws and unlawful use of state's machinery and force by the enforcement agencies and prepare reports for submission to appropriate authorities.
- l) To support democratic and economic reforms through the UN framework in countries coming out of totalitarian control.



CDPHR trustees and the team members consist of academics, lawyers, judges, rapporteurs, social activists, journalists and independent researchers who have an established reputation in their respective areas of expertise. Essentially, we are a team of socially sensitive intellectuals who wish to bring about a positive change in the lives of people deprived of minimum dignity and equality. Some of the team members have rich experience in researching and writing on issues of contemporary social interest. A few others have had long social commitments. In addition to the core organisational team, CDPHR plans to expand further and add to the human resources pool.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS	01
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	02-07
RECOMMENDATIONS	08-11
INTRODUCTION	12-13
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	14
METHODOLOGY	15
UNIT 1: PROBLEMS OF BEING A MINORITY IN PAKISTAN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE	16-19
UNIT 2: STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN	20
2A. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN	20
2B. STATUS OF ETHNIC AND OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES	24
UNIT 3: CASES OF ATROCITIES AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN	27
3A. TARGETING RELIGIOUS PLACES OF MINORITIES	27
3B. PHYSICAL ATTACKS: ASSAULT, ABDUCTION, KILLINGS	28
3C. ABDUCTION, RAPE, FORCED CONVERSION AND MARRIAGE OF MINORITY GIRLS AND WOMEN	30
3D. SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF MINORITY RIGHTS	33
3E. CASES OF MISUSE OF BLASPHEMY LAW	35
CONCLUSION	38
BIBLIOGRAPHY	40

ABBREVIATIONS

- BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
- CAA: Citizenship Amendment Act
- CEDAW: Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
- CIA: Central Intelligence Agency
- CPS: Centre for Policy Studies
- ETPB: Evacuee Trust Property Board
- FATA: Federally Administered Tribal Areas
- GHRD: Global Human Rights Defence
- HRCP: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
- HRW: Human Rights Watch
- ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ICEAFRD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- IDP: Internally Displaced Person
- MRGI: Minority Rights Group International
- NGO: Non-governmental Organisation
- PSGPC: Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee
- SAFHR: South Asian Forum for Human Rights
- SAHRDC: South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre
- SC: Scheduled Castes
- UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UNDM: United Nations Declaration on Minorities
- UNDRIP: United Nations Declaration of the Right of Indigenous Peoples
- UNHRC: United Nations Human Rights Council
- UNICEF: United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
- USCIRF: United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
- WISE: Women In Struggle for Empowerment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Minorities in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are forced to lead lives which are perpetually under siege. Theoretically Pakistan's Constitution provides equal rights to all citizens, but these are only on paper. At the ground level, religious minorities - Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Ahmadis even Shias - are treated as non-citizens. They are people without a voice; people without any constitutionally or legally protected rights. Minorities are stateless in the State of Pakistan. The Punjab dominated military-politician complex violates human rights not only of religious minorities but also of Balochs and Hazras. In 1974 Ahmadis were officially denied even the legal rights to be considered Muslims (USCIRF, 2020).

Since creation of the West and the East Pakistan in 1947, till the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the Punjabi military machine suppressed the human rights of Bengalis - both Hindus and Muslims. Bengali Muslims were considered "not Muslim enough - too Hindu like, too dark and diminutive unlike a true Muslim". In a much written about speech, the father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, assured a constitution which shall provide equal rights to all citizens irrespective of religion or region, irrespective of their modes of worship or the gods of their faith. But no body took him seriously. Even his own government did not. In the early 1950s itself there was a vociferous demand from the influential Jamaat-e-Islami to declare Pakistan an Islamic State. Under such a state, the government may administer the country but the sovereignty lies only with Allah. Law of Sharia must prevail over any other law. Pakistan was on way of becoming a repressive Islamic State without being officially declared so. And it has become such a state now.

Foundations for suppressing all religious minorities were deeply engrained in the very process of creating Pakistan. It was created out of regions of the united India which were dominated by Muslims in the west and the east. The very name Pakistan implied 'land of the pure'. Getting rid of the impure, the non-Muslim, was considered the religious duty of a true and devout Muslim. The state, the framework of law, political and judicial processes, the society of good Muslims (mominis) should all be aligned to facilitate in the process of religious purification. Non-Muslims are the proverbial 'others'. They must be persuaded to convert to Islam by all methods. There is religious merit in converting them. So naturally minorities suffered in the State of Pakistan.

Under Gen. Zia ul Haq (1977-88), its third military dictator, Pakistan made rapid and irreversible strides towards rabid Islamisation of all instrumentalities of governance: executive, political governance, judiciary and military. This was further helped by strong military resistance against atheist and communist USSR, launched by Islamist Mujahedeens and sponsored, financed and trained with a liberal supply of arms and armaments by the USA. Pakistan became a hub of Islamist resistance. Dreaded Taliban acquired Islamic respect and Talibanism began to control governance. Huge financial aid started pouring in from

Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries. Zia ul Haq used to boast he had silently brought Nizam-i-Mustafa to Pakistan. Wahhabism (Ahl-e-Hadith), practice of Islam as it used to be observed during the Prophet's time, was encouraged. Minorities, always under threat, were further doomed. To compound their miseries Zia-ul-Haq got inserted many stringent provisions in the devastating Blasphemy Law (GHRD, 2019).

The Blasphemy law had always existed from the British times, but Zia modified it to Islamise it at the cost of rights of followers of other religions. Sentences under the blasphemy law ranged from heavy fines, forfeiting of property, long imprisonment and mandatory death sentence if the offender is perceived to have caused some dishonour to Allah or Prophet Muhammad. Fake accusations are made to settle personal scores, grab lands and properties. Many a times this law is exploited to send men folks to jail, reduce the family to penury and then force girls and women to marry and convert to Islam. The law is uni-directional; it severely punishes any affront to Islam but ignores any and all affronts to other religions. Police and judiciary are generally complicit in exploitation of this law. In a rare case when a court acquits an 'accused' there is a huge turmoil raked up by rabble rousers. Many honest judges, honest lawyers, human and minority right activists and acquitted accused have been murdered. The law is in complete service of Islam and Islamists. This law perpetuates dehumanising discrimination against minorities. They live under a constant threat of Islamic vigilantism.

Blasphemy law works as a big instrument of exploitation and subjugation of people of other faiths. Fake rumours of desecrating Quran or defaming Islam and Prophet are spread. Minorities and their families are terrorised, subjugated and converted through this draconian law. It should be noted that in Islam it is considered a blessing, a religious merit, if a Muslim succeeds in converting others to Islam. Method does not matter. The whole state machinery is complicit in activities against minorities.

Blasphemy laws are nightmare for ethnic, linguistic and other religious minorities a well. Since 1990, dozens of Pakistanis hailing from religious and linguistic minorities in Pakistan have been killed over claims of blasphemy. The Minorities' Minister, Shahbaz Bhatti, was assassinated in 2011 for speaking against the blasphemy law. Also, Asia Bibi, languished in jail for many years. After calling the blasphemy law a 'black' law, Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab, was shot dead by Mumtaz Qadri, his bodyguard, in 2011 (Minority Rights.org, 2018).

Nothing could be more inhuman than this. "Religious minorities in Pakistan continue to face violence and repeated attacks on their religious places of worship and government's failure to amend the blasphemy law led to violence against them", said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. He was briefing the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Blasphemy against Prophet is mandatorily punished by death without any appeal. Anyone convicted, or even accused without proof, of insulting Islam risks a violent and bloody death at the hand of vigilantes, the Session noted (UNHRC, 2020).

Pakistan Parliament adopted 'Hindu Marriage Act (Act No VII of 2017)' to provide a consolidated law for solemnisation of marriages by Hindu families and for matters ancillary and incidental thereto. The sub text of the Act loftily stated that it is constitutional obligation of the state to protect marriage, family, mother and child and also safeguard the legitimate rights of minorities. It was too good to be true, just too good. Hindus thought now their marriages shall have constitutional sanction and their families and women protected. But no! The Act had a section 12 (iii) which stipulated "...the marriage may be terminated on the basis of either the husband or the wife converting to some other religion" (Hindu Marriage Act, 2017). This annulled any imaginary protection provided to women. Abduct a married woman, force her to convert, force her to say it is voluntary, marriage is annulled and the victim is of the victimiser, the abductor!!

Atrocities on minorities, particularly on Scheduled Caste (SC) Hindus and women, started with the very birth of Pakistan in 1947. Muslim League had always tried to strike a common chord with Scheduled Caste Hindus. Influenced by such efforts an important SC leader of Bengal, Jogendranath Mandal (1904-68), made a common cause with Muslim League. He joined the first cabinet of Pakistan as the Minister of Law and Labour; later also the Minister of Commonwealth and Kashmir Affairs. But Mandal was aghast at the atrocities committed in both wings of Pakistan on minorities and women. Atrocities on 'Nam Sudras' in East Pakistan were particularly severe. He soon realised that State of Pakistan was complicit in this. Disgusted he migrated to India and wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Liaquat Ali Khan detailing denial of basic human rights to minorities in Pakistan. This letter is a historic document indicating the abysmal status of minorities in the then just born Pakistan (Mandal, 1950).

Mass scale conversion of minorities to Islam started with the very birth of Pakistan. Vulnerable families, particularly women and girls, were targeted. More than one lakh SC Hindus were forced to convert in the very first two years of existence of Pakistan. Atrocities on them were particularly severe in the Sindh and Punjab Provinces. SC Hindus were first enticed to stay in Pakistan with attractive financial benefits, mainly to maintain lowly sanitary work, and then systematically planned atrocities and conversions started. During the first few years both India and Pakistan had created Commissions to recover abducted women and girls in their respective areas. Officer-in-charge for recovering abducted Hindu women in Sindh made a shocking, but revealing, statement. "We have to recover Hindu girls. Untouchables (Achut) are not Hindus..." (CPS, 2019).

Conversion to Islam from other religions by whatever means possible, including abductions and forced marriages, had been constantly taking place in Pakistan. However, since 1980s extreme radicalisation of society has happened. 2017 census data (not yet officially released) indicate that 96.28% of total population of 20.17 Cr is Muslim. Hindus are 29.30 lakh i.e.,

1.40%. In 1991 it was 1.65%. There had been huge depletion of minorities' population since 1947 but even if Hindu population was to be static at 1991 level (1.65%) it ought to have been 34.27 lakh in 2017. It is five lakh less (Goyal, 2020). Same is true for Christians, the other major targeted minority community. Of late Gurudwaras and their Granthis (Sikh religious leaders) are the focus of attacks. The holiest of the holy place for Sikhs, Nankana Sahib Gurudwara, was attacked. Daughter of one of its head Granthis was abducted. People from many countries protested vehemently against this. The girl has not been rescued yet.

Planned physical attacks and desecration of temples, churches and Gurudwaras in Pakistan have been happening many a times, a recent one being on a famous temple in Khyber Pakhtunwa. Suicide bombings have happened many a times. Land mafia in collusion with local authorities grab the land vacated by terrorised managers of these religious places. Judiciary does not help, it is mostly on the side of the tormentors. Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) has become an instrument of promoting and assisting illegal grabs of minority lands and properties by fudging and destroying documents (HRCP, 2019). Reduced to penury families, particularly women, are forced to convert.

In Pakistan, for Sunni fundamentalists it does not matter much who the minorities are. Even ethnic and linguistic minorities who follow Islam are routinely discriminated and harassed systematically. On the one hand they are denied equal opportunities in public sphere and on the other hand systematic discrimination and violence is perpetrated on them. Violent attacks on their social gatherings or religious places by Sunni extremist groups and people are very common and are more frequent recently. Shias, Ahmadi Muslims, Christians, and Hazaras are particular targets of these attacks. Other ethnic and linguistic minorities like Baluchs, Pasthuns etc. report similar forms of violence and discrimination despite being Muslims particularly by Pak army and extremist groups. These ethnic and linguistic minorities along with religious minorities remain disenfranchised in society and are not fully included in the political life of the country.

Though Pakistan adheres to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and is signatory to several international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), however, the environment in which Pakistani religious and ethnic minorities find themselves is marred by hate speech, violence and repeated invocation of blasphemy laws. These oppressions have made it increasingly difficult for people of religious and ethnic minorities to live safely and fully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and belief. The marginalisation and persecution of Ahmadi Muslims has reached extreme levels in recent years, and Ahmadis are now the target of a concerted hate campaign. Ahmadis live in constant fear of harassment or assault either to themselves or their homes, workplaces and places of worship. For instance, under Section 298-B of the Pakistan Penal Code, Ahmadis are prevented from using any Islamic epithets that might result in them being

mistaken as Muslims. In addition to this, Section 298-B (2) criminalises the use of the word “Azan” for the call to prayers by Ahmadis. Similarly, the Christian community has experienced a lot of discrimination in Pakistan in the past decade. The Gojra riots were particularly harrowing in that several Christians, including women, were killed (Minority Rights.org, 2018). Shias and Shia Hazara too face similar level of violence due to their different ethnic and religious identity.

Some ethnic minorities like Seedhis, Baluchs, Pashtuns and Sindhis are persecuted by Punjab dominated military and bureaucracy. Baluchistan's independence movement is violently suppressed by Punjabi dominated military here. Forceful abductions, rape, enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings of the detainees by military are frequent in case of the ethnic minorities.

The most heinous, the most inhuman, crime against minorities has been committed during the present Corona period. At many places they were being discriminated against even in the distribution of survival food. It was said the food is only for Muslims. At other places ration was given to minorities which was half of what was given to Muslims. Not only this, efforts were being made by Muslim religious preachers to use the Covid-19 aid to convert the needy Christians and Hindus to Islam.

Human rights movement in Pakistan is a toothless movement. Rights organisations of Pakistan exist on paper only. They do not dare to take up cudgels in favour of minorities. International media sporadically highlights the issue of atrocities on minorities in Pakistan but it is not a sustained campaign, only half hearted. Relief to beleaguered and tortured minority communities in Pakistan can only emerge out of a sustained international campaign at all available forums. Pakistan has to be named and shamed continuously on its horrible performance on minorities' rights front. The experience of the non-Muslims in Pakistan and even of some sects of the Muslim community, such as the Shias, the Ahmadias, and the Hazaras, has been appalling and worrying since the birth of the new nation. Even after the massive ethnic cleansing of Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan at the time of partition, the discriminatory and hostile attitude of the Pakistan State and society towards the religious minorities has remained intact and active. Pakistan's establishment and political parties display no intention to give justice to the beleaguered minorities. However, a few fair-minded and courageous men and women have raised their voices to highlight the acute plight of religious minorities. This has been done within Pakistan and also at the international level. Such people face the same kind of violence.

The present report seeks to place before the world, a picture of the grim reality of the life of religious and ethnic minorities and women in Pakistan. It brings out how life and property of the minorities are not safe in Pakistan, how their religious beliefs are always suppressed, as

reflected by the forced conversion of these people and also by the large number of attacks on their religious places. It describes how the women and minor girls of these communities are abducted, raped, converted to Islam, and forcibly married to Muslim men.

The present report is an aggregation of the facts that are already in the public domain. The human rights activists and some social workers in Pakistan have provided useful insights into the actual life of the religious minorities there. There are international platforms, such as the European Union Parliament, where the plight of such communities in Pakistan has been discussed and the Pakistan Government asked to take firm steps to ensure safe and dignified life to such people. Such media coverage and reports have been studied to prepare the present report on the state of human rights in Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Every basic norm of human rights is being grossly violated in Pakistan by legal institutions, society and non-state actors. Hence, it is a mandate on the international community concerned with the protection of human rights to take necessary measures. Therefore, the international community of UN member states, various governments and non-governmental organisations along with Pakistan government should do the needful to prevent gross violations of rights of minorities. Following are some of recommendations for the same:

- The first thing to do for the dignified life of minorities in Pakistan is to ensure that Pakistan government takes all necessary measures to align its domestic legal order with civil and political rights of international standards. In doing so, rights related to education, language, free speech, religion, fair trial, and peaceful assembly that are provided in the UDHR and various subsequent covenants should be strictly adhered in future legislations and policies of the government.
- Pakistan being an Islamic state, its present constitution has many repugnancy clauses which discriminate against religious minorities. For example, sections 298-B and 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code restrict religious groups from freely practising their faith and Clauses 295-B and 295-C on blasphemy can endanger the very life of the accused individual. These clauses should be reformed immediately to prevent their continued abuse. Apart from this, immediate removal of death penalty in such cases, the introduction of prison sentences for those guilty of false accusations, compensation for victims, and the clarification of imprecise terminology should be undertaken immediately.
- Blasphemy laws are the most dangerous instruments of exploitation often used against minorities. These laws perpetuate dehumanising discrimination against minorities. They live under a constant threat of Islamic vigilantism. These laws need to be repealed without any delay and justice must be provided to all victims of this middle age practise of vigilantism.
- Hate speeches in Pakistan are one of many reasons for violence against religious minorities. Pakistan must address hate speech by implementing new required legislation and introducing new measures. It needs to develop a clear definition of what constitutes hate speech in media and strictly enforce legislation that designates hate speech a crime, namely section 153-A of the PPC. In this regard Pakistan Electronic Media Regulative Authority must have separate division to monitor hate speeches online against religious minorities.

- Protection of religious and ethnic minorities is not possible unless there is requisite social transformation. For this, respect for all religions must be promoted by the government. Unwarranted Hinduphobia needs to be checked. A sense of moral duty must be created among majorities to protect their minority brothers and sisters against violence and discrimination.
- There is large scale violence and destruction of religious and cultural symbols of Hindus and Sikhs. Pakistan must ensure the safety, security and proper maintenance of cultural symbols and heritage of minority groups.
- Pakistan government must bring a detailed White Paper on the religious persecution and violence committed against the religious minorities like Hindus and Sikhs.
- Ministry or organisations which deal with minority affairs should be entrusted with significant judicial powers as it has been observed that regular courts are often found complicit in the persecution and discrimination against minorities. These empowered organisations/ministries should work as the regulatory body for minority welfare activities and they must ensure protection of social, political, linguistic, developmental, economic and religious rights. They should also monitor the safeguards provided under the constitution and Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.
- Pakistan must end religious discrimination in schools and colleges. There needs to be a review and removal of textbooks and curriculum that endorse discrimination against minorities. Educational materials and syllabus should be designed in a way which encourages learning about Pakistan's ancient past and its diverse society. The government must make efforts to provide uniform education to all children. Further, to put a check on radicalisation, the government ought to secularise madrasah education.
- As minorities are severely under-represented in public as well private spheres, it is the responsibility of Pakistan government to ensure proportional representation and political participation of minorities at various levels of the government.
- Pakistan is the civilisational and natural home to lakhs of persecuted and exiled Hindus and Sikhs. Pakistan government with international cooperation must start a process to invite and resettle them by providing security to their life and livelihood in their rightful home.
- Atrocities on minorities, particularly on SC Hindus and women, started with the very birth of Pakistan in 1947. Pakistan must take effective measures to eradicate stigma and prejudice against members of the SC Hindus and to combat discrimination against

them, particularly in the employment and education sectors. Also, it must bring an end to bonded labour of which SC Hindus are worst victims. It must facilitate significant employment quotas in the public sector for religious minorities.

- In a country infested with Islamic radicalisation, there is no security and freedom for women. In this case Pakistan is no different. Further women belonging to religious and ethnic minorities face double marginalisation. Forceful conversion of minority girls is a nightmare for Hindu and Sikh communities in Pakistan. Though Pakistan is a signatory to Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) yet crime against women continues unabated. So, it is requisite that government enact sections of the Pakistan Penal Code against the unlawful conversion of citizens to Islam. Further, the perpetrators of crimes against women must not be protected under any compulsion. Pakistan has both the constitutional and international obligations to protect rights of women.
- Pakistan Parliament adopted 'Hindu Marriage Act (Act No VII of 2017)' to provide a consolidated law for solemnisation of marriages by Hindu families and for matters ancillary and incidental thereto. However, a major loophole in it is used in forceful conversion of Hindu women. It is section 12 (iii) which stipulates "...the marriage may be terminated on the basis of either the husband or the wife converting to some other religion". This section annulled any imaginary protection provided to women. Abduct a married woman, force her to convert, force her to say it is voluntary and her marriage is annulled. This section must be removed and religious merit of converting minority girls must be actively discouraged by the government.
- In a Sunni Muslim majority Pakistan, there are routine violations of rights of not only women and religious minorities but also of ethnic and linguistic minorities as well. The Punjab dominated military-politician complex violates human rights of Balochs, Hazras, Sindhis, Ahmadis and people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Constitutional safeguards provided to ethnic and linguistic minorities and regions must not be tempered and equal protections of rights must be extended to these minorities.
- The declining rate of religious minorities in Pakistan is too steep to be visible to everyone, including the international community. There has been huge depletion of minorities' population since 1947. Hindu population has shrunk to all new low of just 1.40 per cent of total as in 2017. Similar is the case with other religious minorities like Sikhs and Christians. This should be extremely worrisome for the UN and other international human rights watch agencies. This is high time that International agencies, like Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) must intervene effectively before it is too late and minorities are completely wiped off from the country.

Pakistan is signatory to many humanitarian covenants however gross violations of rights of religious minorities goes unnoticed internationally. It is unfortunate that UN and the agencies have not been vocal enough in the wake of this huge tragic development. They must give up their partisan behaviour and speak up vocally for religious minorities of Pakistan.

- The minorities of Pakistan look for support and blessing from India. The Indian sub-continent which includes the present-day India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, has been a single entity culturally and geographically from times immemorial and politically till 1947. It is the cultural, moral and constitutional duty of India to provide a soothing touch to the minorities of Pakistan. Whereas India has well taken care of its minorities after the partition, unfortunately same is not the case in Pakistan. India through international community must press upon the government of Pakistan to take care of its citizens who follow religions of Indic origin.

INTRODUCTION

The civil society the world over shows great earnestness in highlighting any instances of human rights violations against people anywhere. However, a similar earnestness needs to be found in equal measure in cases of such violations in Islamic states. In absence of such high priority to human rights in these countries, the victim groups have felt deeply frustrated and left alone to suffer in silence or have either been compelled to convert to Islam or are physically eliminated or had to flee the country. In these countries, people belonging to non-Islamic faiths face gross violations of their human rights by Islamic fundamentalists and the world remains mute spectator to these rights violations. Thus, there is a pressing need to spread widely the awareness on the grim reality of human rights violations in Islamic countries particularly countries where Islamic extremism exists. The present report focuses on Pakistan since the state of human rights there is no different.

Human beings are endowed with certain natural rights by birth. These natural rights are known as human rights in modern legal parlance. These rights are essential for her to realise the full potential of her personality and for this to happen, a free and just society is a necessary condition. The curtailment or infringement of these rights by any agency is known as the violations of human rights. Indic connotation of the term 'Human Rights' is wider and more inclusive. Essence of these modern-day rights can be found in ancient Indian literatures and scriptures, like Vedas, Upanishads and Mahabharata etc. Also, many Indic faiths like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism have focused on the cardinal principles like that of salvation and welfare for all the living beings, Vasudhaiv Kutumbkam, Sarva Dharma Sambhav along with having strong focus on equality, Individual freedom and liberty. Thus, ancient Indian society was well-organised society with the fundamental rights and duties assigned to individuals, classes and communities. The concept of 'Dharma' and Buddhist Dhamma can also be seen in this context. Today's Pakistan being part of Indian civilisation celebrated these human values. This region was amalgamation of different cultures, religions and views and this diversity of opinions and differences used to be celebrated here until Islam came. Basic rights of human beings that were part and parcel of the culture of this region were distorted once Islamic value system established here. And, slowly this cultural amalgamation disappeared and thus establishing Sunni majoritarianism that it is today.

In 1947, India attained independence from the British rule and was also partitioned to carve out a Muslim country, Pakistan, out of it. Both India and Pakistan, as free nations, were expected to adequately take care of their citizens including the minorities. The issue attained a special significance in the context of Pakistan because it was created as a

Muslim nation and a fair and constitutional attitude of the state and the society towards its non-Muslim citizens was expected to be emphasised. The father of Pakistan, Mr. M.A. Jinnah, had assured that Pakistan shall be a secular nation and all the citizens shall get fair treatment. But despite civilizational and historical similarities, large scale violations of rights of minorities have happened since Jinnah's assurance.

Today Pakistan has created and perpetuated institutionalised discrimination against the members of religious minority communities. Despite promise of equality in the constitution, minorities face violence and prejudice. Hatred is being fomented in society through an inappropriate representation of minorities in society. Women and girls suffer the most due to religious discrimination. Underage girls and women are abducted and forcibly married and converted against their will. The judicial system has also failed to prevent the occurrence of the crimes and give justice to the victims. The authorities along with the judicial system have rendered themselves responsible for the grave violation of human rights among the religious minorities. The condition of religious minorities in Pakistan is a violation of basic rights, freedom, and standard of living of an individual. As the authorities have proved before the world that they are incapable to protect the rights, dignities, and freedom of their citizens, an intervention of International civil society, governments and organisations concerned with human rights is extremely crucial to shield the religious minority community from such atrocities. Therefore, there is a pressing need to highlight the gravity of the situation of human rights violations against religious minorities in Pakistan.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study and highlight various dimensions of human rights violations against minority religious and ethnic groups in Pakistan
2. To highlight the status of dwindling population of such groups
3. To present the status of constitutional rights available to these groups
4. To present the state of forced conversions to Islam
5. To present the magnitude of threat to their life and property
6. To highlight the incidents of brutalities on women and other weaker sections of these groups
7. To bring out the instances of social neglect and isolation faced by these minorities
8. To highlight the anti-minority mindset built-up in young minds from their school-education
9. To bring out the various suggestions that the human right bodies have placed before the Pakistan government and society to bring improvement in the situation.

METHODOLOGY

The content for the report has been collated using reports from international human rights bodies, Pakistan-based human rights bodies and NGOs, media reports, narrations of credible writers and interviews of the actual sufferers of the ordeal. Appropriate context has been provided at places and links and references to all source material have been given.

UNIT 1: PROBLEMS BEING A MINORITY IN PAKISTAN: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Human rights of religious minorities in Islamic states ridden with Sunni fundamentalism are violated with impunity and in many cases along with non-state actors, even state is found complicit. In this regard, Pakistan is not an exception. The problem of atrocities on religious minorities in Pakistan is not new and it has a long history since Independence or partition of India in 1947. Pakistan came to existence purely based on religion i.e., a 'pure land' for Muslims through the partition of India. During the immigration period many Hindus and Sikhs were killed, women were raped, abducted, and forced to marry and convert to Islam, and their lands and properties were snatched. The atrocities against Indic faiths and even some sects of Islam highlight the intolerance level in the present-day Pakistan, a region which at one time was known for cultural pluralism. Religious minorities are the worst victim of this intolerance and Sunni fundamentalism that is raging the present-day Pakistan. In 1950, regarding these atrocities over Hindus in Pakistan, an attempt was made by Jogendra Nath Mandal to bring it to the notice of Pakistan government and its Prime Minister of that time. Mandal, an eminent Dalit leader of East Pakistan (i.e. Bengal before partition) working for the upliftment of Backward Hindus, had stayed in East Pakistan in 1947 and acquired a high rank in Pakistan government as the first Labour Minister and later Commonwealth and Kashmir Affairs. Even after a being the highest ranked Hindu minister in Pakistan, the first-hand experience of Jogendra Nath Mandal was frustrating and the way Hindus were getting treated in East and West Pakistan. In 1950, he resigned from his post in Pakistan government and returned to India, and lived an anonymous life in West Bengal until he died in 1968.

In his letter of resignation to Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, Mandal had detailed the atrocities and discrimination taking place against Hindus in East and West Pakistan. He highlighted the living condition and treatment of Hindus in West Pakistan. The letter points out the anti-Hindu policy pursued by the police administration and some leaders of the Muslim League in East Bengal (Pakistan). The first incident he talks about was the Digharkul village near Gopalganj, where Namashudra people were assaulted by the local Muslims with the help of armed police and the second incidence took place in 1949, the district of Barisal, where Hindus were targeted on the suspicion of being communists and no judicial inquiry was held about the incident (Mandal 1950).

The cases of atrocities especially against the Scheduled Castes in Habibgarh (Sylhet District), and the incident of Nachole (Rajshahi District) and Kalshira (Khulna District) both were carried out on the name of suppression of the communists but innocent Hindus were not spared by the police and local Muslims. The Dacca riot of February 10, 1950, was the prime example of arson, looting, and killing of Hindus shops and houses by local Muslims with the help of police administration. It was estimated that nearly 10,000 Hindus were killed in Dacca riot, young girls were abducted, shops and houses of Hindus were looted, and after this incident, even Mandal asked himself

“What was coming to Pakistan in the name of Islam”. Mandal also revealed his suspicions about the Bengal Government and its plan to squeeze out Hindus from East Pakistan like it was done in West Pakistan on the name of Islamic State (Mandal 1950).

In East Bengal, Muslims boycott Hindu lawyers, shop-keepers, merchants, medical practitioners, traders and forced them to migrate to West Bengal. These atrocities over religious minorities were not limited to East Pakistan but it was prevailing and practiced in West Pakistan and especially in the Sindh region of Pakistan. The West Punjab of India was part of Sindh region in Pakistan and about one lakh Scheduled Castes people living there converted to Islam. Scheduled castes girls were abducted by Muslims and only four out of a dozen were recovered even after repeated petitions to the authority. This was the last reply of the Officer-in-Charge designated to recover abducted girls that “his function was to recover Hindu Girls and 'Achhuts' (Scheduled Castes) were not Hindu”. Hindus in Sindh and Karachi were living in a terrible condition, and 363 Hindu temples and gurdwaras were still in possession of Muslims whereas some of them were already converted into slaughterhouses, hotels and cobblers' shops. Without any prior notice, Hindus lost their possession of properties and it was distributed among local Muslims and refugees. Mandal tried to draw the attention of the 2nd Provisional Government towards abduction of Hindu girls but in return received the information that the Hindus and especially the Scheduled Castes living in Sind had been forcibly converted to Islam in a large number. Mandal in his letter described the condition of Hindus living in Pakistan as 'Stateless' within their houses for the fault that they profess the Hindu religion.

Another important person who highlighted the systematic discrimination against religious minorities and women was Farahnaz Ispahani. She recognized that there are atrocities taking place against religious minorities in Pakistan and highlighted the role of State and stateless actors or extremist groups all around the world in Muslim countries. She began with the example of Sindh and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan where well off Hindus are primary targets of kidnappings for ransom. The number of these motivated attacks against non-Muslims and minority Muslims had increased and there are cases when the accused of “blasphemy” were burnt alive in front of police stations and no offender was identified or punished. Shia Muslims (20-25 percent of Muslim population), Ahmadis (identified as non-Muslim), Christians, Hindus and Sikhs are the primary targets of suicide bomb attacks, forceful conversion of the community members and attacks on their places of worship.

In the early 1950s, there was a debate in Pakistan's Constituent Assembly for the demand that Pakistan should be declared an Islamic State and this idea was propagated by Abul Ala Maududi (Jamaat-e-Islami). According to Maududi, the State's function was to administer the country and the sovereignty laid with Allah, and there is only one 'Sharia' law which could not be contravened. For Maududi there was a negative impact on Muslim life due to non-Muslim culture and “It destroys its inner vitality, blurs its vision, befogs its critical faculties, breeds inferiority complexes, and gradually but assuredly saps all the springs of culture and sounds its death-knell,” and “the Holy Prophet has positively and forcefully forbidden the Muslims to

assume the culture and mode of life of the non-Muslims.”

During the partition riots, the Non-Muslim minorities in Pakistan and especially Sikhs and Hindus were 'cleansed'. It was the early 1950s when attacks against Muslim minorities began with anti-Ahmadi demonstrations and riots, and with the Constitutional Amendment of 1974, the Muslim status of Ahmadis was snatched.

General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), third military ruler of Pakistan introduced and imposed a state-led Islamisation policy. Vali Nasr referred to this policy as the phenomenon of 'top-down Islamisation' i.e., Malaysia, and Pakistan. General Zia also introduced new sets of rules and regulations to adjust Pakistani laws and bring close to Sharia. The infamous 'blasphemy' law was part of these laws which had a continuous impact on religious minorities in Pakistan.

In the 1980s, the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad was supported by external powers to help religious groups in Afghanistan, it had a massive impact on Pakistan as well. Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries can be held responsible for promoting Wahhabism (or Ahl-e-Hadith) and pouring in money for madrassas in whole Pakistan which led to further radicalisation of Muslims. The curricular was changed not only in religious but also in secular schools. It must have changed the perception of whole generation studying in public schools and identifying fellow countryman as non-Muslims, Muslim minorities as “the other,” “unpatriotic,” and “not Muslim enough.”

These Islamist groups also helped the state in its foreign and security policy agendas like Jamaat-e-Islami had assisted the Pakistani army to crack down both Muslims and non-Muslim of East Pakistan in 1971. The term “too Hindu” was often used to refer to Bengali Muslims. Like their sectarian brethren, these Islamist groups in India and Afghanistan believe in the same ideological goals and supported by the local military-intelligence complex.

Religious tolerance in Pakistan has steadily declined and the data collected in the census of 1998 also reflect that Hindus constitute 1.6 percent and Christians 1.59 percent of the total population of Pakistan. Partition (1947) and wars of 1965 and 1971 between India-Pakistan were the major events of the “cleansing of the population” of these religious minorities in Pakistan and these incidents of attacks have been continuously increasing. Hindu minority in Pakistan has been continuously facing atrocities like forced conversions and kidnappings for ransom. The number of Hindu families seeking asylum or migrating to neighbouring India has rapidly increased in the last few years. The incident of abduction and forced conversion to Islam of Rinkle Kumari, a young Hindu woman, gained a lot of media attention. According to Asian Human Rights Watch reports each month there have been 20-25 kidnappings and forced conversion cases of Hindu girls in Sindh region of Pakistan.

Even after the implementation of discriminatory laws during the 1980s, the cases of violence and atrocities against religious minorities continued to rise. Asia Bibi (Christian woman) from Punjab was the first woman charged under blasphemy law of Pakistan and sentenced to death. It was early 2012 when Rimsha Masih (Christian girl) was charged with blasphemy though she was fortunate enough that the case against her was dismissed in November 2012, and before she started living in Canada with her family, they were kept in a safe house in Pakistan to protect from

vigilante actions against Rimsha and her family.

In August 2010, due to accusation of blasphemy, in Gojra town of Punjab a fierce mob burnt alive 7 Christians, 18 others were injured and 50 houses were set on fire. Section 295 is a key section of Penal Code of Pakistan related to Blasphemy law “Damaging or defiling a place of worship or a sacred object,” and “defaming the Holy Prophet of Islam” and the person committing this offence will be punished with death or imprisonment for life, and fine. Surprisingly, the blasphemy law is not applied to Muslims committing this offence against non-Muslims and defiling their places of worship.

In March 2013, 40 houses belonging to Christian community were attacked and burned down by a mob in Lahore and this incident took place in front of the police. The number of attacks on Shia Muslims have increased in Pakistan and media has tried to mischaracterise and name them as sectarian conflicts, whereas in reality these ferocious attacks are an example of narrow mindset related to Takfiri Islam and Islamists committed to purifying Pakistan. The literal meaning of Pakistan itself is “the land of the pure.” The process of purification of Pakistan was initiated after partition and then under the military regime of General Zia Ul-Haq, this process was institutionalised and legalised. Secular voices were suppressed or eliminated even from the mainstream judicial systems; therefore, supporting these minority communities in Pakistan is not only in the interest of Pakistan but a responsibility of the international community to support those Pakistanis, who have not lost faith in a pluralist society, yet.

The above instances of rights violations of minorities clearly points out the abysmal state of human rights in Pakistan of which religious minorities are the worst victim. The so called process of purification of Pakistan has put the population of religious minorities on the verge of extinction.

UNIT 2: STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN PAKISTAN

The state of human rights especially of religious minorities is in miserable condition and religious minorities in Pakistan are treated like second class citizens. Religious minorities in Pakistan include Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadiyya, Shias, and Hazaras, facing discrimination in every aspect of life and on daily basis, and without having any sense of security, even assurance from the government of Pakistan. The cases of abduction, killing, forced conversion, attacks on the place of worships, forced marriages, rapes of minorities women and girls are some examples of atrocities taking place against religious minorities in Pakistan.

2A. STATUS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

People having different faiths and religions preferred to stay back in Pakistan at the time of partition of India in hope that they will be treated equally by their Muslim brothers and the government of Pakistan. With every passing year the status of minorities has degraded and they were treated as separate and unequal citizens of Pakistan which include Christians, Hindus, Shia's, Hazaras, Ahmadiyyas. The women of minority communities are primarily targeted in Pakistan, even after the law for gender equality exists but remain inefficient and ineffective in terms of enforcement and implementation. Cases of rape, honor killing, murders, acid attacks, and forced conversion of minority communities, forced marriage of women of minority communities, domestic violence, child marriage, and discrimination against women define the grave condition of human rights violation of Women (GHRD 2019: 3,7).

Farahnaz Ispahani (Journalist and former member of the National Assembly of Pakistan), has stated that "cleansing Pakistan of minorities" is quite evident and a continuous process since the partition from India and the formation of Pakistan as an independent state. Due to this process, they primarily target and attack especially the Hindus, Christians, and minorities communities of Muslims apart from Sunni Muslims, and it has direct linkages with the radicalisation and "Talibanisation" of the state of Pakistan (Kukreja 2019).

Farahnaz Isaphani has also stated that;

"...Muslim groups such as the Shias, the Ahmadis who have been declared non-Muslim by the writ of the state, and non-Muslim minorities such as Christians, Hindus and Sikhs have been the targets of suicide bomb attacks, had community members converted to Islam against their will, and while the international community often fails to hear of even high profile attacks and bombings of churches and other places of worship of minorities, for decades, ...their houses of worship attacked and bombed even while they were inhabited by worshipers" (Kukreja 2019).

The above statement manifests that the atrocities over religious minorities and cleansing of minority communities in Pakistan are underway and that includes abduction, rape and forced conversion of teenage Hindu girls.

The report of the United States on Religious Freedom in Pakistan has also expressed grave concern regarding the failure of authorities to intervene in societal violence in case of religious minorities and perpetrators easily escape from the legal trials due to bribery, external pressure on the victim, and lastly due to the lack of efficiency by law enforcement agencies. Religious minorities have also expressed concern regarding the inadequate response of the government towards the forced conversion of the minority communities to Islam (US Report 2010: 1-2, 14). According to the members of religious minority communities the government has dwindling intentions to put a halt on societal discrimination and neglect the official discrimination happening with Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and the worst treatment especially with the Ahmadiyya Muslims on all fronts (US Report 2010: 19).

Ever since the creation of Pakistan, the Hindus have been living in the absence of a law that would validate and legitimise a Hindu marriage. In her article, "The Hindu Marriage Act, 2017, A Review" Sara Reza has highlighted the miserable condition of religious minorities living in Pakistan.

"Ever since Pakistan gained independence in 1947, the Hindu community has been subject to severe discrimination and marginalisation. Hindu women, especially, have had to face the brunt of this unjust treatment and are regularly subjected to forced conversions, rape, and oppression within the domestic sphere. According to a report released by the Movement of Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan, up to 300 Hindu women are forced to convert and marry Muslim men every year in Pakistan." (Raza 2017).

The religious minorities in Pakistan have been facing physical attacks, forced conversion to Islam, social and psychological insecurity, and institutional degradation in day-to-day life, whereas the Hindus remain the prime target. In the absence of Hindu Marriage Act, it was difficult for the Hindus in Pakistan to transfer property and had to travel without proper documents to prove their identity. Bigamy was another challenge because one does not acquire any proof of marriage and which makes it almost impossible for the spouse to establish the second marriage as bigamous (Raza 2017). Although, in 2017 the Hindu Marriage Act was passed still Section 12 (iii) of the Act created a new problem by stating that "... the marriage may also be terminated on the basis of either the husband or wife converting to some other religion." This encouraged the abduction of a married Hindu woman and forced conversion to Islam to make marriage null and void, even if the conversion was done forcefully without any consent of the women (Raza 2017).

After the creation of Pakistan, the population of religious minorities and especially the population of Hindus and Sikhs have declined very sharply. The demographic report "Religious Demography of India (2003)," by Delhi based think tank CPS (Centre for Policy Studies) presents the data related to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

The population of Hindus and Sikhs in West Pakistan/Pakistan

Year	Population (in %)
1941	19.6
1951	1.6
1991	1.65

The population of Hindus in East Pakistan/Bangladesh

Year	Population (in %)
1941	29.6
1951	22.9
1974	13.6
1991	11.3

Source: Joshi, A. P., M. D. Srinivas, Jitendra K. Bajaj (2003), 'Religious Demography of India', CPS, New Delhi (<https://www.cpsindia.org/dl/religious/summary3c.pdf>)

Divya Goyal has tried to put some light on the current status of the Hindu population in Pakistan since 1991, in her article in the Indian Express. As per the census of 1998 in Pakistan, the Hindu population has come down to 1.6 percent compared to 1.65 percent in 1991. However, the census was done in 2017 but still no religious data has come to the public domain even though 2018 was set as a deadline, which has already passed. Goyal further writes that as per the unofficial suggestion the population of Hindus in Pakistan have declined further by 0.19 percent, and which translates that the total Hindu population in Pakistan will be around 1.41 percent in 2017 (Goyal 2020).

It is worth noting that post-1980s the situation of religious minorities in Pakistan has become more miserable over the period due to extreme radicalisation of the society, and exodus, mass killings of the members of religious minority communities. As per the census of 2017, the total population of Pakistan was 20.77 crore and 1.41 percent Hindu population share will be estimated to be 29.30 lakhs in total. In case the percentage of Hindu population has remained stable (1.65% in 1991) then after 27 years the total Hindu population would still be around 34.27 lakhs in 2017, which means that Hindu population has reduced by around 5 lakhs. Still, the absence of data has enabled us to make a clear assumption of the current status of religious minorities in Pakistan.

Many national and international organisations are working in the area of human rights in Pakistan but many of them are compromised or are toothless. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is one such organisation founded in 1987 in Lahore, Pakistan. It is entrusted to monitor and to ensure protection and promotion of human rights in the country. However, it has failed miserably in most of its objectives. Its reports, which many a times are compromised though, do point out the rights violations of women, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities. According to the annual report of HRCP, in faith-based violence 99 Ahmadis lost their lives. Under the blasphemy law, along with Asia Bibi, there were around 64 people charged and total three men were killed in police custody which included two Christian brothers. After the successful campaign of Pakistan military against Taliban fighters in Orakzai Agency area, 25 out of 102 Sikh families had returned to the area. Due to continuous threat to their lives and security in Baluchistan 500 Hindu families had migrated to India. There are cases of honour killing in Pakistan and in 2010 alone 17 members of minority communities were killed by their relatives (HRCP 2010).

In 2011, the annual report of HRCP has highlighted cases of religious violence in Pakistan. In religious violence total 389 people lost their lives and 601 got injured. In Baluchistan, more than 100 people of Hazara Shias community were killed in faith-based violence and many fled from the province in fear. In a targeted attack, at least six Ahmadis lost their lives and on the other hand the cases of abduction and forced conversion of girls and young women of the Hindu community were not addressed. This year at least eight people were accused of blasphemy and three were given capital punishment by the court (HRCP 2011). The cases of religious violence and harassment of ethnic minorities remained consistent and the justice was close to non-existent. Although, Rimsha was acquitted from the accusation of burning the Holy Quran still Ryan stayed in jail, and Sherry Rehman was booked under the blasphemy law. In total 213 different incidents of sectarian conflicts and terror attacks happened, 583 people succumbed to death and 853 were injured. More than 20 Ahmadis lost their lives because of their religious identity. In a year at least six churches were attacked in Karachi and in October alone two churches were attacked within a span of 10 days only. In an incident of March, the land mafias of Mardan city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province attacked and demolished a 150-year-old Baba Karam Singh temple. (HRCP 2012).

At the beginning of this year over 200 Hazara Shias lost their lives in sectarian violence in Baluchistan, and in other 200 cases of sectarian attacks around 687 people were killed. This year again in targeted attacks 7 Ahmadis lost their lives. In the deadliest attack on a church in Peshawar over 100 Christian citizens were killed. In another case entire Christian neighborhood was torched by a fierce mob of local Muslims because one Christian man was charged under the blasphemy law, in this incident, a total of 100 houses were burnt. In Badin, mobs dug up the dead bodies of two Hindus and accused that the graveyards belong to them and only Muslims could be buried in the graveyard (HRCP 2013).

In the Sindh region, there were incidents of attacks on 11 Hindu temples and churches. Zikri sect was primarily targeted in two attacks that took place in Baluchistan. A Christian couple was lynched and burned on the accusation of defiling the Holy Quran in KotRadhaKishen city of Punjab

province. Just like recent years 11 Ahmadis were killed in targeted attacks. In total 157 families (114 Christian, 29 Hindu, 10 Baha's and 4 Buddhist) of religious minorities were displaced from FATA because the Pakistani army was carrying out a military operation against terrorists. The question of discrimination in IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps was raised by some of the religious minority families especially at the food distribution centres. Population of religious minorities in Pakistan constitutes 3 percent of the total population, but there are other things which need to be considered like ill-treatment by the government, discriminatory laws, terrorism, social insecurities (rigid intolerance and persecution of minorities). In most of the cases, Ahmadis are charged with blasphemy law compared to Christian, Hindu, and Sikhs. Christian and Hindu communities are fleeing from Pakistan in search of safety in other countries. Faith-based persecution and discrimination happen with the religious minorities on daily basis, forced conversion, and in some parts Sikh claim to have paid 'jizya' to militants in order to cross a place in Malakand of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (HRCP 2014).

Freedom of religion and belief is just limited to the constitution and not valid in real life for minorities, for example the Ahmadiyya's place of worship has been defiled. Hindu and Christian communities are subjected to forced conversion in Sindh and Punjab. Many cases of abduction and forced conversion of girls and young women of religious minorities have been reported. The houses of three Hindus and four Christian women booked under blasphemy law were attacked by a mob of local Muslims (HRCP 2019). Thus above stated facts, examples, statistics and statements are testimony to the bitter truth that gross violation of rights of religious minorities has happened and it still continues unabated.

2B. STATUS OF ETHNIC AND OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

The Sunni majoritarian discrimination is not limited to merely women and religious minorities but also extends to ethnic and linguistic minorities as is the case in most of Islamic nations. Sunni Muslims forms the majority of Pakistan, but Pakistan is also home to several and ethnic minorities, such as Christians, Hindus, Shias Parsis, Balochs Sikhs, Bahais, Ahmadis, Sindhis, and Pashtuns etc. The situation for many such ethnic communities who follow Islam in Pakistan has worsened over the past few decades. These ethnic and linguistic minorities along with religious minorities remain disenfranchised in society and are not fully included in the political life of the country; in fact, the situation for minorities continues to worsen. Discussion of some of the most prosecuted such ethnic and religious communities and their human rights violations follow here.

Shias account for around 10–15 per cent of the Muslim population of Pakistan. They comprise of a number of different ethnic groups and can be found throughout the country. They are regarded as apostates by some extremist Sunni groups and individuals. As a result, many face regular hostility from extremists and public calls for members to be killed. Among them, the most vulnerable is the sizeable Hazara population in Quetta due to their ethnicity as well as their religious beliefs. As both an ethnic and religious minority, Hazaras face intersectional discrimination. The situation for Hazaras in Quetta is particularly serious, as highlighted by the series of bomb blasts around Alamdar Road in January 2013 which killed 126 members of the community. This targeting of Shi'a

community by militant groups has continued to the present day. Bombings carried out by militants and terrorist organisations have targeted social gatherings and crowded Shi'a areas with near impunity. There have been no meaningful crackdowns or investigations into the perpetrators of this violence, and police have generally been unable to stop attacks when they occurred. They have also been subjected to various forms of hate speech, most commonly as campaigns in mosques, schools, public spaces and increasingly on social media. Shias are vilified as a community for their religious beliefs and individuals are also picked out for criticism (Minority Rights.org, 2018).

Sheedi community is another such persecuted community despite being Muslims. The Sheedi community of Pakistan is the descendants of East Africans brought as slaves by Arab merchants between the eighth and nineteenth centuries. According to Young Sheedi Welfare Organisation (YSWO), the size of the community's population ranges from 50,000 to just under 1 million. Sheedis are based mostly in southern Pakistan. The majorities of Sheedi are Muslim, but have distinct cultural traits linking back to their particular history. Sheedis face widespread discrimination in Pakistan from other community groups due to their appearance and the colour of their skin. Women, in particular, often encounter discrimination in livelihood opportunities and are badly paid by their employers.

Ahmadi Muslims are target of the most brutal attacks on their life and properties by Sunni fundamentalists. They are a religious community of around 3-4 million. Although they consider themselves to be Muslim, some Muslims in Pakistan hold the opposite view because of the Ahmadis' claim that their founder was a recipient of divine revelation and a prophet of God. This claim is believed by some Muslims to violate a basic Islamic tenet regarding the finality of the prophet Muhammad. This religious difference has been used in the past by certain Pakistani governments to justify a number of legal restrictions on the Ahmadis' practice of their faith. In 1974, a constitutional amendment was passed that declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslims for purposes of the constitution and law. Fundamentalist Muslims carrying out the destruction or desecration of Ahmaddiya places of worship are routine now in Pakistan. There are also substantial allegations of arbitrary detentions and the usage of anti-terrorist courts to further victimise the Ahmaddiyas (Minority Rights.org, 2018).

The Baluchis are the indigenous peoples of Baluchistan, which is split between the Pakistani province of Baluchistan and Iranian Baluchistan. The majority of the Baluch people reside in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan. The socio-economic conditions of the Baluchis are abysmal, with over 50 per cent living below the poverty line. Grievances harboured by the Baluch stem from their economic deprivations and aspirations of independence. Baluchistan has economic resources which the successive federal governments have exploited without either due acknowledgement of Baluchistan's contribution to the national economy or recompense in monetary or financial measures independence movement is violently suppressed by Punjabi dominated military here. Forceful abductions, rape, enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings of the detainees by military are frequent (Minority Rights.org, 2018).

Pashtu-speaking people in Pakistan are around 20 million. Majority of them inhabit the plains of

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), while a minority (around 10 per cent) live in the highlands of the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Pashtun communities in KP remain at risk from the continuing Taliban insurgency, as well as from the repercussions from resulting government responses. In December 2014, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attacked the Army Public School in Peshawar, claiming 141 lives, including 132 children. The attack highlighted the extreme vulnerability of Pashtun civilians in what has become a cycle of violence. Pashtuns have also been frequently targeted by security forces in raids and abductions, while many others struggle with displacement and negative representations (USCIRF, 2018).

Sindhis is a large ethnic community living in Sindh province. Sindhis see themselves as threatened by the continued immigration and urban settlement of Mohajirs, and by a rural influx of Punjabis, many of them military personnel, who, they claim, obtain ancestral Sindhi lands unlawfully. Numerous Sindhi activists and intellectuals are reportedly in prison, some detained without trial, many tortured and denied legal or medical aid. Sindhis also consider that they are deprived of their share of irrigation water and that the province's fossil fuels are being exploited by outsiders for commercial gain, while many Sindhis suffer unemployment and poverty. Their grievances are largely directed at the Punjabis who dominate the bureaucracy and the armed forces.

Unlike many Hindus and Sikhs who emigrated to India at the time of partition, Christians for the most part remained in newly-founded Pakistan. According to the 1998 Census, Christians make up approximately 1.59 per cent of Pakistan's total population. Christians have continued to suffer targeted violence and other abuses, including land-grabbing in rural areas, abductions and forced conversion, and the vandalism of homes and churches. One of the worst incidents for the community took place in Lahore on 27 March 2016 when Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a splinter group of the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), bombed Gulshan-i-Iqbal park and killed more than 70 people, mostly women and children. In addition, many Pakistani Christians have been convicted of blasphemy under the country's repressive laws, including the widely covered case of Asia Bibi, who in 2010 was the first woman in Pakistan sentenced to death under 295-C after she was accused of religious defamation by Muslim women with whom she worked harvesting berries in rural Punjab. Besides the constant threat of violence, Christians also experience many forms of everyday discrimination in areas such as employment, where they are typically relegated to the most menial tasks, such as cleaning and garbage collection. Christians are also among the country's most marginalised communities, with limited economic opportunities. In Lahore, for example, the Christian population accounts for the bulk of the city's sanitation workers and street-sweepers – a fact that reinforces their stigmatisation – while most of their supervisors are Muslim. Christian women, in particular, face multiple forms of discrimination and so are vulnerable to a range of abuses, including forced conversion, forced marriage and sexual violence. Many reports suggest that between 100 and 700 Christian women (including minors), are victims of forced conversion and marriage each year (USCIRF, 2018). Thus not only religious minorities but women, ethnic and linguistic minorities are also the worst victims of Sunni fundamentalism and state sponsored discrimination and violence against them.

UNIT 3: CASES OF ATROCITIES AGAINST RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

Though all minorities including women are prime target of Sunni fundamentalism and other state and non-state actors, however religious minorities are most vulnerable. Their population in wake of unabated violence, discriminations and forced conversions has drastically dwindled. Very basic freedom and rights of them are violated with impunity. Following are some of instances as how it is done.

3A. TARGETING RELIGIOUS PLACES OF MINORITIES

Targeting of the cultural and religious heritage of minorities has become a new norm in Pakistan. These places on the one hand don't get state attention regarding renovation and on the other hand are looted and desecrated by Sunni fundamentalist groups. In an incident of June 2010, the demolition of a temple next to shamshanghat gave rise to a protest by the Hindu and Sikh communities in Rawalpindi (HRCP 2010). In 2012, six churches in Karachi city were attacked within a year and that includes, in the month of October, attacks on two churches within just 10 days. In these attacks around 200 Christians, protesting against electricity shutdown, lost their lives and the statue of St. Mary and holy books in churches were defiled. The same year in March, the land mafias of Mardan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, demolished a 150-year-old temple of Baba Karam Singh. People of the Sikh community in the region demanded the reconstruction of the temple and security of their sacred places in Pakistan. Later on, 21 September, a group of local Muslims targeted and attacked a Hindu temple in Karachi (HRCP 2012).

A mob protesting in Mardan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against an American director for making an anti-Islam film in the US turned to violence, and the St. Paul Lutheran Church building along with a high school, a computer laboratory, a library and houses of clergymen were set on fire. These anti-US protesters also targeted a Hindu neighborhood (Hindu Goth) in the outskirts of Karachi and attacked the Sri Krishna Ram temple, desecrated the idols, scriptures and the caretaker of the temple was beaten up. In Hyderabad city of Sindh province, a youth was injured in another church attack. In Lahore attack of November 2012, seven Christian men got injured in order to stop the land mafias from occupying a graveyard belonging to Christian. In the last month of the year 2012, a Hindu Temple and some houses of the Hindu community were demolished by a builder with the help of the local police in Karachi. Victims of the incident protested outside the Karachi Press Club for compensation and return of religious materials but no action was taken in their favour (HRCP 2012).

In 2013, the first instance of a suicide attack took place in Pakistan's history, including five attacks on churches. All Saints Church in Peshawar (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province) was attacked on 22 September by two suicide attackers. According to the government and media sources around 85 people had succumbed to death and over 100 people had got injured in that attack. But the

members of Christian community claimed that the number of people who lost their lives in this attack was twice as compared to the reported number by the government and media. A militant group took responsibility of the attack and claimed that the attack was in response to the US drone attacks and killings of innocent people, and that they will continue to target 'foreigners' in Pakistan if the US does not stop its drone strikes. There were cases of clashes reported in Karachi between Muslims and Christians after the church bombing in Peshawar (HRCP 2013).

In a village of Punjab's Vehari district, an anonymous group of people attempted to set a church on fire but failed and fled after damaging the building and the scripture. Later in August of the same year Assembly of God Church in Swati Gate of Peshawar was attacked and one of the two policemen assigned for security of the church was killed by two armed men. Earlier in July of the year, another policeman was killed by armed men in front of the same church. Another church in Bahar colony of Lahore was attacked by anonymous extremists and copies of Bible and expensive furniture and electronic items worth millions of rupees were burned. In another case of November, a policeman guarding the Symbol of God Church was killed by unidentified motorcyclists in Umeedabad, Peshawar (HRCP 2013).

In the year 2014, a number of attacks took place targeting religious places of Hindu community i.e., on January 26, two anonymous men attacked the Hindu temple in Peshawar and killed a policeman guarding the temple. On March 15, a rumour was spread in Larkana, Sindh that a member of the Hindu community had defiled the Holy Quran, and in return, a Hindu temple was burnt down by a fierce mob of local Muslims. On 17 March a temple in Badin was attacked, and in an attack on 28 March, another temple was burnt in Hyderabad. On March 30, the Faqir Par Braham Ashram was desecrated by local extremists in Tharparkar. On November 21, an unidentified man carried out an attack on a temple in Tando Mohammad Khan district of Sindh province and burnt the idol of Lord Hanuman with some religious texts (HRCP 2014).

In 2019, more than three cases of blasphemy were reported from Sindh province alone and incidents of attacks by mobs on homes, businesses and religious places belonging to the Hindu community. In September 2019, Sindh Public School in Ghotki was attacked by a mob because a student had accused that the owner of the school had committed blasphemy. Three temples and some houses belonging to the Hindu community were also attacked by the mob (HRCP 2019). Today many temples and Shakti Peeths remains destroyed and religious minorities face violence and state apathy when it comes to construction of any new place of worship by minority communities.

3B. PHYSICAL ATTACKS: ASSAULT, ABDUCTION AND KILLINGS

The major form of violence perpetrated against religious minorities is in the form of physical attacks, abduction and subsequent forced conversions and killings. Blasphemy laws are used to score personal disputes involving properties. Abductions are the most frequently used tools for forced conversions of minorities girls. Killings of minority's popular community leaders are frequent. Apart from this, destruction of cultural symbols of minorities is common. Some instances follow here:

Three Sikhs were abducted from the Khyber tribal of FATA region and kidnappers were demanding rupees 20 million by February. Later, on February 21, the beheaded body of Jaspal Singh was found in Orakzai Agency. Sardar Bishen Singh (a prominent Sikh leader) had also mentioned that one of his cloth shops was looted and the way for another shop in Lahore was obstructed due to illegal construction. Instead of listening to his problem, the police was busy asking question about his nationality. The Hindu community in Pakistan also face retaliation from Muslims, whenever Muslims in India gets targeted for their faith (HRCP 2010).

As the HRCP report suggests, around 27 Hindu families from Baluchistan had sought asylum in India. In October, 500 Hindu families had migrated to India from Baluchistan, to evade abduction and threats to their lives. There were reports that many Hindu families have fled Baluchistan and the country due to security concerns. As many as 93 cases of abductions were reported by police, and in reality, the number was supposed to be considerably higher. An incident gained so much popularity in Pakistan when three Hindu men were attacked and killed in Chak town of Shikarpur district because a Muslim girl visited his friend's house on Diwali who was a Hindu boy. This event had upset the members of Bhayo tribe, even though the Hindu elders had sent the girl back to her home and beaten up the boy, but still, those three Hindu men got killed who were not even connected with the event (HRCP 2010).

In 2010, Hindu families in Pakistan had sent their children to the houses of their relatives (living in Hindu-majority areas) to protect them from the fury of Muslim extremists because an Indian high court was supposed to announce the verdict on Babri Masjid. The Hindus living in Sindh region have been vulnerable to intimidation and forced conversion of young Hindu women to Islam, meanwhile the major concern for the Hindus living in Baluchistan is kidnapping. As per the report from HRCP activists in Baluchistan, out of 17 districts of Baluchistan Hindus feel safe only in Loralai district. According to activists, Hindus had migrated from Sibi, Mastung, Noshki, Bolan, Kalat, Jhal Magsi, Dera Bugti and Khuzdar districts due to insecurity. A leading religious leader of Hindus from Kalat was abducted. Religious extremism and other anti-social elements plan to snatch property from minorities has forced them to migrate to India or other countries especially from Sindh and Baluchistan (HRCP 2012).

A Sikh businessman, Mahinder Singh, of Tabi village in Landikotal was abducted from his shop by militants in November. The administration did not take any action to ensure safe release of Mahinder. On January 8, 2013, the disfigured body of Mahinder was found in Khyber Agency in a gunny bag. Earlier, Mahinder's brother Baswant was also kidnapped but militants released him after shaving off his hair (HRCP 2012).

On January 21, Rakkbir Singh was kidnapped from Peshawar by unidentified persons and released after 32 days. It was speculated that ransom was paid by his family for his release. A resident of Kurram Agency, Charan Singh, was abducted when he was going to Kohat district for the registration of his car. His location remained unknown until the end of 2013. On August 13, 2013, Victor William Bhutta, a Christian social activist of Karachi was killed by extremists. On October 26,

armed gangsters entered the colony premises and killed three children with two Christian activists named Yusuf Iqbal alias 'Joja' and Younis Inayat. As reported by the locals even a grenade was thrown in the compound and around 600 families terrorised by the attack fled the place in search of safety. Gangs of criminals looted the quarters vacated by the locals (HRCP 2013).

In March, Joseph Colony (a Christian-dominated neighborhood) in Lahore was set on fire by a mob of local Muslims because a Christian man was accused of blasphemy. As a result, around 100 houses were burnt in the incident. It was just a few weeks later, a confrontation among Christians and Muslims in Francis Colony of Gujranwala district began because a Muslim leader scolded a Christian boy for playing music on his cell phone outside a mosque. On December 9, a sister of a Christian ex-councilor wrote to HRCP about an incident that she was abducted by five criminals on gunpoint as she returned to her house to collect some personal belongings, in order to acquire information of whereabouts of her brother. She was tortured, gang raped and threatened with life, but still no satisfactory action was taken by the police until the end of the year. (HRCP 2013).

The condition of Sikh community living especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region has been becoming miserable due to targeted kidnappings and killings and forcing them to move to other places like Rawalpindi. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region of Punjab and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan are close to the border of Afghanistan and more vulnerable to militant extremism i.e., kidnapping, terror and attacks. Sikhs living in this region have been an easy target for extortion and kidnapping for ransom. A little has been done to take action against militants asking jizya from Sikhs living in FATA (HRCP 2013).

Just like Sikhs, traders and businessmen of Hindus community in Baluchistan have been getting abducted for ransom. On May 28, five Hindu children returning from school were abducted by armed men, even though four suspects were arrested by the police but the children were not recovered. On September 3, a Sikh man was gunned down by an unidentified assaulter in his shop in Mardan. On September 6, three shops owned by Sikhs in Peshawar were attacked and in open fire by unidentified persons, one Sikh was killed while other two got injured. Two Sikhs businessmen abducted from Dera Ismail Khan were released after four million rupees were paid. Many Sikhs have closed their shops and stopped sending their children to school (HRCP 2014). Thus extremist groups along with anti-social elements commit the such crimes against religious minorities with impunity tells a lot about the security to life and properties of people belonging to such minority community where state either remains mute spectator or is complicit in it.

3C. ABDUCTION, RAPE, FORCED CONVERSION AND MARRIAGE OF MINORITY GIRLS AND WOMEN

In any state infested with Sunni fundamentalism, condition of women is bound to be pitiable. They lack personal agency and freedom in many cases. The situation becomes worse if such a girls or women belong to a minority community. They are prime target of Sunni fundamentalism for abductions and subsequent forced conversions. There is religious merit in forceful conversions of minority girls. Judiciary and other state institutions are also found complicit in such cases. Such instances of violence and rights violations are most widely reported in Pakistan. Some instances follow here.

In the name of honour around 17 women of minority communities were killed which included 11 Christian and 6 Hindu girls and young women. The forcible conversion of young Hindu girls and adverse climate of fear in Sindh and the north-western tribal belt have forced religious minorities for migration (HRCP 2010).

In early 2012, a 19-year-old Hindu girl Rinkle Kumari was abducted from Mirpur Mathelo and her father made all the efforts possible to lodge a complaint of her abduction. Once the case was registered, the heavily armed religious activists began to harass him in the court premises. During a press conference, the families of abducted four Hindu girls (Rinkle Kumari, Dr Lata Kumari, Bharti Naraindas and Asha Mohandas) were also present to narrate their sufferings and how their girls were abducted, converted forcibly to Islam and married to Muslim men. According to the victims' families, the abductors were well-armed and supported by prominent religious and political personalities. Pakistan Hindu Council filed a petition in the Supreme Court for the recovery of three Hindu women- Rinkle Kumari, Asha Mohandas of Larkana and Dr Lata Kumari of Jacobabad. Relatives allegedly said that the girls were abducted, converted forcibly and Muslim men had married them against their will.

On March 12, Rinkle Kumari accepted in a press conference that without any pressure she had embraced Islam. Journalists reported that after every question asked, she was given notes by the two bearded men who had accompanied her to the conference. The conference abruptly ended when the bearded men held her arm and left the room. On March 26, the Supreme Court ordered to send Rinkle Kumari (renamed as Faryal Shah), Dr Lata Kumari (renamed as Hafsa Bibi) and Asha Mohandas (renamed as Haleema Bibi) for three weeks in women's shelter in Karachi, in order to give them time to think freely and make a decision about their future. On April 18, the girls decided to go with their husbands in their statements recorded in court. The court said that the women had taken their decision after sufficient time given to them in a pressure-free atmosphere. Still, the parents of the young women insisted that women were under pressure, threatened and they were never allowed to meet them, and eventually sent with their 'abductors'.

In 2013, two cases of forced conversion came to limelight, one being of abduction and forced conversion to Islam of a 15 year-old Christian girl, and married to a worker of a minister in Karachi. In the Sindh region of Pakistan, the forced conversion of Hindus and especially girls of Hindu community have been quite a common complaint. Each year more than 1000 Hindu girls were converted forcibly to Islam in Sindh region, according to the Secretary General of the All-Pakistan Hindu Panchayat (HRCP 2014). As per the report, every year around 700 Christian women were getting abducted, converted and forced to marry Muslim men in Pakistan. In return of the FIR registered by the girl's family, the abductor files a counter FIR stating that the girl by her free will had converted to Islam. In majority of the cases, during the period of judicial proceedings, the abductors had kept the girls in their custody. Due to increasing threats, persecutions and absence of security, many members of the Christian community left the country and moved to Thailand and other countries (HRCP 2014).

A freelance journalist, Saba Imtiaz, has clearly stated in her article that, "The allegedly forcible nature of the conversions, the almost identical pattern of the cases, and the targeting of minor girls have deeply unsettled the Hindu population, which constitutes about two percent of Pakistan's approximately 200 million people." The majority of forced conversion cases are reported from the Sindh region of Pakistan. The activists and families of Hindu community allege that through an organised manner conversions take place, which start from abduction a Hindu girl, then forcible conversion to Islam, and lastly, her marriage to a Muslim man. The powerful shrines, seminaries, clerics, and politicians are seen often backing these conversions and provide protection to the couple (Outlook, August 2017).

In 2016, a bill was passed by the Sindh legislature to prohibit forcible conversion before 18 years of age, but soon it faced intense criticism from different religious groups (Outlook, August 2017). Finally, on November 15, 2019, the bill was rejected by the Provincial Assembly of Sindh Province.

Women of religious minorities in Pakistan are not only facing gender discrimination but religious violence and persecution as well. There are a number of cases when underage Hindu and Christian girls disappeared and reappeared as converted and married Muslim women. These cases are seen as an attempt of Muslim extremists to expand Islam through forced conversion and marriages of women belonging to minority communities. In case the stories of abductions and rapes gets public, to suppress the suspicion of sexual assault the culprits end up marrying off the rape victims (GHRD 2019: 7).

The shrines, seminaries, clerics and local politicians support and back these conversions of religious minorities women. Clerics are often found engaged in forced conversions, and newly converted Muslims are offered money and housing by these clerics. In Islam, it is considered to be a blessing if a Muslim finds success converting a Hindu to Islam. With every passing year, the number of cases of rape of underage girls and forced marriages has reportedly increased (GHRD 2019: 7)

The government of Pakistan criticises acts of violence against minorities but it has always failed to take concrete action against the perpetrators. The corrupt and bias local governments and police forces of Pakistan are often seen working in favour of Muslim perpetrators and limit capacity of religious minority women and their family, which makes it difficult for them to effectively file cases of sexual harassment, violence and other crimes (GHRD 2019: 8). Honour killings, rapes, acid attacks, domestic violence, abductions, forced conversions, and marriages are some gender-based heinous crimes committed in Pakistan. As per one estimate, around 1000 cases of 'honour' killings are reported every year (HRW 2019: 450). Thus in a country infested with Islamic radicalisation, there is no security and freedom for women. In this case Pakistan is no different. Further women belonging to religious and ethnic minorities face double marginalisation. Forceful conversation of minority girls is a nightmare for Hindu and Sikh communities in Pakistan. Though Pakistan is a signatory to Convention on the elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) yet crime against women continues unabated.

3D. SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF MINORITY RIGHTS

Apart from legal, institutional discrimination, social discrimination in day-to-day life is frequent in Pakistan, minorities are discriminated for being non-Muslim. They are denied basic social amenities. Other international or national aid to them is opposed by majority community. Many instances are found, some of them follow here:

During the floods in 2010, Christians displaced in Punjab had complained about discrimination they faced during relief operations. District officials in Sukkur had also observed that Sikhs and Hindus were denied food at food distribution points. Around 600 flood victim Hindus in Karachi began protesting against religious insensitivity because they were served with beef in food. Local gangsters, with the support of the state agents, were forcing Hindus for evictions from Tharparkar of Sindh province. The forced conversion of young Hindu girls had pressurised religious minorities to migrate from the north-western tribal belt and Sindh province (HRCP 2010).

According to the head of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC), Sardar Sham Singh, the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) proved to be the greatest threat to land attached to holy sites of Sikh community. However, in theory, the function of ETPB was to protect the lands and properties of religious sites belonging to non-Muslim communities, but in reality, the employees of ETPB had promoted and assisted land and properties snatching by destroying the land and property records. As per the working committee report of HRCP, in the cases of abduction of minority girls and women, it is very rare that courts take decision in favour of the family and give them the custody of the abducted girls, even if the girl's age was around 12 or 13 (HRCP 2010).

In a case of July, on the eve of Shab-e-Barat, the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) denied entry of the Sikh community members observing a religious festival in Gurudwara Shaheed Bhai Taru Singh in Lahore (HRCP 2011). The Christians also face social discrimination. In September, at a police post and veterinary dispensary sharing the same building in Narang Mandi area of Punjab, a Christian dispensary worker was beaten up by two policemen because the worker drank water from the same glass the policeman had used. The Christian man, Nisar Masih, explained that after seeing him drinking water from the office cooler, the policemen asked him about his religion. The two policemen assaulted and abused the worker after knowing that he was a Christian. Later, as quoted in a local newspaper, it was told to Masih by one of the accused policemen that the utensils used by Muslims could not be used by the Christians (HRCP 2012). Due to the rising number of faith-based discrimination and violence, the reports of Hindus looking to emigrate had increased drastically especially from Sindh and Baluchistan province. According to the head of Pakistan Hindu Sabha, DM Maharaj, around 3000 Hindus had migrated to India in 2012, ever since the migration process began four years ago. (HRCP 2012)

A folk singer, Bhuro Bheel, from Pangrio, Badin died on October 5 in a road accident. Bheel belonged to a group of the Hindu community, and was buried in Haji Faqeer graveyard in Pangrio

just like the others members of the community were buried in the past. Some Muslim youth warned the family because a Hindu was buried in a graveyard belonging to Muslims. Soon, the local mosque made an announcement and urged the Hindu community to remove the body or else it will be removed. Hundreds of members from the Bheel community along with Muslim supporters from Sindhi nationalist parties and civil society went to protest on the local police station. On the morning of October 6, Bheel's relatives could not do anything when a mob dug up the grave, to remove the body and place it outside the graveyard. In the evening, a local landlord provided space to bury the body. According to Bheel's family and relatives, the clerics were responsible for provoking Muslims and students of madrasas from neighboring towns (HRCP 2013).

In another incident in December, the grave of Allah Dino Bheel was dug up to remove the body in Tando Bago of Badin district. A local cleric accused Bheel community of burying the body in the graveyard that belonged to Muslims, but after the police intervention the body was buried in the same graveyard and a wall was constructed to divide the graveyard among both communities.

A fact-finding mission was formed by the Peshawar office of HRCP to investigate the abduction of a young woman of Hindu community. After a round of talks between local authorities and HRCP office, local police finally registered an FIR of the woman's family (HRCP 2013).

In October, a Muslim man broke into a Christian house in Islamabad and pressurised the Christian man and his two nephews to embrace Islam, later the accused got arrested by the police. There were three cases of interfaith marriages when Christian men married Muslim women that triggered conflict between the two communities. In June, a Panchayat forced the Christian community to leave the village in Sialkot after a young Christian man had married a Muslim woman. In another case the same month, a Christian family was forced to leave the village in Sargodha because a male member of that Christian family had eloped and married a Muslim woman. The same month again in Sargodha, four Christian family houses were looted and forced by some landlords to sign stamp papers in order to grab their property. It all started after a Christian man had, reportedly married a Muslim woman, and was related to one of the four Christian families (HRCP 2013).

There is no actual data available on the number of Hindus leaving their villages and migrating to India each year. As per the information provided by Hindus, who left their Pakistan's village and emigrated to India altogether, the total number was estimated to be 5,000 each year (Outlook, August 2017). The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has expressed concern when Hindus and Christians were denied food aid amid coronavirus outbreak in Pakistan. It was reported that a Karachi based NGO, Saylani Welfare International Trust, had denied Hindus and Christians from food assistance, and gave a lame excuse that the aid was only reserved for Muslims (USCIRF Press release, April 13, 2020). Thus social discrimination has forced the religious minorities to live like untouchables and second class citizens in their own country. It has put them into abject poverty and this helplessness is further exploited by forcing them to convert to Islam.

3E. CASES OF MISUSE OF BLASPHEMY LAW

In Pakistan, blasphemy is considered to be a crime if a person insults a God, desecrate a place of worship, texts, buildings or things considered to be sacred in a religion. This law had also existed in British times, but in the 1980s the government of General Zia-Ul-Haq made it severe and as a result, the life of the accused became miserable. Clauses like 295-B and 295-C on blasphemy can endanger the very life of the accused individual. The blasphemy law has been widely misused in Pakistan against Non-Muslims and other religious communities for personal gains and to settle personal disputes. Apart from religious motives, most frequent misuse of this law is reported in scoring personal disputes against minority community. Illegal usurpation of properties of minorities using this law is most frequent. Politically, it is used against influential minority leaders.

The strict changes were made in blasphemy law of Pakistan to safeguard the religious sensitivities of Islam. The lack of clarity in the formulation and implementation by the police and judiciary have created a space for misuse of the blasphemy law to abuse, harass and persecute minority communities in Pakistan. Amnesty International has requested Pakistan's government to take every possible action to deny the misuse of blasphemy law while keeping that in force (Amnesty Report 2001).

On 19 July 2010, two Christian brothers, Sajid and Rashid Emmanuel were shot dead in court premises of Faisalabad district for being accused of blasphemy and still, the attackers managed to escape from there. In another incident that year, two men were charged with blasphemy and received death threats. Asia Bibi was not only a Christian but the first woman too, for being charged under blasphemy and sentenced to death. She was charged with blasphemy law in June 2009 when her Muslim fellow workers refused to drink water because she, a Christian woman, had touched the pot. This kind of discrimination with the Christians was common throughout Pakistan and in most of the cases they were not allowed to touch utensils used by Muslims (HRCP 2010).

In Abbottabad, a Christian schoolgirl of eighth-grade was charged with blasphemy after she misspelt a word in her exam. She was expelled from the school and the local clerics began instigating hatred against her. Many Christian families have reportedly left their places to evade arrest after being charged with blasphemy. In January, over a false allegation of blasphemy, two Christian women were assaulted and humiliated publicly by a fierce mob in Lahore. On April 30, a Christian seminary, a church and Christian's houses of Gujranwala district were attacked by a mob of local Muslims after knowing that two Christian men accused of blasphemy were released from police custody. Later, the police had charged two men for instigating violence in that case (HRCP 2011).

A 14-year-old Rimsha Masih, a Christian girl was accused of blasphemy in 2012, fortunately, she was granted asylum by Canada. In March, thousands of Christians had fled from Lahore because a Christian man, Sawan Masih, was allegedly charged under the blasphemy law, in response a mob

had looted and burned around 150 houses of the Christian community as well as two churches (HRW 2014). In 2014, many Christians were awaited to be persecuted after being accused of blasphemy. In Pakistan, only the accusation of blasphemy can prove to be fatal, even before the arrest and trial in court like in the case of lynching of Shama and Sajjad in KotRadhaKishen, Punjab. As per the report, under section 295-C of Pakistan Penal Code, 12 cases were registered in total during this year. In Pakistan, the accused of blasphemy consider themselves lucky if arrested by the police without any delay. However, police custody is no assurance of protection for the accused of blasphemy anymore. A 70-year-old, Mohammad Asghar, a psychiatric patient who returned from Britain was arrested after he claimed himself a prophet. A police officer shot him multiple times before being taken to a hospital. A Christian pastor as an accused of blasphemy, sharing the cell with Asghar, was also shot by the same police officer in this incident (HRCP 2014).

In the case of 4 November 2014, Shama and Sajjad, a Christian couple were beaten to death by a mob and then their bodies were burned in a brick kiln, and allegedly accused of blasphemy for desecrating a copy of the Holy Quran. The couple was working as a bonded labor on brick kiln in KotRadhaKishen, Punjab. The accused of the incident were arrested quickly after the interventions of the Supreme Court, the Prime Minister, and Chief Minister of the province. In any case, blasphemy accused has little hope for fair trial no matter how rich and influential one might be (HRCP 2014). A television personality, Junaid Jamshed, was booked under blasphemy for making blasphemous comments in his sermons on television. Soon, a video was released by him to apologise and to ask for forgiveness for his remarks (HRCP 2014).

In 2019, there were at least three cases reported from Sindh province where a mob had attacked places of worship, houses and shops belonging to the members of the Hindu community. In Karachi, around 200 Christian families got displaced after an angry mob attacked their Christian-majority neighborhood because a false accusation was made against four Christian women for desecrating the Holy Quran (HRCP 2019).

Blasphemy law is being used extensively against religious minority communities in Pakistan. "Sentences for these offences range from fines to long terms of imprisonment, and in the case of defamation of the Prophet Muhammad, a mandatory death sentence." The blasphemy law is used widely to persecute religious minorities and others by making a false accusation, to take personal revenge and personal gains. Once the person is accused of blasphemy, immediately the person is presumed to be guilty of the crime. The major biases of the blasphemy law have made it unable for religious minorities to appeal against the case, registered against them (GHRD 2019:10).

In the case of Asia Bibi, even though the Supreme Court had acquitted her from the case, still for three days nationwide protest was organised against the decision. Police stations and schools were attacked, still no one was arrested. Religious extremist groups of Pakistan had openly called for violence, and no strict action has been taken against them yet (GHRD 2019:11).

In September 2018, a school principal, Nautan Lal, was accused of blasphemy in Gotki, in response a mob provoked by local religious leader attacked place of worship and properties belonging to the members of Hindu community. Junaid Hafeez, a professor in Multan was charged under blasphemy law and sentenced to death. Since 2013, he is spending majority of his prison time in solitary confinement (Amnesty Report 2019). In 2018, a significant rise was noticed in the number of cases under the blasphemy law, due to increased personal and official rhetoric. Instead of doing amendment in law, the government was busy encouraging discrimination and persecutions of the disadvantageous groups of the society. In February, 18-year-old Patras Masih and 24-year-old Sajid Masih, two Christian brothers were charged with the blasphemy law in Lahore. Sajid was allegedly forced to jump out of the window after the police had tortured him during the interrogation in a room. In this incident, his legs and jaw were badly injured although he survived (HRW World Report 2019: 448). Thus Blasphemy laws are the most dangerous instruments of exploitation often used against minorities. These laws perpetuate dehumanising discrimination against minorities. They live under a constant threat of Islamic vigilantism.

CONCLUSION

Hence it is evident that minorities' particularly religious minorities are the main victims of the continuing human rights crisis in Pakistan. They are routinely discriminated and harassed systematically. Though Pak constitution promises equal rights to all citizens but religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities along with women continue to be discriminated against, both in law and in effect. There exists institutional, legal and societal discrimination and violation of basic rights and freedom of minority religious communities is rampant. Not only Pak constitution fails to protect the individual right to freedom of religion or belief but it also contains repugnancy provisions like blasphemy. Under Gen. Zia ul Haq (1977-88), its third military dictator, Pakistan made rapid and irreversible strides towards rabid Islamisation of all instrumentalities of governance like executive, political governance, judiciary and military. Blasphemy laws were modified during this time at the cost of rights of followers of other religions. Blasphemy laws perpetuate dehumanizing discrimination against minorities. They live under a constant threat of Islamic vigilantism. Many such provisions are used by the government to limit fundamental freedom on one hand and by fundamentalist to invoke apostasy and blasphemy to intimidate and harass minorities on the other hand. In addition, the Pak government lacks agency, as well as at times unwilling; to protect women and minority groups against violence and intimidation by the religious fundamentalists and other illegal armed groups. Thus, there is an urgent requirement of taking care of the human rights of Hindus and Sikhs of Pakistan.

It is the constitutional and international obligation of Pakistan government to clearly define minority rights to protect minority groups from discrimination and harassment. Also, Afghanistan should ratify all relevant international obligations on socio-economic rights and align its national laws to international standards. Internal contradictions in the constitution and legal provisions of Pakistan need to be resolved so as to not contradict or supersede other rights and laws. Atrocities on minorities, particularly on SC Hindus and women, started with the very birth of Pakistan in 1947. SC leader of Bengal, Jogendranath Mondal (1904-68), who made a common cause with Muslim League, had to come back to India just after few years. His letter is a historic document indicating the abysmal status of minorities in the then just born Pakistan. Conditions for SC Hindus are much worse today. The government should also identify minorities like SC Hindus for special attention and adequate resources should be allotted to them to empower them economically. Government must provide adequate security to protect them, their places of worship, and their right to practice their faiths with freedom, from the violence perpetrated against them by non-state actors.

The fact that religious communities also face the threat of violence on a daily basis makes it increasingly hard for them to be able to demand the realization of their international and constitutional human rights. For this, all persecuted communities must fight collectively and united to meet the existential challenge. Unfortunately, there is no strong pan Pakistan

organization to represent them and voice their grievances effectively at both national and international platforms. So they must work collectively as a pressure group to meet the existential crisis.

It is also the duty of international community concerned with the protection of human rights to take necessary measures. The international community of UN member states, various governments and non-governmental organizations should do the needful to prevent gross violations of rights of religious minorities. These measures become more important in wake of rising instances of violence and forceful abductions, rape and conversion of minority girls. Pak government must be pressurized to revise articles of constitution which are discriminatory and results in the rights violation of minorities with a view to ensure that the constitution prohibits discrimination on all grounds; adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation prohibiting all direct, indirect, and multiple forms of discrimination, on any ground; and provide for effective remedies for victims of discrimination, including through special judicial and administrative mechanisms. Finally, Indian Government must be welcoming to remaining religious minorities who desire to come to India.

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