



RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND THE GENDERED CONTEXT IN PAKISTAN

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES AND THE GENDERED CONTEXT IN PAKISTAN

A ROADMAP FOR EMPOWERMENT
(POLICY PAPER)

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ACRONYMS LIST

CEDAW Covenant on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women

CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child

ETPB Evacuee Trust Property Body

FGD Focus Group Discussion

FIA Federal Investigation Agency

FIR First Information Report

FSC Federal Shariat Court

HRCP Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

ICCPR International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights

ICERD International Covenant on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

ICESCR International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights

IDI In-Depth-Interview

ITMP Ittehad-e-Tanzimat-e-Madaris Pakistan

NADRA National Data Registration Authority

NCHR National Commission on Human Rights

PECA Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act

PPC Pakistan's Penal Code

PTA Pakistan Telecommunication Authority

SDPI *Sustainable Development Policy Institute*

SOP *Standard Operating Procedure*

UDHR *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

UN United Nations

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FOREWORD

“Laws alone cannot secure freedom of expression; in order that every man present his views without penalty there must be spirit of tolerance in the entire population.”

— Albert Einstein

Nations that nurture inclusive, tolerant societies and ensure social justice and equity find sustainability in their growth and are resilient in times of crisis. In Pakistan, unfortunately we have struggled to tame the non-tolerant and fundamental elements in our society with the result that many segments of our society suffer marginalization and segregation. There are multiple layers of marginalization that manifest as a result of identity politics, based on religious beliefs; ethnicity and languages; and socio-economic and class divides. The persecution and marginalization of religious minorities in Pakistan is an issue of serious concern and when considered through the lens of gender and socio-economic status, the forms of social exclusion, political marginalization and access to employment, education and services for this particular class are further heightened.



Shehri-CBE has been actively engaged in research and advocacy work on various aspects of human rights that include gender empowerment and securing the rights of religious minorities. In this *Study*, we have sought to examine the interfaces that exist between the religious minority status and gender identity to document challenges that women amongst religious minorities face on matters such as financial empowerment, personal laws related with marriage and inheritance, access to justice, education and gainful employment. It is an effort to not just bring to light these challenges and their impact on the affected communities but to also identify pathways through which reform can take place on a policy and legislative level; advocating for institution building and encouraging behavior change.

It is hoped that this *Study* and the advocacy work that will follow our research would contribute to greater acceptance, inclusion and empowerment of women amongst our religious minorities.

Amber Alibhai

General Secretary

Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment

INTRODUCTION

The vision for Pakistan, as shared by its founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was of a forward-looking and tolerant nation where people belonging to different religions and ethnicities could live in peace; where the fundamental duty of the state was the provision of safety and security of its citizens without any discrimination. The importance of religious minorities found in the vision of the founding fathers of the nation is aptly reflected by the white strip in our national flag that represents minorities at large, the protection and sanctity of whose faith and religious freedom is considered a paramount duty of the state.

However, it is a matter of great regret that this vision of an inclusive nation never really materialized. Religious minorities in Pakistan have and continue to face discrimination at various levels that include, but are not limited to, social exclusion, lack of effective political representation, and restricted access to legally enshrined rights and entitlements.

Religious minorities have also suffered at the hands of radical and fundamental forces within society with often documented cases of forced conversions, desecration of places of worship, and loss of life and property. A matter of great concern is that although the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of religious minorities and various legislations are also in place to ensure protection, such practices continue and have resulted in placing Pakistan amongst the top 10 countries globally where minorities remain under constant threat.

The present *Study* looks at the overall national policy and the institutional framework that has been structured around the consideration of protecting the rights of religious minorities, and documents key analytical reviews that have been conducted by individuals and institutions of merit and credibility. In particular, the *Study* examines several issues and challenges faced by the Hindu and the Christian community, and also sets a focus on 'Gender' within the geographical context of the province of Sindh. It tries to identify issues and challenges more relevant to women religious minorities within a larger understanding of the overall crisis. Secondary research has been complimented with primary research where access has been made to women activists, academics, and legal experts within the Christian and the Hindu minorities to document their challenges and views for change. Also, documented are experiences and recommendations of noted activists along with minority members of the assembly of the province of Sindh.

The *Study* concludes with a comprehensive *Policy Framework* identifying gaps in policy and implementation. Besides looking at the issue from the lens of law and order and security solely, the *Study* also recommends more grassroots level interventions such as the creation of cultural spaces and institutions to foster greater understanding, cohesion, and respect at the societal level. It is expected that this contribution would help in identifying avenues for future research in this regard, and would lead to the initiation of policies, actions, and public awareness to help build greater tolerance.

The *Study*, however, has been prepared under certain limitations and constraints. Information regarding laws and regulations on the status of religious minorities, which are also constantly updated and amended, have not been consolidated to date. Independent efforts were made to gather information from various government and non-government sources to develop a collage, but there may have been some unintended omissions. While it is important to document the context, the core focus of this work has been to chart a way forward, as well as to highlight some very personal, human stories and experiences of representatives of the religious minorities to provide insight into the multiple challenges they face and resulting implications on their social, economic and political lives.

Farhan Anwar and Hiba Shoaib
November 2020

01

RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

– An Overview

*This **Section** provides an overview of the demographics and the associated aspects of law and governance regarding the status of religious minorities in Pakistan*

Defining 'Minorities'

The term 'Minority' has been defined differently by different scholars and organizations, and there is no internationally agreed definition as to which groups constitute minorities. The most consensus-based effort to define rights of such groups was by the *United Nations (UN)* in 1992, in its Resolution 47/135, where the *United Nations General Assembly* proclaimed the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (also known as the '*Minorities Declaration*').¹ Its Article 1 refers to minorities as based on national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity, and provides that States should protect their existence. While 'definitions' may vary, however, there are a number of legal instruments – declarations, covenants, treaties, etc., that directly or indirectly address the issue of religious freedoms and beliefs. Prominent among them and having a global outreach is the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, enacted by the UN on November 25, 1981. In addition, the most referred legislative instruments having a global outreach are Article 18 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and Article 18 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.⁴

The UN sub-commission on Human Rights defines the term as follows:

'A group of citizens of a state, consisting of a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that state, endowed with ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if not implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law.'

Definition of a religious minority, which draws from that of Francesco Capotorti, states:

*'A group who is less in number in the population of a state and not in commanding position. These people have some common religious characteristics, implicit or explicit, and they feel a sense of belonging to a group. They want to preserve their religious and cultural and linguistic norms'*⁵

Religious Minorities as a 'Vulnerable' Population

Produced by the Minority Rights Group International, Peoples Under Threat (an annual index), in 2020, ranked Pakistan amongst the top 10 countries globally for increasing genocide and mass killings, whereby Hindus, Christians, Shi'a (incl. Hazara), Ahmadiyya, and other religious minorities were said to be at the most risk.⁶

This is despite the fact that, on August 11, 1947, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah delivered a speech to the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan where he envisioned a pluralistic and a democratic land that would safeguard the rights of all people from all faiths. However, after decades, despite the inclusive values espoused by its founding fathers, Pakistan has descended into a state riddled with religious extremism, nationalist sentiments and prejudiced views.

¹ United Nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner

² United Nations, Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ReligionOrBelief.aspx>

³ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁴ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>

⁵ Freedom of Religion and Status of Religious Minorities in Pakistan. *International Journal of Management Sciences and Business Research*. Tahir, H., & Tahira, I. (2016). ISSN (2226-8235) Vol-5, Issue 12

⁶ Peoples Under Threat, Minority Rights Group 2020, <https://peoplesunderthreat.org/>

The numerical disparity between Muslims and non-Muslims in Pakistan is significant. As per the 1998 census, Muslims formed 96.16% of the population and non-Muslims consisted of 3.84%. There is little confirmation as to present population figures. Slightly differing statistics have been provided over the years.⁷

According to the 2014 government registration documents cited by the press, there are approximately 1.4 million Hindus, 1.3 million Christians, 126,000 Ahmadis, 34,000 Baha'is, 6,000 Sikhs, and 4,000 Parsis.⁸ Taking account of the Ahmadi boycott of the official census, however, community sources put the number of Ahmadi's at approximately 500,000-600,000. Estimates of the Zikri community, located in Balochistan, range between 500,000 and 800,000 individuals. Several minority rights advocacy groups, however, dispute the provisional results of the 2017 census and state the numbers underrepresent their true population⁹ This

could be because a lot of people, out of fear and threats, avoid being identified as religious minorities, and therefore the above figures can be contested for being underestimated.

Over 80 percent of non-Muslims in Pakistan are either Christians or Hindus. Though they are spread throughout the country, the majority of non-Muslims are concentrated in a few geographic areas. The vast majority of the Hindu population is concentrated in a few areas in the Thar Desert and other parts of Sindh and Balochistan. In contrast, the majority of Pakistani Christians live in the central districts of Punjab province. Sixty-two (62) percent of Pakistani Christians live in urban areas, notably Lahore, Karachi, Faisalabad and Sialkot while the rest inhabit rural settlements.¹⁰

JINNAH'S VISION OF PAKISTAN

"We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community, because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on, and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khattris, also Bengalis, Madrasis and so on, will vanish... You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place or worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State.... We are starting in the days where there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State.... Now I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State"

Source: Mr. Jinnah's presidential address to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan.

Retrieved from, www.pakistani.org

⁷ *Prioritizing Needs: An Evidence Based Study for Religious Minorities in Sukkur, Ghotki and Larkana. Legal Aid Society in Collaboration with EDACE. Zahid, H. E., & Munshey, M. (2016)*

⁸ *International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 United States Department of State. Bureau of Democracy, Human Right, and Labor. (2018)*

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Fact Sheet*

Although a lot of disturbing experiences are also shared by other Pakistani citizens, due to the much smaller number of religious minorities, non-Muslims are rendered more vulnerable and are severely impacted by such incidents.¹¹ In Pakistan, it is unfortunate that religious minorities are labelled as ‘vulnerable communities’, owing to continued practices of discrimination, marginalization and hate speech. In a 2013 Pew Survey, fifty-seven (57) percent of Pakistanis said that they considered religious conflict as a national problem.¹² There are multiple dimensions associated with practices of religious discrimination against minorities in Pakistan. A report, *Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan*, prepared by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) brings out this aspect of the crisis well. It states:

*“Discrimination against religious minorities in Pakistan manifests in myriad forms, ranging from restrictions on political participation and limited economic opportunities to outright violence. These different forms of discrimination do not operate in isolation, but rather work together and reinforce one another. On the one hand, groups such as Scheduled Caste Hindu women suffer from multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination that affect their lives in profound ways. In comparison, the discrimination encountered by religious minorities belonging to the elite and urban middle class is somewhat mild, and the inclusion of these minorities in positions of power within politics, the economy, or the military has often been used to deflect criticism from the blatant religious discrimination that pervades the country. Yet it is important to note that members of this relatively privileged group are few and even they do not have immunity from discriminatory structures, which prevent them from enjoying full citizenship rights. With regard to the different systems of oppression that operate in Pakistan, gender-based discrimination is particularly severe, as highlighted by the Global Gender Gap Index for 2013. Measuring ‘relative gaps’ between men and women in areas including education, health, economics, and politics, this ranking placed Pakistan second to last out of the 136 countries assessed. It is therefore unsurprising that minority women – who encounter multiple and intersectional discrimination – find themselves in a particularly dire situation”.*¹³

¹¹ *Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging*. South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies. Fuchs, M. M., & Fuchs, S. W. (2020).

¹² *The World’s Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society* was conducted by Pew Research Centre’s Forum on Religion and Public Life and published in April 2013, the main objective being to examine the social and political views of Muslims worldwide.

¹³ *Searching for security: the rising marginalization of religious communities in Pakistan*. Minority Rights Group International. Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Dilawri, S., Salim, A., Ishfaq, H., & Saleem, M. (2014).

MAIN RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

Ahmadis

The Ahmadi community in Pakistan comprises approximately 0.22 per cent of the population according to the country's last national census (approved), conducted in 1998. However, Ahmadi population statistics are especially contested. While the community is officially numbered at less than half a million, other sources estimate it at 600,000 and even into the millions. They are relatively well-educated as a group and many make their home in Rabwah, Punjab district. While Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims rather than a non-Muslim minority group, they are regarded by many representatives of dominant Islamic groups as heretics and legally prohibited from declaring themselves Muslims. They are unable to exercise the right to vote because, in order to do so, they must declare themselves non-Muslims, which they are unwilling to do

Christians

According to the 1998 Census, Christians make up approximately 1.59 per cent of Pakistan's total population. In fact, the exact number is unknown and estimates range from less than 2 million to as many as 3 million. There are Christian communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, including around 70,000 in Peshawar, but the bulk of Pakistani Christians live in Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, and numerous small communities in Punjab. While Christians in Pakistan are overwhelmingly poor – working in menial jobs as cleaners, laborers and farmhands – there are notable exceptions

Hindus

Hindus in Pakistan account for approximately 1.85 per cent of the country's population according to the 1998 Census – amounting to less than 2.5 million people. However, as with other minority groups, these figures are regarded by community organizations as unreliable and out of date. The Pakistan Hindu Council, for instance, has estimated that the total Hindu population now exceeds 7 million. Of this group, approximately 94 per cent inhabit the province of Sindh, with more than half of Sindhi Hindus concentrated in the south-east district of Tharparkar, bordering India. The remainder of Pakistan's Hindu population reside in small pockets of Punjab, as well as Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. Since 1947, levels of animosity towards Hindus have correlated closely with the vicissitudes of Indo-Pakistani relations. Issues and tensions on the international level have fed into the characterization and targeting of Pakistani Hindus as foreign agents

Source: Searching for Security, Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan, 2014, SDPI

02

LEGAL & INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

*This **Section** looks at the existing legal and institutional framework at the national and provincial level, and documents some key policies, institutions and decision-making platforms that have either been specifically structured within the context of protection of religious minority rights or are more generalized policy and legal constructs but do find a relevance nonetheless*

Our International Commitments and Obligations

Pakistan is a signatory to several international human rights treaties including the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)* and it also adheres to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*. It has taken a reservation on most of these and made their observance subject to the injunction of Islam, which limits the scope of the treaties immensely. *Article 18* of the *UDHR* guarantees the right to freedom of speech, religion and conscience to every human being. Under the international treaty and customary law, Pakistan is bound to enforce the right of freedom of religion and belief of its people, especially for the minorities, who are equal citizens of Pakistan and are entitled to equal rights and protection.¹⁴

Convention	Status
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965	Ratified
International Convenat on Civial and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966 3, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 25, and 40	Ratified, Reservations on Articles
International Convenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966	Ratified
Elimination of All Forums of Discrimination against Women, 1979	Ratified
ILO 111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	Ratified
ILO 169 Convention Indigeneous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 1989	Ratified
Interantional Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	Not Ratified
International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948	Ratified
Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989	Ratified
Convention Against Tortre and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 1984	Ratified

Pakistan has certain obligations to uphold the right to freedom of religion or belief and give effect to the rights enshrined by these treaties. Some other key treaties that Pakistan has ratified – with certain reservations – and which are relevant to freedom of religion or belief to varying degrees include the *International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, ratified in 2008)*, the *International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, ratified in 1966)*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, ratified 1966)*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, ratified 1990)*, and the *International Labor Organization Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 1958 (ILO 111)*. A significant gap remains between ratification and implementation at the domestic level, however. Pakistan follows a dualist system concerning international treaties, and therefore those that have been ratified still require incorporation into domestic law.

Failure on the part of the government of Pakistan to comprehensively bring domestic legislation in line with international treaties has led to the frequent violation of the latter. The currently enforced *1973 Constitution* is the supreme law of the country and all laws passed should be in line with the Constitution. Certain ‘*Funda-mental Rights*’ are enshrined in the *Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Articles 8 to 28)* that deal with fundamental rights provided to the citizens of Pakistan, irrespective of religious faith and association.

The constitution defines “Muslim” as a person who “believes in the unity and oneness of Almighty Allah, in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad ... the last of the prophets, and does not believe in, or recognize as a prophet or religious reformer, any person who claimed or claims to be a prophet after Muhammad.” It also states “a person belonging to the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, or Parsi community, a person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves Ahmadis), or a Baha’i, and a person belonging to any of the scheduled castes” is a “non-Muslim.”

Source: Pakistan 2018, *International Religious Freedom Report*, US State Department

¹⁴ *Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Pakistan: An Analysis of Federal and Provincial Laws*. AGHS. I.A.Rehman

Following discussion provides a holistic overview of the associated legal and constitutional construct as it relates with religious minority issues in Pakistan; and is excerpted from the 2018 Report on International Religious Freedom – Pakistan, issued by the Office of International Religious Freedom

– US Department of State

According to the constitution, every citizen has the right to freedom of speech, subject to ‘reasonable restrictions in the interest of the glory of Islam,’ as stipulated in the penal code. According to the penal code, the punishments for persons convicted of blasphemy include the death penalty for ‘defiling the Prophet Muhammad,’ life imprisonment for ‘defiling, damaging, or desecrating the Quran,’ and ten (10) years’ imprisonment for ‘insulting another’s religious feelings’. ‘Speech or action intended to incite religious hatred is punishable by up to seven (7) years’ imprisonment. Under the 2016 *Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA)*, the *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony* is responsible for reviewing internet traffic and reporting blasphemous or offensive content to the *Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA)* for possible removal, or to the *Federal Investigative Agency (FIA)* for possible criminal prosecution.

The constitution provides for ‘freedom to manage religious institutions.’ It states every religious denomination shall have the right to establish and maintain its own institutions. The constitution states no person shall be compelled to pay any special tax for the propagation or maintenance of a religion other than the person’s own. The government collects a 2.5 percent *zakat (tax)* from Sunni Muslims and distributes the funds to Sunni mosques, madrassahs, and charities.

The *Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony* is responsible for organizing participation in the Hajj and other Islamic religious pilgrimages. Authorities also consult the ministry on matters such as blasphemy and Islamic education. The ministry’s budget covers assistance to indigent minorities, repair of minority places of worship, establishment of minority-run small development projects, celebration of minority religious festivals, and provision of scholarships for religious minority students. The constitution states no person attending any educational institution shall be required to attend religious instruction or take part in any religious ceremony relating to a religion other than the person’s own. It also states no religious denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of its denomination in an educational institution maintained by the denomination.

By law, madrassahs are prohibited from teaching or encouraging sectarian or religious hatred or violence. *Wafaqs* (independent academic boards) register seminaries, regulate curricula, and issue degrees. The five *wafaqs* each represent major streams of Islamic thought in Pakistan: Bareilvi, Deobandi, Shia, Ahle Hadith, and the suprasectarian Jamaat-i-Islami. The *wafaqs* operate through an umbrella group, Ittehad-e-Tanzeemat-e-Madaris Pakistan (ITMP), to represent their interests to the government.

Relevant Ministries and Departments Federal and Provincial

Ministry of Interfaith Affairs and Religious Harmony
(Federal)

Minority Affairs Department, Government of Sindh

Human Rights and Minority Affairs Department,
Government of Punjab

Auqaf, Religious and Minority Affairs Department,
Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK)

Commissions

Pakistan National Commission for Minorities

The NAP requires all madrassahs to register with one of five wafaqs or directly with the government. The constitution states 'all existing laws shall be brought into conformity with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah [Islam's body of traditional social and legal custom and practice]'. It further states no law shall be enacted which is 'repugnant' to Islam. The constitution states this requirement shall not affect the "personal laws of non-Muslim citizens" or their status as citizens. Most personal laws regulating marriage, divorce, and inheritance for minority communities date from pre-partition British legislation.

What does the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan say?

Following are the fundamental rights guaranteed to the citizens of Pakistan under the Constitution.

- No person shall be deprived of life or liberty, save in accordance with law (article 9)
- Safeguard as to arrest and detention. All arrested person must be informed of grounds of their arrest, they have right to consult and defended by lawyer of their choice.
- Right of fair trial under article 10A
- Slavery, forced labor is prohibited and no child under age of 14 year be employed in factory and mines.
- There shall be protection against retrospective punishment
- There shall be protection against double punishment and self-incrimination.
- Freedom of movement to everyone
- Freedom of assembly for all citizens
- Freedom of association for all citizens
- There shall be freedom of trade, business and profession for all citizens.
- Freedom of speech for all citizens
- All citizens shall have right to have access to information in all matters of public importance under article 19A.
- Freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institution in country
- Safeguard against the taxation for the purposes of any particular religion.
- Safeguard as to educational institutes in respect of religion etc.
- All citizens have right to acquire, hold and dispose of property in any part of Pakistan.
- Protection of property rights of owners.
- All citizens are equal and there shall be no discrimination on bases of sex etc.
- Free and compulsory education to all children of age 5 to 16 by Government
- No discrimination in respect of access to public places.
- Safeguard against discrimination in services.
- All citizens have right to preserve their particular language, script and culture

Of these, Article 20 specifically addresses 'religious minorities'

Article 20. Freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institutions.

Subject to law, public order and morality:-

- (a) Every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion; and
- (b) Every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions

The following Articles are related to Fundamental Rights that specifically mention specifically religion/religious minorities

Article 22. Safeguards as to educational institutions in respect of religion, etc.

- (1) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own
- (2) In respect of any religious institution, there shall be no discrimination against any community in the granting of exemption or concession in relation to taxation
- (3) Subject to law:
 - (a) No religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any educational institution maintained wholly by that community or denomination; and
 - (b) No citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution receiving aid from public revenues on the ground only of race, religion, caste or place of birth
- (4) Nothing in this Article shall prevent any public authority from making provision for the advancement of any socially or educationally backward class of citizens

Article 26. Non-discrimination in respect of access to public places

- (1) In respect of access to places of public entertainment or resort not intended for religious purposes only, there shall be no discrimination against any citizen on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth
- (2) Nothing in clause (1) shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children

Article 27. Safeguard against discrimination in services

- (1) No citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth provided that, for a period not exceeding [16][forty] years from the commencing day, posts may be reserved for persons belonging to any class or area to secure their adequate representation in the service of Pakistan: Provided further that, in the interest of the said service, specified posts or services may be reserved for members of either sex if such posts or services entail the performance of duties and functions which cannot be adequately performed by members of the other sex
- (2) Nothing in clause (1) shall prevent any Provincial Government, or any local or other authority in a Province, from prescribing, in relation to any post or class of service under that Government or authority, conditions as to residence in the Province for a period not exceeding three years, prior to appointment under that Government or authority

In addition, Article 36 of the Constitution of Pakistan (not part of Fundamental Rights) addresses religious minorities

Article 36. Protection of minorities

The State shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities, including their due representation in the Federal and Provincial services

The Constitution establishes a *Federal Shariat Court (FSC)* composed of Muslim judges to examine and decide whether any law or provision is 'repugnant to the injunctions of Islam.' The constitution gives FSC the power to examine a law of its own accord or at the request of the government or a private citizen. The constitution requires the government to amend the law as directed by the court. The constitution also empowers the FSC to review criminal cases relating to certain crimes under the *Hudood Ordinance*, including rape and those linked to Islamic morality, such as extramarital sex, alcohol use, and gambling. The court may suspend or increase the sentence given by a criminal court in these cases. The FSC exercises 'revisional jurisdiction' (*the power to review of its own accord*) in such cases in lower courts, a power which applies whether the cases involve Muslims or non-Muslims. Non-Muslims may not appear before the FSC. If represented by a Muslim lawyer, however, non-Muslims may consult the FSC in other matters such as questions of sharia or Islamic practice which affect them or violate their rights if they so choose. By law, decisions of the FSC may be appealed to the Supreme Court's Shariat Appellate Bench.

The constitution establishes a *Council of Islamic Ideology* to make recommendations, at the request of the parliament and provincial assemblies, as to 'the ways and means of enabling and encouraging Muslims to order their lives in accordance with the principles of Islam.' The constitution further empowers the council to advise the legislative and executive branches when they choose to refer a question to the council, as to whether a proposed law is or is not 'repugnant to the injunctions of Islam.'

The constitution directs the state to 'safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of minorities,' to secure the well-being of the people irrespective of creed, and to discourage sectarian prejudices. It forbids discrimination against any religious community in the taxation of religious institutions. The National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR), an independent government-funded agency that reports to parliament, is required to receive petitions, conduct investigations, and request remediation of human rights violations. The NCHR is also mandated to monitor the government's implementation of human rights and review and propose legislation. It has quasi-judicial powers and may refer cases for prosecution but does not have arrest authority. The *18th Amendment*, passed in 2010, expanded the powers of the prime minister and devolved responsibility for education, health care, women's development, and minorities' affairs, including religious minorities, to the provinces. According to the constitution, there shall be no discrimination on the basis of religion in appointing individuals to government service, provided they are otherwise qualified. There is a 5 percent minimum quota for hiring religious minorities at the federal level.

The constitution prohibits discriminatory admission based on religious affiliation to any governmental educational institution. According to regulations, the only factors affecting admission to government schools are students' grades and home provinces; however, students must declare their religious affiliation on application forms. This declaration is also required for private educational institutions, including universities.

Following are listed some laws at the Federal level, where cases filed under these laws have resulted in discriminatory actions against religious minorities. These laws have been excerpted from the research report of the AGHS Legal Aid Cell – Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Pakistan: An Analysis of Federal and Provincial Laws, prepared by noted human rights activist – I.A.Rehman

Electoral laws

The legal instruments which outline the electoral laws for religious minorities in Pakistan include the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan (hereinafter called the constitution), the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies Allocation of Reserved Seats for Women and Non-Muslims (Procedure) Rules, 2002 and the Representation of the People Act, 1976. The salient features of these instruments are laid out below:

Constitution of Pakistan 1973

2. (a) - Article 51 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan: National Assembly

There shall be three hundred and forty-two seats for members in the National Assembly, including seats reserved for women and non-Muslims

2. (b) - The National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies Allocation of Reserved Seats for Women and Non-Muslims (Procedure) Rules, 2002

The Act was promulgated to prescribe the method and procedure for working out the quota of seats reserved for women and non-Muslims in the National Assembly and provincial assemblies in respect of each political party, which is reproduced hereunder:

2. (c) - The Representation of the People Act, 1976

This was enacted to provide for the conduct of elections to the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies.

Section 47-A. Party lists for reserved seats, etc.-

The Sindh Protection of Communal Properties of Minorities Act, 2013

This Act as per Section 2(b) seeks to protect

places of worship, monasteries, seminaries, vicarages, dharamshalas, goashalas, burial places, community centres, social welfare, education, health and recreational institutions meant for communal use by minority communities and includes side buildings, vacant places, lands, residential places, offices annexed to the said properties.

Section 3(1)

No property of a minority community meant for its communal use shall be bought, sold or transferred by any person without [No Objection Certificate] NOC from the Provincial Government.

Evacuee Trust Property Law

2 (a). The Evacuee Trust Properties (Management and Disposal) Act, 1975/

2 (b). Pakistan (Administration of Evacuee Property) Act, 1957

The Hudood Laws

The Hudood Ordinances were promulgated in 1979 and enforced in 1980. They comprise five criminal laws, collectively known as the Hudood laws:

The Offences against Property Ordinance deals with the crime of theft and armed robbery

- The Offence of Zina Ordinance relates to the crime of rape, abduction, adultery and fornication. The word “zina” covers adultery as well as fornication
- The Offence of Qazf Ordinance relates to a false accusation of zina
- The Prohibition Order prohibits use of alcohol and narcotics
- Execution of the Punishment of Whipping Ordinance prescribes the mode of whipping for those convicted for had offences

Relevant provisions of Pakistan Penal Code regarding 'offences relating to religion'

2 (a). Section 295

Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage, or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may be extended to two years, or with fine, or with both.

295 (A)

Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Pakistan, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may be extended to ten years, or with fine, or both.

Section 295 (B)

Whoever willfully defiles damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Quran or an extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life.

Section 295 (C)

Whoever by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) shall be punished with death and shall be liable to fine.

2 (b). Section 298

Whoever, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person or makes any gesture in the sight of that person or places any object in the sight of that person shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year or with fine, or with both.

Section 298 (A)

Whoever, by words, either spoken or written or by visible representation, or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly defiles the sacred name of any wife (UmmulMumineen) or members of the family of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) or any of the righteous Caliphs or companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

Citizenship and naturalization

2. (a) The Citizenship Act, 1951/ 2. (b)-National Database Rules and Regulations

National Database and Registration Authority (Pakistan Origin Card) Rules, 2002

03

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

*In this **Section**, critical issues and challenges faced by the Christian and the Hindu communities are documented. Views and recommendations expressed by the community representatives are synthesized with the insights gained through extensive secondary research to cover a range of issues in a holistic manner*

In order to gain in-depth information on the struggles and grievances of the Hindu and the Christian community, this study employed qualitative research methods by conducting In-Depth-Interviews (IDIs) and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the month of October and November, 2020. The FGD, led by two interviewers, was held comprising a mix of fourteen (14) Hindu and Christian participants (9 female, 5 male) belonging from various professions from Karachi, Sindh. Moreover, four (4) separate and in-depth interviews with women participants were also conducted to better understand the challenges faced by women of minority faiths in particular. Then, six (6) separate profile interviews with notable educationists, social right activists, and MPAs were held to document their thoughts and recommendations. Altogether, twenty-four (24) interviews were held and the participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Their stories and views serve as examples of minority grievances and, in no way, are meant to limit the extent of the problem to the said concerns.



(Refer to Annex for the list of participants and their affiliation)

To maintain a conversational and flexible discussion, the interviews conducted were semi-structured. After obtaining consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and only those participants who consented were identified with their name. For analytical purposes, the contents of the interviews were translated from Urdu to English and statements were coded according to different themes. While some of these interviews were conducted online through Zoom meetings and WhatsApp calls, others were held in-person under Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) during COVID-19.

In addition to primary data collection, a thorough literature review of relevant national and international academic studies and reports on the said topic was also done, which was synthesized with primary findings.

Weak Political Participation

"Pakistan's Constitution, in the very start, declares that all citizens have equal rights but then, at the same time, it also says that the President and the Prime minister cannot be from the minority. Then, how is this being an equal citizen?" – Zahid Farooq, Social Activist, 2020

According to the Article 41 (2),

"A person shall not be qualified for election as President unless he is a Muslim of not less than forty-five years of age and is qualified to be elected as member of the National Assembly".

and, Article 91 (3) of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan,

"After the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, the National Assembly shall, to the exclusion of any other business, proceed to elect without debate one of its Muslim members to be the Prime Minister"

a non-Muslim cannot become the President and the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Although not restricted from holding other seats in the government, minorities are formally barred from assuming such high posts of authority. Therefore, with regards to the status of minorities, parts of the Constitution are heavily argued for contradicting its own provisions, and for only identifying Muslims as “full citizens with guaranteed rights”.¹⁵

A Christian lawyer shared her feelings in the following words:

“Does the Constitution of Pakistan allow me, being a Christian woman, to become the President of Pakistan? No. If I were a Hindu, was it possible for me to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan? No. The Pakistan of Quaid-e-Azam was not like this. His speech of August 11 that we can now see on social media, did not bring in all these partialities”

-Christian, Female, 2020

It was during General Zia-ul-Haq’s rule when separate electorates for religious minorities were introduced.¹⁶ Under this system, minorities were able to elect representatives from their own communities but were not able to vote in the general Muslim constituencies. Although some minority groups believe that separate electorates grant them a sizeable representation, most people campaign against this system as, under the guise of greater political participation, it demarcates constituencies on religious grounds.¹⁷ It further marginalizes the minority from the mainstream politics and amounts to a sense of alienation among them. In fact, in 1993, the National Commission of Pakistan for Justice and Peace Commission (Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan), said:

There are reserved seats for religious minority members in both the national and provincial assemblies. The 342-member National Assembly has 10 reserved seats for religious minorities. The 104-member Senate has four reserved seats for religious minorities, one from each province. In the provincial assemblies, there are three such reserved seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; eight in Punjab; nine in Sindh; and three in Balochistan. Political parties elected by the general electorate choose the minority individuals who hold these seats; they are not elected directly by the minority constituencies they represent.

Source: Pakistan 2018, International Religious Freedom Report, US State Department

- “They (separate electorates) only incite religious prejudices; they create disorder within the nation;
- They segregate minorities from mainstream national politics; they downgrade minorities to third-class citizenship;
- The separate electorates promote only a few individuals instead of communities;
- They further divide and splinter minorities causing more feuds and strife”.¹⁸

In 2002, Pervez Musharraf (former President of Pakistan) replaced separate electorates with a joint electorate system for minorities which provided them the dual voting rights i.e., the ability to elect their own representatives in the Parliament as well as to vote for the general seats.¹⁹

¹⁵ Fuchs, M. M., & Fuchs, S. W. (2020). *Religious Minorities in Pakistan: Identities, Citizenship and Social Belonging*. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*. (p.58).

¹⁶ *Islamic radicalism and minorities in Pakistan. Religious radicalism and security in South Asia*. Rais, R. B. (2005). 19, 447-65.

¹⁷ Malik, I. H. (2002). *Religious minorities in Pakistan* (Vol. 6). London. *Minority rights group international*.

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ *Religious minorities in Pakistan* (Vol. 6). London. *Minority rights group international*. Malik, I. H. (2002).

On the matter of separate or joint electorates, an Ex-City Councilor of Pakistan People's Party and a Human Right Activist shared the following,

"I am not in favor of separate electorate because the last time it happened, it made things worse for us. It was of no benefit for our larger community. I favor the current system of joint electorates because this way we at least do not isolate ourselves from the Muslim legislators. We are able to establish a connection with the general constituencies. At least, they come to us and hear our demands. Why do we want to cut ourselves from the mainstream politics? We are equal citizens of this country and holders of CNIC. Indeed, I agree that we do not enjoy the rights of equal citizens, but I believe that the minorities should try to indulge into the mainstream election, which is what I always teach them as well. This is why I always contest for the joint electorate system instead of asking for separate electorates" – Susan Thomas, Christian, 2020



It is important to note that there has been an increase of 30% of voters from religious minorities i.e., from 2.7 million in the 2013 polls to 3.63 million at present. The same was mentioned by a respondent affiliated with politics, who said:

"I have run elections campaign myself and indeed there has been an increased turn out of voters from the minority groups, and people do vote" – Christian, Female, 2020

Nonetheless, the representation of religious minorities in legislative bodies remain significantly weak. Although in 2002, the seats in the National Assembly were increased to a total of 342, the number of seats for the minorities were not and, to date, remain ten (10).²¹ Despite the reservation of these ten (10) seats in the National Assembly, the political participation of religious minorities remains limited. Due to a rise in religious intolerance and hate speech against the minorities, political parties are hesitant to nominate non-Muslims for general seats and do not advocate for an increase in the number of reserved seats for them.²² Hence, even after the provision of a joint electorate, the electoral process itself is not fully inclusive towards the minorities.

²⁰Pakistan's minority voters increase by 30% but are still living on the edge. *Hindustan Times*. Ahmad, I. (2018) <https://www.hindustan-times.com/world-news/pakistan-s-non-muslim-voters-rise-by-30-hindus-maintain-majority/story-zjJWf3CHXCMarDrzPLNNBJ.html>

²¹Minorities under attack: Faith-based discrimination and violence in Pakistan (2015). FIDH/HRCP

²²Report on issues faced by minorities in Pakistan. South Asians for Human Rights. Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research. Zaigham, N. (2009).

Most respondents were of the opinion that the issues of minorities are not included in the agendas of the political parties, and even if they are, little is done to cater to them. A few participants also showed their disenchantment and dissatisfaction towards their community representatives in the parliament. They said that these people tend to exhibit greater allegiance to the political party instead of to their own community.

“How will we have political participation when we are not involved in the mainstream politics? There are reserved seats. Even in political parties, there is a reserved quota. A couple years ago, a Christian PPP senator in the province of Sindh took the seat to represent us, but most of the Christian community doesn’t even know who he is. These candidates are afraid to openly speak about facts” – Christian, Female, 2020

“Most times we are not satisfied with the leaders selected from our community. They are selected, not elected. They are just puppets and dummies. They don’t even know what to say, and are just being fed with money. How can they be our representatives? I am not saying that all are bad. Some are, in fact, very humble and they actively try to put forth our issues, but we don’t have enough of them”
- Christian, Female, 2020

Occupational Discrimination

Although non-Muslims in Pakistan hold an equal right to apply for any job, they are often not entertained because of their religious beliefs and have to face structural obstacles and socio-political issues while seeking jobs. Most of them are daily wage workers employed as brick-kiln workers, domestic workers, janitorial staff, and with the glass industry. They rarely enjoy any workplace benefits like security, bonuses, promotion, etc.²⁴

Albeit the fact that there is a quota of 5% for religious minorities in public jobs while the rest of the seats are on open merit, on several occasions, minorities have been exploited due to a lesser number of seats. In fact, as one of the participants noted, ***“most times, the quota is filled by employing minorities in low position jobs, such that of sanitary workers, street sweepers or garbage collectors”***. – Hindu, Male, 2020

This discrimination is made rather blatant when government jobs in newspaper advertisements and posters particularly specify Hindu and Christian applicants for sanitary and similar menial jobs.

Around 80% of the minority community is poor and most of them are stuck in the vicious cycle of bonded labor.²⁵ Regarded as modern-day slavery, bonded labor remains a scourge reality of our country, especially in rural parts of Sindh where poor kids, from the minority demographic, are forced to work at carpet weaving and brick-making industries for debt relief under high surveillance.

²³A Socio-Political Status of Minorities in Pakistan. *Journal of Political Studies*. Khalid, I., & Rashid, M. (2019). 26(1), (p.65)

²⁴Searching for security: the rising marginalization of religious communities in Pakistan. *Minority Rights Group International. Sustainable Development Policy Institute*. Dilawri, S., Salim, A., Ishfaq, H., & Saleem, M. (2014).

²⁵Life on the Margins. *National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP)*. Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012).

The 'Scheduled Castes' of Hindus residing in interior Sindh are the most vulnerable to debt bondage because of their poor socio-economic position. Feudalism and the authoritarian influence of the landlords over police and the government exacerbate this problem, thereby making the implementation of the national law of Bonded Labor Abolition 1992, a challenge.²⁶

An incident on the issue of bonded labor was shared by one of the respondents:

A Christian couple, 4 years ago in Punjab near Sahiwal, used to make bricks. The woman was five months pregnant. These are bonded slaves who work on bricks. The couple was burned alive because they were Christians...they accused them of and burned them alive... Now, there are several Hindu organizations that are trying to pay these owners to free these slaves. – Christian, Female, 2020

Christian sweepers are often called 'Chura' which means impure and polluted, and are subject to stereotyping and marginalization.²⁷ Thus, economic segregation feeds into negative stereotypes about minorities, where they are considered as second-class citizens by the majority.

Respondents further added:

"Becoming a president or prime minister is a far-fetched idea, but you would rarely find minorities occupying a lead or a head position in any company. In case, one of us does, then there will be several other people to pull us down because they can't tolerate a minority sitting above them" – Hindu, Male, 2020

"Often times, in order to protect minorities, commissions and bodies are established at the governmental level. Recently, National Minority Commission was made. These commissions are made for the minority, but the head of it is not selected from the community itself. So how will that be representative of our issues and progress ahead? That is a question mark"

– Christian, Male, 2020

Job Concerns of Minorities

"When the government posts job availability/vacancy, on it, they mention that certain jobs are only for minorities. However, these are all sanitary jobs and they describe it by saying these jobs are only for Christians. This is very insulting and derogatory" –Christian, Male, 2020

"There are no protective measures given to us and the treatment is horrible. They expect the worker to take a dive into the gutter and take out the slug. Don't discriminate towards us by nominating Christians for such jobs in the first place, and if you do, then the government should ensure their basic human rights are met"
–Christian, Male, 2020

"Why can we not adopt advanced machinery and equipment to clean gutters? You expect us to dive into the sewers without any gloves or clothing gear, and expose us to foul smells and sewage water that can give us skin diseases. In foreign countries, we see the professional technology but none like that here. Unfortunately, out of financial constraints, our boys have to take such disgusting jobs. Where are your methodologies and equipment for which you take a lot of grant and funds on paper, and then you sign international treaties?"
–Christian, Female, 2020

²⁶Forced Conversion of Minority Girls and Women in Pakistan, Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner by World Sindhi Congress

²⁷A Socio-Political Status of Minorities in Pakistan. Journal of Political Studies, 26(1). Khalid, I., & Rashid, M. (2019). (p.65).

Although there are no formal barriers to the advancement of minority groups in the military, in reality, it is rare that non-Muslims are assigned senior positions or ranks of colonel.²⁸ The respondents noted how, without even taking the qualification of the candidate into consideration, a Christian or a Hindu name on the CV becomes the employer's sole reason for rejection. One respondent suggested that ***"personal information regarding religion should not be asked in interviews or CVs. If you're a Pakistani, then you're a Pakistani. That's it. Why need to ask about religion?"*** – Christian, Male, 2020

Other participants shared the following instances,

"A lot of times I have went in for the interview, and the moment they see that my surname has Thomas in it, they go like oh, you are Christian and then the interview ends in two lines, that's it. It simply shows that they are not interested in hiring me" – Christian, Female, 2020

"I personally know a boy who was selected for a job. When he was about to join, they got to know that he is a Christian and immediately after that he was informed that he can't work over there. Imagine, you are hired and everything is in place but just because they get to know that you don't belong from a religion same as theirs, you are rejected" – Christian, Male, 2020

"I know a boy who did B.COM, and applied for a bank job. He was refused the bank job because of his background. They offered him a job of tea boy or a cleaner instead. Knowing the job conditions in the country, he took that work. How is this fair?" – Christian, Female, 2020

Limited Educational Opportunities

Article 22 (1) of the Constitution

"No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own".

Article 22 (3b)

"No citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution receiving aid from public revenues on the ground only of race, religion, caste or place of birth".

An educationist shared how non-Muslim students are sidelined by the school authorities and the management.

"The street children from the Christian community, this includes those that are seen wiping cars and selling towels, etc., are given second preference in education even in those institutes that are specifically recognized by the government for the Christian Community. Our mission is to bring such kids forward"

–Christian, Female, 2020

²⁸ International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 United States Department of State. Office of International Religious Freedom

Although the Constitution clearly prohibits religious discrimination within the educational realm, the ability to easily access and enjoy educational opportunities for the minorities remain a harsh reality. Some respondents pointed out that at the time of admission in government institutes, merit is not paid enough heed and students are instead required to state their religion on the form. In addition to religious discrimination, their poor economic standing becomes another major obstacle in availing good education.

Here, it is important to shed light on the historical trajectory of Pakistan under various rulers and how they made Islamic studies a prominent part of the school syllabus. During Bhutto's rule, a lot of schools were brought under the state as part of his nationalization program.²⁹

One respondent pointed out how **"some Christian schools that were once nationalized by Bhutto were then returned to us by Pervez Musharraf in the early 2000s, but a lot of Christian schools are still nationalized and something needs to be done about that, so that these schools are given back to the community again"**. – Christian, Male, 2020

This was further intensified under Zia's Islamization policy that emphasized teaching Islamic studies as part of the country's school curricula. The emphasis on Islamic studies grew to such an extent that it was made compulso-

ry even at the level of higher studies.³⁰ Today, Islamic Studies is a mandatory subject for all Muslim students, and as stipulated under Article 31 (2a), the state shall endeavor "to make the teaching of the Holy Quran and Islamiyat compulsory, to encourage and facilitate the learning of Arabic language and to secure correct and exact printing and publishing of the Holy Quran".

Legally, according to Article 22, non-Muslim students are not required to study Islamiyat or Quranic teachings, but, unfortunately, a lot of non-Muslim students have to take it because schools do not offer parallel subjects in their religious beliefs. In some schools, however, non-Muslims students may study the course on Ethics in place of Islamiyat, which was introduced by the Sindh Textbook Board in 2016, but this alternative is not available in every school.³¹ Not only is there a lack of available teachers to teach Ethics as a separate subject, but the syllabus material is also not widely available in the market.³² Parents may choose to send their children to private schools that may or may not teach Islamiyat as a compulsory subject, but that has to be at the family's own expense – something most minorities are financially unable to afford. However, even in most private schools of Sindh, Punjab and KPK, Islamiyat is taught as a mandatory subject.

"If we go to schools other than the missionary schools, then that's a problem. Government schools may take you in as a student, but when it comes to studying subjects like Islamiyat, we are forced to take them because they don't have a teacher for Ethics. Now, in board, Civics teaching has finished and Ethics is taught. I think Ethics should be taught to every student

Students who get into public examinations, they have to study Islamiyat because then they can get extra marks when they apply for medical or other studies. If you can recite Quran, then you get another extra 10. Then where does the kid of the minority stand? You are compelling non-Muslim kids to take Islamic studies.

If Muslim students can get extra points by memorizing Quran, then why can't Christian get the same by memorizing Bible or Hindus by memorizing Geeta?"

– Angela Dsa, Educationalist, Christian, 2020

²⁹Searching for security: the rising marginalization of religious communities in Pakistan. Minority Rights Group International. Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Dilawri, S., Salim, A., Ishfaq, H., & Saleem, M. (2014).

³⁰Ibid

³¹Non-Muslim students reluctant to study Islamic studies or ethics. DailyTimes. Yousafzai, A. (2016). <https://dailytimes.com.pk/39753/non-muslim-students-reluctant-to-study-islamic-studies-or-ethics/>

³²Ibid

Professor Nuzhat Williams

President of Young Women's Christian Association and Ex-Principal of Govt. Karachi College

"A good curriculum is meant for the holistic development of children by teaching them universal values and critical thinking. Unfortunately, we have a biased syllabus. It says, Hindu's are kaafirs, and Christians and Jews are our enemies. If you ingrain such information in young minds, what do you expect they will grow into? Religion should be a home affair. It should not mingle with academics. I keep stressing that we should integrate Arabic language in the syllabus. Through this, the kids will be able to understand the Holy Quran. Kids will have the ability to understand themselves and make a better judgment. Moreover, in textbooks at schools, only the male leads are mentioned. There is minimal mention of the heroic efforts by women who fought battles. Who are the girls going to look up to?"



I was four years old when I accompanied my Nanny (aaya) to a Tandoor. The man over there served the 'Kothi Walas' i.e., us, first. And made the 'Chura' i.e., the Christian sweeper stand at the end of the line. Although we both were Christians, but because we lived in a big house, we were favored while the poor Christian sweeper was served last. This bias is centuries old.

***Bhagat Singh** was killed by the British because he used to chant words for independence, but we tend to forget about his patriotism. How many people know about **Justice Robert Cornelius**? His rulings are still valued today in the Supreme Court and the High court. We would have never acquired Punjab if **SP Singha** (a Christian speaker of Punjab assembly) had not asked two of his colleagues to caste vote for Punjab. Also, **Jogendra Nath Mandal** (a Hindu), then law minister of Quaid Azam, passed the Pakistan Resolution. **Cecil Chaudhry** and **MM Alam** were the heroes of the 1965 war. **Mervyn Middlecoat** was involved in various aerial battles during the 1965-71 Indo-Pakistani wars. **These are the marginalized heroes of Pakistan** and are not much spoken about in our textbooks. Pakistan was created for the minorities. The white in the flag represents the minorities. Let it stay white, don't make it bleed in red.*

We know about the alleged blasphemy case on Salamat Masih, a 14-year-old young boy, who didn't know much about his own religion, how can he know about others'? Asma Jahangir fought so hard for him, and in doing so, received so many death threats. The same happened with Asia Bibi; she was getting water from a well where every other woman was getting it from, did the well get dirty by her hands because she is not a Muslim?

The census isn't correct. Based on the 1998's consensus, they say that we are 3-4% of the population, but since then have we not grown in number? That is of course not the right number of our population.

For us, there are reserved seats. These people occupying the reserved seats, whether they go to provincial seats or MNA level seats, they speak in favor of their parties and not the community. Solution is that there shouldn't be reserved seats, it should be elected for minorities. And there should be separate electorate, not joint electorates.

The presence of hate speech against non-Muslims in the school curricula is another challenge faced by kids from the minority groups.

"A lot of material found in the educational curriculum and books has hateful material in the books that the students are studying, stuff like Hindus are 'kaafir', they are the devil, don't drink food/water from Christians/Hindus and there are many such quotations written in the books. This is one example of hate speech" – Hindu, Male, 2020

Most participants showed concern in sending their kids to school because of derogatory material present in school books. Hindu participants, in particular, pointed out how upset and agitated they feel when, as part of the history class, their kids are taught about the Hindu-Muslim rivalry and that Pakistan is a state for Muslims alone. This incites hatred between Hindu and Muslim students within the class, and evokes a sense of nationalism among Muslim students.

A respondent expressed:

"Anti-India slogans are thrown at me. I consider myself a Sindhi and a Pakistani. Why am I associated with Hindustan?" - Hindu, Male, 2020.

In addition to the biased reading material, several studies have revealed that teachers mark non-Muslim students strictly and are unnecessary harsh towards them, which further puts minorities at a disadvantage.³³ Teachers from the minority faith are also not immune and are often a victim of bullying by Muslim students.

Another respondent emphasized how such bigotry and prejudiced views adversely impact the tender minds of non-Muslim kids which, in turn, may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. She said:

"When we create such mindset in the younger generation through books and curriculum at such a young age, we inject these ideas into their heads, it gives them inferiority complex, they [children] internalize such stereotypical views which get exacerbated in future" –Christian, Female, 2020

It is important to note that the government has made attempts to revise the school curricula. As the International Religious Freedom Report (2019) by the U.S Department of State notes, the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of Education have held consultations in the past to remove derogatory material from the textbooks and, to an extent, have also succeeded in doing so. However, minority faith representatives have often complained about being discouraged to actively participate in the review process on the Textbook Board and for not having their recommendation of including new rights-based content, accepted.³⁴

Respondents highlighted the dire need of including a more tolerant education system, that highlights the importance of embracing diversity and accepting differences. They also emphasized having extra-curricular opportunities like sports and theatre equally available to minorities as well, because such ***"activities are important for our children's personal growth and confidence"*** – Christian, Male, 2020

³³Searching for security: the rising marginalization of religious communities in Pakistan. Minority Rights Group International. Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Dilawri, S., Salim, A., Ishfaq, H., & Saleem, M. (2014).

³⁴International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 United States Department of State. Office of International Religious Freedom

Worship Sites and Housing Issues

Minorities, especially within the province of Sindh, have to face several land issues pertaining to their places of worship. Evacuee Trust Property Body (ETPB), a state body, is responsible for managing land and dispute issues. In Sindh, 21,700 acres of land is under the ownership of ETPB.³⁵ When Hindus migrated to India, several of them left their holy sites behind, such as in Tharparkar, and the ETPB was entrusted with the responsibility of protecting these places. However, a 2014 survey by the All-Pakistan Hindu

"Although there are various reasons for demolishing Hindu Temples in Pakistan, but just recently in Islamabad, a temple was not allowed to be constructed by people. So many videos on social media came up saying that we are kaafir. Now, its construction has been stopped" – Hindu, Male, 2020

"Just a few days ago, a Hindu temple in Badin [a city in Sindh] was destroyed by a person. In Badin, most people live in harmony but that one guy came and he destroyed all our statues of Gods and we were shocked. This is what I call as a lack of awareness and poor and violent mentality of people towards other religions" – Hindu, Male, 2020

Rights Movement (APHRM) reports that only 9/428 holy places of Hindus are operational while the rest of them have been desecrated, unlawfully occupied by landlords, or given to Muslims for residential purposes.³⁶

In Sindh, a lot of burial land that belongs to the Shudras (lowest caste in Hindus) has also been grabbed by Muslims, and consequently, Hindus have been barred from their right to bury the deceased over there.³⁷ Much of the issues prevail because the complete devolution of power after the passing of the 18th Amendment in 2010 has still not taken place. Ergo, the Sindh Government still struggles to exercise its sole authority in resolving the land dispute and property issues.³⁸ Nonetheless, ETPB's slow procedures and ignorance towards holy sites has caused severe distress to Hindus residing in Sindh, and to other religious minorities' altogether.

Additionally, few participants pointed out how religious minorities have to encounter problems at the time of purchasing residential place, and are often denied housing on religious grounds.

A few of them shared their stories:

I am a lawyer but being a Christian, even for me it is difficult if I want to purchase a house in a good location. Since my name is Tabassum Yousaf, it can't be identified if I am a Christian or a Muslim, but when my husband's name comes up for grants etc., his name is Hamid Robert, when they hear the name Robert, they say, sorry, please take your money back, we can't give you the house. One time broker asked us about our caste. When I told them that I am a Christian, they turned us down, even when we had given them 1.5 lacs as down payment. This happened in Karachi

-Tabassum Yousaf, Christian, 2020

"I had a similar experience when a friend of mine asked me to visit a property with him... he was looking for an apartment. He asked us if we were Hindu and we said yes. On that he said that we should notify the broker first because usually there are difficulties with the caste and people refuse to sell and rent. This happened near Phelwan Goth in Karachi, where another similar case happened where the Christian couple was asked to evacuate in two days when the owner found out about their religion" – Hindu, Male, 2020

³⁵Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Pakistan: An Analysis of Federal and Provincial Laws. AGHS. I.A.Rehman

³⁶Searching for security: the rising marginalization of religious communities in Pakistan. Minority Rights Group International. Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Dilawri, S., Salim, A., Ishfaq, H., & Saleem, M. (2014).

³⁷Minorities under attack: Faith-based discrimination and violence in Pakistan (2015). FIDH/HRCP

³⁸Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Pakistan: An Analysis of Federal and Provincial Laws. AGHS. I.A.Rehman,

M. Parkash Mahtani

Patron-in-Chief, District Hindu Panchayat, Hyderabad

"One of the main challenges that the Hindu community is facing is forced conversions. This is more of a concern in the Sindh province as majority of the Hindu community of Pakistan is based in Sindh. For as long as 73 years after the creation of Pakistan we had no marriage law. We now have the Hindus Marriage Act and the Child Marriage Restraint Act – that makes the minimum marriageable age as 18 years. These laws have put some breaks on this deplorable practice but still there are issues with lack of awareness among major stakeholders and lack of effective implementation. There is a need of building greater awareness amongst the police and judiciary so that there is better implementation. We also would like the Hindu Marriage Act to have issues like inheritance covered also that for now is missing.



Then we have major issues with the incidences of desecration of our temples, gurdwaras and other properties. Normally it is not the common people that damage and destroy our sacred places but a few people are involved who propagate hate and want to incite violence and intolerance. Like for example there was recently the incidence of desecration of the famous Dargah (shrine) Odero Lal in Hala. This sacred shrine was a symbol of Hindu Muslim harmony as people from all faith respected this site. But some people in order to trigger violence and hatred damaged it. But we were able to pacify the communities and the matter was resolved in an amicable manner.

We also need to have a strong political voice. Even within the Hindu community there might be divergent views about what are the best electoral law option and that is ok. That is how democracy works and the majority voice is accepted.

I personally feel that the joint electorate system is a more viable option. It helps our community to remain a more active part of the political mainstream. Because otherwise we are cast out and if we want to have any of our issues resolved at the political level we are told that we should consult our reserved seats members. In the Sindh province things are better where the PPP gave tickets on general seats to minority members also and we have three (3) minority members that have been elected on the general seats.

In the end I would like to strongly propose that the 2014 Tassaduq Hussain Jilani judgement needs to be implemented at the earliest as that judgment has provided the best framework that can facilitate the fruition of the dream of an inclusive and tolerant Pakistan that the founder of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah shared with Pakistan at the time of its birth. A National Commission on Minority Rights has been formed as a consequence of the judgment and is looking into this matter and we hope that soon there will be some progress"

Besides being denied housing, the valuable lands owned by minorities in urban districts of Sindh like Saddar, Karachi has also been encroached by the authorities without any warning whatsoever.³⁹ Most times, on very short notices, they have been forced to evacuate their residence leaving their cultural spaces behind. According to the HRCP Sindh, previously a lot of Hindus used to live in Lyari, Karachi but now, due to threats by Muslims to acquire their land, the Hindu population has significantly decreased. In fact, most of them have quietly escaped to India.⁴⁰ Sometimes, minorities find themselves in a cycle of debt as well. They are unable to pay back loans on high-interest rates, and in case of missing an installment, it is noted that lenders tend to double the interest rate. This stands true for the colony of Essa Nagari where several minorities reside and are entrapped in a debt cycle.⁴¹

Religious Intolerance and Blasphemy

The adoption of Objective Resolution is regarded as the first step towards the Islamization of Law. It was presented by Liaquat Ali Khan and was adopted by the first Constituent Assembly on March 12, 1940.⁴² Since then, it has served as a foundational stone in the constitutional development in Pakistan. Some of the key clauses of the Resolution are hereunder:

- Sovereignty belongs to Allah alone, who would delegate it to the state of Pakistan through its people for being exercised within the limits as a sacred Trust;
- The state shall exercise its power and authority through the chosen representatives of the people;
- The principle of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed;
- Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective sphere in accordance with teachings of Islam and set out in Holy Quran and Sunnah;
- Adequate provision shall be made for the minorities to freely exercise their religion and develop their cultures.

The Objective Resolution was made a preamble of the 1973 Constitution. Under the directives of General Zia-ul-Haq, it was further made a part of the Constitution via the 8th Amendment.⁴⁴ Today, the Objective Resolution is enshrined under *Article 2A* of the Constitution. The Resolution received widespread criticism by the minorities, and was voted against by the non-Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly. Non-Muslims like Prem Hari and Chandra Mandal opposed the Resolution, and instead suggested omission of words like "...sacred trust", "...as enunciated in Islam".⁴⁵

Although *Article 20* guarantees freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institutions and *Article 27* provides safeguard against discrimination in the services, at the same time, a person's freedom of religion, as stated in *Article 19*, is "...subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam or the integrity...".

³⁹Discrimination against Religious Minorities in Pakistan: An Analysis of Federal and Provincial Laws. AGHS. I.A.Rehman

⁴⁰Ibid

⁴¹Ibid

⁴²Objectives Resolution. History Pak. (2020). <https://historypak.com/objectives-resolution/>

⁴³Ibid

⁴⁴The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) in the 1973 Constitution: Background, Structure and Performance. Peshawar Islamicus, Vol:11, Issue 1. Faqir, K., & Islam, F. (2020).

⁴⁵Objectives Resolution. History Pak. (2020). <https://historypak.com/objectives-resolution/>

Similarly, *Article 2* declares Islam as the religion of the state, and *Article 227 (1)* ensures that “all existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah...”. However, *Article 227 (3)* declares, “nothing in this part shall affect the Council of Islamic Personal laws of non-Muslim citizens or their status as citizens”

This suggests that as far as the status of religious minorities is concerned, while “the Constitution gives rights with one hand, it takes them away from another”.⁴⁶ It maintains a religious preference, and, in one way or another, implies that all citizens of Pakistan should adopt an Islamic way of life.

In 1962, the Council of Islamic Ideology was founded which, as stipulated in *Article 228* of the Constitution, is responsible for giving legal advice to the parliament on issues concerning Islam.

Later, in 1980, Federal Shariah Court was also established to ensure that all laws are in accordance with the Sharia Law, and finally, with the Enforcement of Shari’ah Act in 1991, Shariah was made the supreme law and was extended to whole of Pakistan.

According to *Article 203-C (2)* and *203-E (4)* of the Constitution, a person from a minority faith group cannot be a lawyer or a judge in the Federal Court of Shariah respectively. While this body has the liberty to adjudicate on matters concerning the religious minorities, no member of the minority is actually allowed to appear as a witness in this judiciary system.⁴⁷

Article 203-C (2): The Court shall consist of not more than eight Muslim [Judges], including the [Chief Justice], to be appointed by the President

Article 203-E (4): A party to any proceedings before the Court under clause (1) of Article 203D may be represented by a legal practitioner who is a Muslim and has been enrolled as an advocate of a High Court for a period of not less than five years or as an advocate of the Supreme Court or by a Juris consult selected by the party from out of a panel of Juris consults maintained by the Court for the purpose.

The blasphemy laws, as stated in Pakistan’s Penal Code (PPC), have serious implications for minorities in the country. Offenses related to religion were first codified by the British rulers of the subcontinent in 1860.⁴⁸ However, later during the tenure of General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), under his policy of Islamization, severe blasphemy laws with harsh punishments (sections 295-B and 295-C) were added. Any comment allegedly directed at the Prophet or desecration of the Holy Quran was made punishable by death.⁴⁹ However, as highlighted in the study, *A Socio-Political Status of Minorities in Pakistan* by Khalid and Rashid (2019), these laws have overwhelmingly been used to target the minorities in cases of personal rivalry, land disputes, religious and/or political vendettas.⁵⁰ As pointed out by the respondents, the presence of such an Islamized legal system has subjected them to institutionalized inequality and marginalization. When asked about their freedom to celebrate festivals like Diwali and Christmas, the respondents shared “as long as it is in our own gated communities and boundaries of our holy places, it is fine”. Although they did acknowledge the security that is provided to them by the government at the time of festivals, they expressed their fear of abruptly getting attacked by an angry mob.

Although to date, there has never been a judicial death sentence under blasphemy, but convictions and persecutions are common. Often, angry mobs have killed people accused of blasphemy even if those allegations had no credibility.

⁴⁶*Life on the Margins. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012).*

⁴⁷*Life on the Margins. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012).*

⁴⁸“As good as dead”: *The impact of the blasphemy laws in Pakistan. Amnesty International. (2016).*

⁴⁹*Ibid*

⁵⁰*A Socio-Political Status of Minorities in Pakistan. Journal of Political Studies, 26(1). Khalid, I., & Rashid, M. (2019).*

Anthony Naveed

Member, Provincial Assembly, Sindh (Pakistan People's Party)

"The biggest challenge is that we still have not been told the exact figure of our population through the census. Until and unless we don't know how many religious minorities reside in the State, a proper budget cannot be prepared and resources cannot be allocated fairly. Given the overall increase in Pakistan's population, we have of course grown in numbers but no right figure is out.



Although the Constitution of Pakistan gives us a 5% quota for public jobs but there are technical issues. For example, they create 17-18 jobs, when in actual they should create 20 jobs to fully avail the 5% of the quota, and then they state that the quota will be implemented, but it is only partially implemented. Although Sindh has progressed a lot if you compare from the past, but there is a discriminatory mindset that still defines low position jobs as non-Muslim jobs.

Still in a progressive and urban city like Karachi, there are some housing areas like Darul Salam, where their by-laws do not allow religious minorities to buy a house.

After the 18th amendment, the worship sites and the properties of the minorities should become provincial subjects. It should be Sindh Evacuee Trust, and not at the federal level. We can take better care of it.

It is right that Christian Marriage Act 1872 has defined minimum age of marriage as very less, but that is an extremely old document coming from the times of the Arabs. Churches here have stopped following it for a very long time now. After the Sindh Child Restraint Act, we only follow 18 as the permissible limit. That document needs to be updated."

The hate material in the books is immense. We read it, the generations before us read it, and we see the implications of it today. For the generations to come ahead, this has to be removed. We need to teach children about accepting diversity and have interfaith harmony lessons.

Mangla Sharma

Member, Provincial Assembly, Sindh (Muttahida Quami Movement)

"In order to avail higher job positions like that of 17/18 grade, you have to pass a test. When our kids go for that test, there is a full portion of 10 numbers that is purely about Islamiyat. Automatically, a minority kid is at the disadvantage and out from the long run. You say that you have given an equal opportunity, but technically speaking, there are problems.



Insecurity these days has increased among minorities, 5-6 years ago it wasn't like this but intolerant social attitudes are increasing day by day, and in my opinion, Sindh has a rich culture, that is diverse and religious diversity should also be respected.

No Hindu body overlooks our sites, everything is done by the Evacuee Trust Property Board. After the partition

this came into being and it should have a Chair from the minority, and the properties should be supervised by our own community members. But, over here, ETPB has taken over. Even if a minority member is present, he or she is only there to say 'yes' and 'no'.

All big temples have been converted into plazas and malls. They play the religion and blasphemy card for their own personal objectives. They want to accuse us with blasphemy, while in reality they want to grab the compound that a person from minority owns, and I know this case that happened. Inside story was something else. Our temples of Kaali Matta are destroyed and their pictures are put on Facebook to spread hate speech.

Gender discrimination is also there in curriculum. So many women have fought, but none of them are mentioned. Even the male heroes of the minorities are not mentioned. If you see the website of the national assembly, there is no mention of Jogendra Nath Mandal, who was the first law minister after Pakistan was made. We have a history of non-Muslim heroes, and kids need to know about them. It was back in the 90s, when we were given ten (10) seats. And now, the National Assembly has come this far and has a total of 342 member seats, but the seats for minorities are still ten (10). There was a time when females wouldn't come out, but now the women of minority faiths are coming out so they also need representation in the parliament as well. More women should occupy the general seats."

There are numerous evidences of widespread violence, attacks on places of worship, hatred against minorities and religious extremism. One such glaring example is from 2009, when several houses and a church were set on a fire by a mob of Muslims in Gojra, Punjab. The attacks were triggered by some unverified reports of the desecration of the Quran.

Moreover, in 2019, a Hindu teacher, Notan Lal, was arrested in Ghotki Sindh province for being accused of blasphemy in Islamic studies class by a student. Sometimes, the police are allegedly pressurized by the religious groups to register blasphemy charges against an innocent person, while, other times, the accused is unable to find a lawyer for his case because of the death threats and the risk involved.

Two respondents shared how religious intolerance, in addition to inducing fear, has made celebration of festivals very difficult:

"Two years ago, in Korangi, we decorated the entire street for Christmas. We hung lights and other decoration material. But then boys, I mean our Muslim brothers, came and destroyed and burned down the entire décor of the street. We had spent so much time and money on it, but on the day of the festival itself, the entire thing was burned down in front of us. None of us could do anything. Then we were told that if you want to do such a festival, then we should do it indoors and not on such a big level" – Christian, Female, 2020

"We celebrate our Hindu festivals with minimal music and by hiding in our houses because our Muslims neighbors do not approve it and make things difficult for us later on. On Diwali, I am unable to use a phool jhari and harmless crackers because it creates noise. However, our neighbors do the same thing when it's Shab-e-Barat [Muslim festival]. This upsets me." – Hindu, Female, 2020

⁵¹International Religious Freedom Report for 2019 United States Department of State. Office of International Religious Freedom

⁵²Searching for security: the rising marginalization of religious communities in Pakistan. Minority Rights Group International. Sustainable Development Policy Institute. Dilawri, S., Salim, A., Ishfaq, H., & Saleem, M. (2014).

04

WOMEN RELIGIOUS MINORITY— DOUBLE DISCRIMINATION

*With regards to the existing laws and lacunas in them, this **Section** highlights the challenges faced by women of minority faiths that makes them one of the most vulnerable groups in Pakistan. For this, separate and in-depth interviews were conducted with women who consented to be identified with name. Their stories and concerns are documented below, and are meant to serve as examples of minority women's grievances*

A woman, and that too from a religious minority, is subject to ‘double discrimination’ in Pakistan. In the words of Peter Jacob, they are at “double jeopardy, where minority women face discrimination and exploitation on grounds of being members of religious minorities, and on account of being women, who are marginalized citizens in Pakistan”

Introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq, the Hudood Laws and the Law of Evidence had an adverse impact on the overall status of women in Pakistan. Rights of all women were impinged; however, the peripheral status of the minority women was further challenged. The 1997 annual report by Human Rights Commission of Pakistan also denotes that "women who belong to especially vulnerable groups are particularly likely to be targeted for abuses, including rape, and find it very difficult to obtain redress. Such women include members of the religious minorities, very poor women and women bonded laborers”

The Hudood laws, comprising five criminal laws, dealt with offences concerning adultery, theft, and drinking. These laws were radical and discriminatory towards all women, and had harsher implications on the status of minorities. Firstly, non-Muslim judges were barred from presiding over a case if a matter concerning these laws was in trial. Secondly, the testimony of Non-Muslims as a witness was reduced in Hudood matters.

Minorities and Women Population in Provinces

	Grand Total	Christian	Hindu	Ahmadis/Qadyani	Scheduled Caste	Others
NWFP	99,664	37,262	5,323	42,585	299	14,195
Sindh	2,645,277	295,267	1,981,637	42,616	301,355	24,352
Balochistan	81,417	26,264	32,173	9,849	6,566	6,566
Punjab	2,054,034	1,700,652	95,708	184,053	22,086	51,535
FATA	13,023	2,223	953	6,670	953	2,223
Islamabad	35,913	32,773	161	2,738	*	242
Pakistan	4,936,740	2,104,401	2,117,636	291,175	330,881	92,647
Minority Women (1998)	2,359,635	1,010,112	1,016,465	139,764	158,823	44,471
Minority Women (2011)	2,962,044	1,262,640	1,270,581	174,705	198,529	55,589

N.B Calculation on the basis of data of census 1998

Source: Jacob (2012) Life on the Margins

Personal Laws

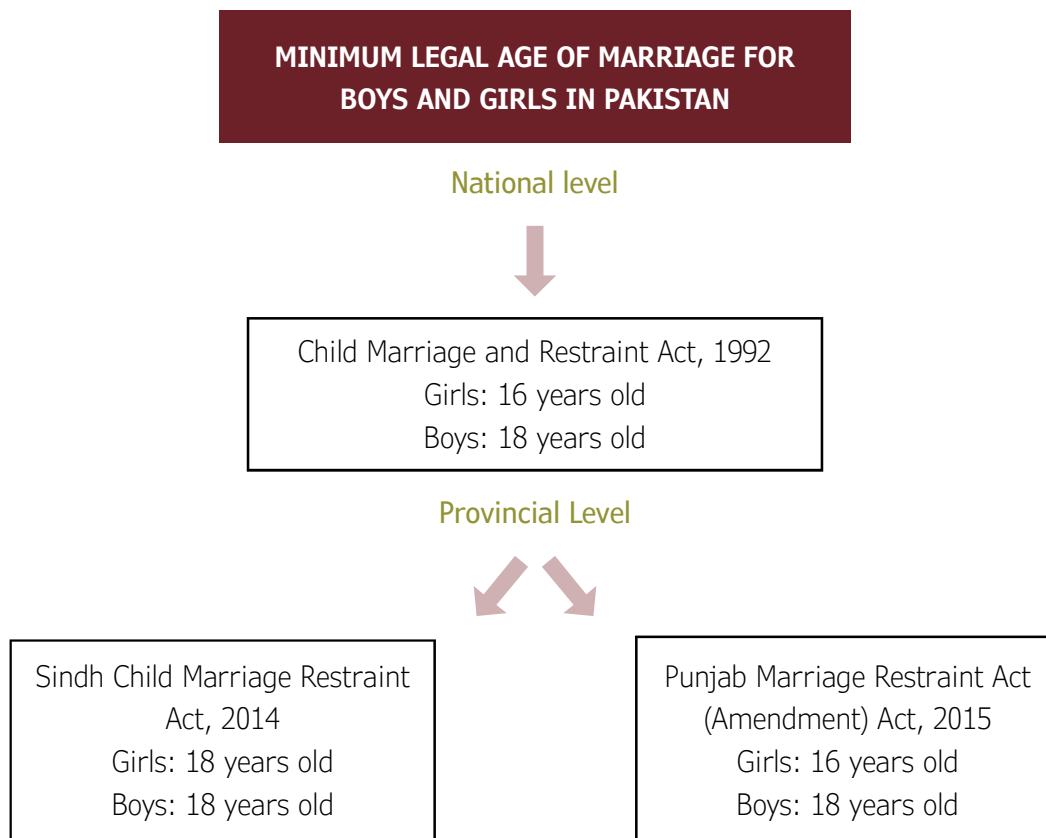
Absence of codified personal laws continue to undermine the security and status of women from religious minorities. Women find it increasingly difficult to prove their personal status through legal documentation in matters concerning divorce, passport and identity cards, inheritance, marriage, custody of a child, family relations, opening of bank accounts, etc. Due to a lack of official documents on marital status, it is difficult for them to travel abroad, seek divorce, separate or adopt. A lot of them undergo challenges at the time of inheriting property from their deceased husbands, and, in the process of doing so, are exposed to harassment by police.

⁵³Life on the Margins. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012)

⁵⁴Legal injustices: The Zina Hudood Ordinance of Pakistan and its implications for women. Journal of International Women's Studies, 7(2), 78-100. Imran, R. (2005). (p.92).

⁵⁵Life on the Margins. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012)

⁵⁶Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).



As far as Christian personal laws are concerned, the Christian Marriage Act of 1872 and the Divorce Act of 1869, the colonial-era rulings, are outdated and problematic. Currently, according to the Christian Marriage Act of 1872, a Christian girl older than 13 and a Christian boy older than 16 can marry each other. This stands in blatant contradiction to the Child Marriage and Restraint Act 1929 of Pakistan that has set the minimum legal age of marriage as 16 and 18 for girls and boys, respectively. Even in the context of Sindh in

particular, it further contradicts the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act of 2014 that has defined the minimum permissible age of marriage as 18 for both boys and girls. This reflects the lacunas in the legal framework and flawed application of legislation which has wreaked havoc on the lives of women minorities.

Christian Marriage Act 1872

Part VI clause 60 (1): "the age of the man intending to be married shall exceed sixteen years, and the age of the woman intending to be married shall exceed thirteen years"

Source: Christian Marriage Act, 1872

Moreover, as far as seeking divorce is concerned, Christian women have had to experience rigors of a legal battle. Before 1981, Section 7 of the Christian Divorce Act 1869 allowed the dissolution of marriage on irretrievable grounds. However, in 1981, after General Zia-ul-Haq repealed Section 7, adultery was left as the only ground for divorce. This meant that under Section 10 of the Christian Divorce Act 1869, while a husband could charge his wife for adultery, a female spouse had to prove adultery coupled with cruelty in addition to bigamy.⁶¹

⁵⁷Christian Marriage Act,(1872), <http://cbwah.gov.pk/assets/media/christian-marriage-act-1872.pdf>

⁵⁸The Child Marriage Restraint Act (1992), <http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/147a.html>

⁵⁹Child marriage is illegal in Sindh, but not in other provinces. GeoNews. (2019). <https://www.geo.tv/latest/232082-child-marriage-is-illegal-in-sindh-but-not-in-other-provinces>

⁶⁰Christian Divorce Law in Pakistan: Past, Present and Future. Cambridge L. Rev., 4, 169. Abbasi, M. Z. (2019).

⁶¹Ibid

This meant that Christian men and women did not have equal footing in seeking a divorce.⁶² The implications of this legal binding were exacerbated by Zia's Zina Ordinance that had defined adultery as a criminal offence. This posed a severe impact on the lives of Christian women because, adultery, in the court of law, is not only tantamount to character assassination but also leads to the social stigmatization of women in our male-dominated society.⁶³ In 2016, however, Section 7 was restored by the Lahore High Court for a case that was filed by a Christian man, Amin Masih, who did not wish to accuse his wife of false adultery. Although Lahore High Court's ruling indeed sets a precedent for others to follow, it reflects that for 35 years, Pakistan's law did not provide Christian couples an ordinary ground besides adultery for dissolving their marriage.⁶⁴

Although the draft bill Christian Marriage and Divorce Act' 2019 has been approved by the Federal Cabinet Division in principle, it is yet to be passed as a law by the National Assembly. If passed, it will introduce 18 as the cut-off age for marriage and will allow both men and women to seek divorce on equal and reputable grounds.⁶⁵ By repealing the current and century-old rulings on matrimonial matters, it will seek to address legal gaps in Christian marriage laws, and more importantly, give greater autonomy to Christian women.

In 2016, the Sindh Hindu Marriage Act was passed at the provincial level of Sindh. By laying out a proper manner of registration, it made it easier for Hindus to officially document their unions. One of the most important conditions of marriage included 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage for both boys and girls.⁶⁶ This act also applies to Sikh marriages.

In 2017, the Hindu Marriage Act was passed that extends to the provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, it introduced a legal mechanism to prove the legitimacy of Hindu marriages. In addition to declaring 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage for both the parties, it

On the matter of forced conversion and forced marriages, in Sindh, there is a Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act that has been put in place by Pakistan People's Party government. However, the biggest lacuna of it is that there is no room for immediate annulment after the forced conversion has taken place. You have to request the court for divorce and separation because she is now converted and has become a Muslim. When laws are made, we deliberately leave loopholes that hinder the implementation for minority relief. Currently, as a counsel, I am looking over a forced conversion matter where the girl is a 14-year-old Christian. She was abducted, forcibly converted and married all on the same day that was 10/10/2019. She was taken from Karachi to DI Khan and the nikkah (marriage) was done on the same date. But the problem is that the court is not accepting it. After years of effort, we have now been able to issue non-bailable warrants but the partiality of judges is still there. The people that have been accused in my case are the Qaazi (the one who did the marriage), the witnesses and the kidnapper, but the relaxation from the court was such that the Qaazi was not nominated for the warrant. For the kidnapper and two witnesses, the warrants have been issued, but not for the Qaazi. Why? Because, the system is partial and biased. They deliberately and reluctantly ignore these matters.

- Tabassum Yousaf, Advocate of High Court, Christian, 2020

⁶²Life on the Margins. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012)

⁶³Christian Marriage and Divorce Act 2019 — a long awaited legislation. DailyTimes. Patras., A. I. (2019). <https://dailytimes.com.pk/459454/christian-marriage-and-divorce-act-2019-a-long-awaited-legislation/>

⁶⁴Christian Divorce Law in Pakistan: Past, Present and Future. Cambridge L. Rev., 4, 169. Abbasi, M. Z. (2019).

⁶⁵Christian Marriage and Divorce Act 2019 — a long awaited legislation. Daily Times. Patras., A. I. (2019). <https://dailytimes.com.pk/459454/christian-marriage-and-divorce-act-2019-a-long-awaited-legislation/>

⁶⁶Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).

laid out grounds for termination of Hindu marriage and, in particular, allowed wives to seek divorce on grounds like neglect, cruelty, and second marriage.⁶⁷

Although a milestone in legislation, this shows that until three years ago, Hindu citizens of Pakistan had no formal means of proving their marital status which, in turn, spurred a number of problems for them. For e.g., Hindu women, due to a lack of marriage registration papers, could not show formal proof of their marriage that consequently made them more vulnerable to forced conversions.⁶⁸ This reflects the extended failure of the State in providing protection to religious minorities on basic family and social matters.

Moreover, neither of the Acts truly protect against the menace of forced conversion and are therefore criticized. In the Hindu Marriage Act 2019, there is a controversial clause (12a-iii) that calls for annulment/cessation of marriage in case one spouse converts to another religion.⁶⁹ This, unfortunately, provides a legal route and space in the legitimization of abductions and forced conversions. It has incentivized and triggered forced conversions and marriage of minority women because, once converted, their previous marriage automatically stands annulled.⁷⁰ The aforementioned examination on personal laws demonstrates the contradictions and loopholes in them, thus making minorities, especially women, an easy target to abuse. Nonetheless, they are vital documents, and their significance in legitimizing the status of minorities cannot be ignored.

Forced Conversions and Marriages

Religious intolerance has led to a wave of forced conversions in Pakistan, where minors, especially girls, are subject to physical and/or emotional violence and are coerced into marriages with Muslim men much older than their age. Although the exact figures are arduous to obtain, it is estimated that, each year, approximately 1000 women are forcibly converted. Around 20 – 25 Hindu girls are abducted and forcibly married every month.⁷¹ This issue is rampant in the province of Sindh, particularly in areas like Sanghar, Jacobabad, Ghotki and Thar, districts of Umerkot, Mirpur Khas, where the socio-economic plight of Hindu girls increasingly render them vulnerable to abuse.⁷²

As far as the legal provisions are concerned, the Pakistan Penal Code (1860) and the Protection of Women Act (Criminal Laws Amendment) (2006) are laws that attempt to criminalize forced conversions in Pakistan. Although in 2016, the Sindh provincial assembly passed the Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Bill against forced conversions, it failed to make it into law. It is reported that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) succumbed to the pressure from religious groups who had threatened to besiege the assembly, and therefore the governor refused to sign the bill.⁷⁴

A lack of investigation and delayed proceedings, unfair court rulings, fear of reprisal from extremist groups, prejudiced views and ignorance of the police system are some of the factors that have, unfortunately, given massive impunity to perpetrators.

⁶⁷Hindu Marriage Act 2017. *The Gazette of Pakistan*. ACT No, VII of 2017

⁶⁸Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).

⁶⁹Ibid

⁷⁰Remove annulment clause in Hindu Marriage Bill: Pakistan Hindu Council. *The Hindu*. (2016) <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/remove-annulment-clause-in-hindu-marriage-bill-pak-council/article8240575.ece>

⁷¹Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).

⁷²Forced Conversion of Minority Girls and Women in Pakistan, Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner by World Sindhi Congress.

⁷³Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).

⁷⁴PPP lawmakers turn down bill against forced conversions. *Tribune*. Tunio, H. (2019): <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2075311/1-ppp-lawmakers-turn-bill-forced-conversions>

“If you are unmarried, then people suggest you to get converted to Islam just to get a better marriage proposal. I have personally faced such comments. At first, I used to ignore them but now I confront by asking, would you like to change your religion for me? And they obviously don’t respond then. Previously, I used to avoid such comments but then silence was considered as a weakness, so I started to confront.

A lot of cases of forced conversions are not even filed because of victim blaming, a lot of girls do not even come forward. Secondly, if the case is filed, then the girl is kept in Darul-Aman which is a shelter home. Then from there she is brought to the court. Unfortunately, the girl is not allowed to meet with her own parents but with her in-laws. There is a lot of pressure on the girl, both internal and external. The pressure is to such an extent that girls are afraid to speak. They are given life threats and family threats. This is why, a lot of times in courts, girls confess that they converted with consent and at their own will because they know that their family is going to be in trouble. After a girl is physically and sexually harassed, the society that we live in does not accept her. That’s unfortunate”

- Susan Thomas, Human Rights Activist & PPP Ex-City Councilor, Christian, 2020

The female respondents pointed out how, at the time of registering a First Information Report (FIR) against harassment or forced conversions, the uncaring, lethargic, and ignorant attitude of the police render girls and their families with little recourse against the assailants. Especially when influential, powerful and religious authorities are involved, reports and statements made by the police are false and misrepresented. Since an FIR is a vital step in the procedure of criminal code, the lack of FIR limits their chances to seek justice in the courts.⁷⁵

Courts and judicial officers are also largely biased in their proceedings. At times, by claiming that the conversion took place with free will, the courts have either legally recognized the conversion of a 7-year-old girl, or, other times, they have legally dissolved the previous marriage of a Hindu woman just to get her married to a Muslim man.⁷⁶ The nature of the conversion is rarely questioned by the courts. Instead, the mere documents and fabricated conversion certificates provided by the abductor are accepted by the courts as sufficient proof, thus legitimizing the practice of forced conversions.⁷⁷

The role of the fundamentalists and radicals is also important to take note of here, as they routinely, and sometimes, officially, encourage the practice of converting non-Muslims to Muslims. By maintaining their status-quo and extraordinary influence in the rural areas of Sindh, religious institutions, shrines and *Pirs*⁷⁸ tend to prescribe this act as the utmost duty of Muslims.⁷⁹

The same was delineated by a woman in the following words:

“Extremist religious organizations also have a role to play in forced conversions. They teach others that if you convert someone to Islam, then the doors of the heaven are open for you. In workplaces, I have seen so many people trying to convince and convert small kids to Islam. Especially, if those kids are progressing, then they are killed by the colleagues. I know a child who was called for Mother’s Day celebration, but then he never got back home. People with connections here get their work done. People with no connections have to suffer.

⁷⁵Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).

⁷⁶Forced Conversion of Minority Girls and Women in Pakistan, Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner by World Sindhi Congress.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸A Pir is referred as a Muslim saint or a holy man that gives spiritual guidance.

⁷⁹Forced Conversions & Forced Marriages in Sindh, Pakistan. CIfORB, University of Birmingham, UK. Ackerman, R. (2018).

As more and more politically motivated and fundamentally driven madrassas have established in Sindh, things have started to change. Previously, Sindh wasn't so hostile and many Hindus used to live over there peacefully. But after the establishment of such institutors, religious intolerance has intensified.

-Angela Dsa, President of CFI-Pakistan (GPFP) & Educationist, Christian, 2020

As also indicated by our respondent Susan Thomas above, it was further highlighted that girls, throughout the process of testimony and court proceedings, are unable to meet with their family members. Instead, they remain in the custody of the perpetrators which usually facilitates a testimony in favor of the abductor as a result of constant threats and psychological violence.⁸⁰ These problems are further exacerbated by delayed procedures and lengthy backlogs of cases driven by weak case management, old-fashioned procedural rules, poor legal education, uninterested judges and greedy lawyers.⁸¹

"these cases can take several years to resolve. By that time, the girl who is fighting already has 2 kids. The cases stay on pending and the system is not efficient"

Sarwat Samson, Christian, 2020

Often, in the face of everyday threats, discrimination and violence, minority women, especially from low-income backgrounds, are forced to change their religion. Their decision to convert is out of desperation and not out of a genuine will. They see it as a way out to escape their otherwise helpless and despaired circumstances, which yet again, indicate the failure of the state in providing socio-economic security to religious minorities. This is why perhaps most cases of forced conversions occur among lower-income groups that, for example, include the Dalits (Scheduled Caste) residing in the rural Sindh, whose socio-economic plight renders them the most vulnerable.⁸²

The case of Arzoo Raja, a 13-year-old Christian girl, who was abducted from Karachi on October 13, 2020 and was converted and coerced into a marriage with a 42-year-old Muslim man is, sadly, not new. While her parents filed an FIR and said that she was a minor, the abductor, Syed Azhar Ali, tried to show her as an 18-year-old who converted with free-will and consented to marriage, and also presented a nikkahnama and a free-will affidavit.⁸³ The girl reportedly claimed the same before the court, however, what remains important to question is whether a 13-year-old girl possesses the intellectual maturity of taking such a decision, and whether Arzoo's assertion was actually un-coerced? By approving the free-will affidavit, the court initially accepted the marriage and the mother was also not allowed to meet Arzoo.⁸⁴ However, upon much demonstrations and uproar from the society and the human rights activists, the case was not dismissed and a five-member board was formed to determine her age, which later confirmed that she was indeed a minor. Currently, she has been sent to a shelter home and the man is barred from seeing her. We are yet to see if the culprits will actually be punished by the court.⁸⁵

⁸⁰*Ibid*

⁸¹*Ibid*

⁸²*Forced Conversion of Minority Girls and Women in Pakistan, Submission to the UN Office of the High Commissioner by World Sindhi Congress*

⁸³Protective custody sought for 'underage forced conversion' victim Arzoo Raja. *Samaa*. October 31, 2020 <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2020/10/-forced-conversion-arzoo-raja/>

⁸⁴Karachi: Court approves the conversion and marriage of 13-year-old Arzoo Raja. *AsiaNews.it*. Khokhar (October 30, 2020) [http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Karachi:-Court-ap-proves-the-conversion-and-marriage-of-13-year-old-Arzoo-Raja.-The-mother's-desperation-\(VIDEO\)-51455.html](http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Karachi:-Court-ap-proves-the-conversion-and-marriage-of-13-year-old-Arzoo-Raja.-The-mother's-desperation-(VIDEO)-51455.html)

⁸⁵Court: Arzoo Raja a child marriage case, age 14. *Samaa*. Munim (November 9 2020) <https://www.samaa.tv/news/2020/11/forced-conversion-case-arzoo-raja-case-update/>

Zahid Farooq,

Joint Director of Urban Resource Center and a notable Social Rights Activist, gave us first-hand information on the case of Arzoo Raja

This happened on October 13, 2020. Arzoo Raja, a 13-year-old girl, lives in Karachi near Cantonment Station. Her age is 13 years old. In 2001, her parents got married and in 2007 Arzoo was born. She has two elder sisters and one elder brother. No one in the entire world can challenge the record of Catholic Church, and according to their records, she was born on 21 July, 2007. She has her B-form from NADRA, there's a certificate of her birth in the church and school records. She also has State Life Insurance, and according to all these records, her birth year is 2007.



The community that she lives in has a few Christian households while the rest are of Muslims. Arzoo's family is financially weak, the house itself is very small with 6 members living in it. When power-cuts would happen, the family would sit outside and then of course they, including the girl, naturally came in more and more contact with that man [Syed Azhar Ali]. If they had UPS or some solar system facility, then the girl would have mostly stayed indoors. This is why, most of these cases happen in financially weak families because their living conditions and income are not good. The man is 43-year-old, Syed Azhar Ali. He has a position of grade 2 in the Water Board, but he showed himself to Arzoo's family as the holder of some executive position. He said that he would give 50% of his salary to them. The man was already married but the rukhsati had not taken place. The girl said that he liked him but how can a 13-year-old girl take such a big lifetime decision of getting married? Girls often tend to say that they voluntarily converted, what else can they say? They don't even know what is happening. There's another case of a 14-year-old girl, an 8 grader. She was kidnapped, and on the same day was taken to Punjab for marriage, because over there, 16 is the minimum legal age of marriage. That court is also in the case.

If the conversion was happening just for the sake of religion, then I would understand. But, on the same day, they are married and 95% of them are girls. This means that the conversion is not for religion but for a forced marriage.

In all parts of the world, 18, past puberty, is the age when every child gets their license, NIC, voting rights. So, conversion should also be above the age of 18. A child should first be given an un-coerced atmosphere and a few months to revisit their self and take a decision with full freedom. Over here, they are pressurized through various methods.

And this should apply to all. Here, if Christian and Hindus convert, then that is acceptable. But if incase a Muslim converts, then that is declared as a religious crime. They are not even documented. If a Muslim converts to another religion, NADRA does not accept it nor changes their religion.

Through Arzoo's case, one important thing that we have learnt is that all families should keep age documentation record of their kids. For Arzoo, we had all the documents proving her age. This is why we could make a strong case of child marriage under Sindh's law that states 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage. Otherwise, it would have slipped like many other cases in the past. Documents like baptism certificate, birth certificate, family card, school ID, school annual reports, all are important legal documents explicitly stating the date of birth"

Socio-Economic Discrimination

"I used to work at a reputed school that provides education to the underprivileged children in Pakistan. I was given the best teacher as well. Then I got promoted as a principal. As a principal, I was overlooking their campus in the society of Dar-ul-Salam. In 2013, the foundations of this school were laid in front of me where I personally worked for the establishment of this school. I used to pay visits in the community to encourage people to send their kids to school, they were all from low-income backgrounds. Very near to this school, across a few streets, there was another community of Christians. From there, we got a lot of admissions and several Christian kids got enrolled at our school.

However, the community registered a complaint to the management of the school saying things like this is an only Christian school and that the principal is also a Christian who has employed all Christian staff. A person from the management visited to check the school, to whom I conveyed that the staff is not Christian, and it's the school admin who recruits teachers and not myself personally. He was convinced, but after that day, I was very upset because of the instructions I later received. Previously, I was told that we should keep a ratio of girls to boys, where we should empower girls more. But now I was being told to keep a ratio of non-Muslims to Muslims. I was told to work on this ratio and to keep a balance so that not all students are non-Muslims. I cried a lot that day. I felt like I was just a dummy, and was being told to work against my community. I thought to myself that how I could restrict a non-Muslim child from getting an admission at the school if s/he has rightfully passed his test and is equally eligible. Sometime later, I was demoted on the grounds of not being an efficient principal. So, you see, I was first promoted and then demoted, and this was all because of my religious identity".

– Rabica Juliet, High School Teacher at G.G Secondary School, Karachi, Christian, 2020

"Back at my university, I was the only Christian girl in my class. A girl from my class circulated a message in class saying that non-Muslims can never be friends with us. I did not have many friends at university. This is why in the first five semesters, I was mostly isolated. Even during class presentations, I would speak very less because of low self-confidence. One time, during my class presentation, some boys hooted on me. A day before that, I had seen on Facebook that I was being bullied with my name, and they had also written the name of our community leaders (bishops). I spoke about this matter to one of my professors and they suggested me to change my section next semester. I almost agreed to it until I thought to myself that I can't keep changing my sections if the same happens again. Then I took take this matter up to the director, where I showed him the screenshots of how the Christian community and I was being made fun of on Facebook. He took a strict action against those boys. I was happy to see this decision from the authority. But my point is, us minorities face such bullying on a daily basis.

I would also like to share another incident that happened with my aunt. One time, my aunt helped a Muslim woman financially, but when she offered her [Muslim woman] food, she refused. The Muslim woman said that she is not allowed to take food from the hands of a Christian. My aunt was so hurt to see this that the Muslim woman was willing to take money from a Christian, but not the food that was being offered to her in good will.

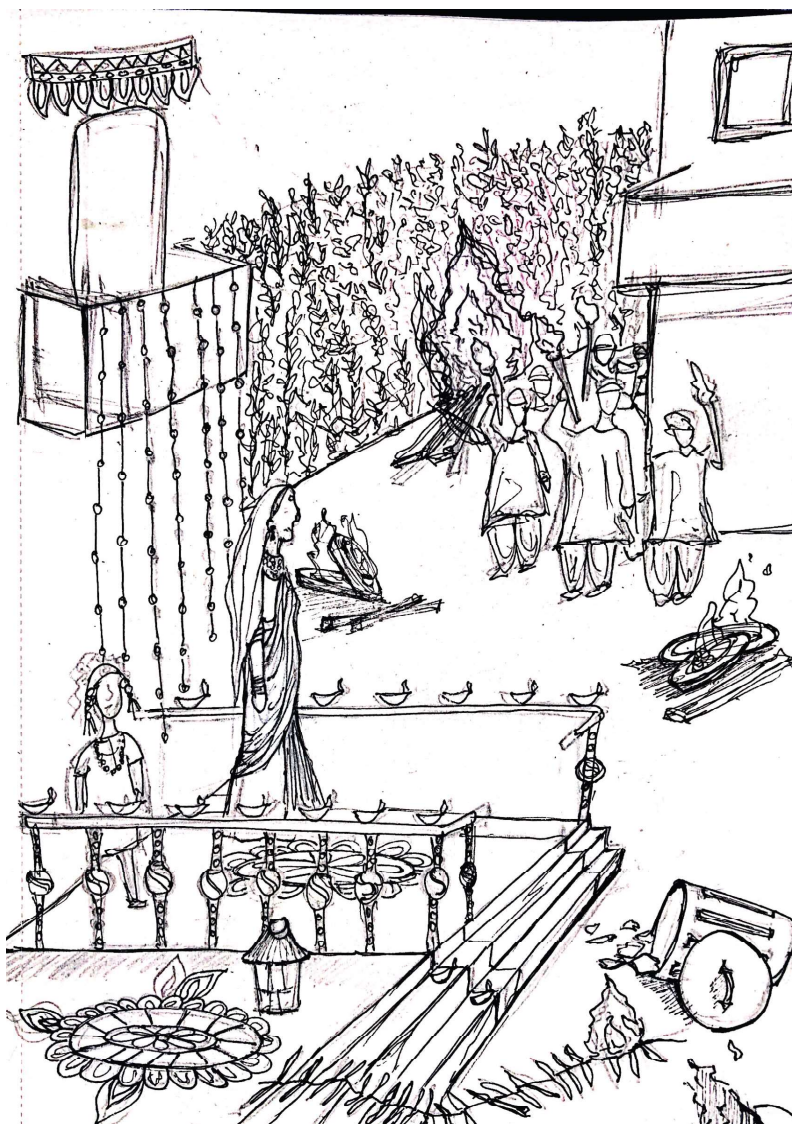
-Sarwat Samson, Journalist, Christian, 2020

The aforementioned stories of these women respondents are neither shocking nor exceptional. On account of religious identity, several minority women face a plethora of challenges at the work-place, educational institutes, and in the community. Discrimination ranges from bullying to harassment to discouraging remarks to being refused to have dinner with and much more.

The way Rabica was told by her school management to maintain a ratio of “Muslims to Non-Muslims”; the way Sarwat was harassed and bullied by her peers; the way a Muslim woman refused to eat food offered by Sarwat’s aunt, all reflect the intensity of discrimination and exclusion of minority women in day-to-day societal affairs.

Peter Jacob’s study (2012), *Life on the Margins*, examined the socio-economic plight of minority women in Pakistan by conducting a survey in 26 districts of Punjab and Sindh, where most of the minority population resides.⁸⁶ As many as 1000 Christian and Hindu women were interviewed. As far as workplace harassment is concerned, his study revealed that 76% of minority women had been harassed at the work-place. When asked whether their religious identity, in particular, made them a target of sexual harassment, 92% of women did not answer.⁸⁷ This indicates the lack of trust, insecurity and a state of helplessness among minority women who perhaps wished to remain anonymous on a topic that is riddled with social stigma in Pakistan. One of the female respondents stressed the same by saying: **“it is better if we do not disclose our identity in such cases because the backlash is too much. Victim blaming is done and this brings shame upon us and our families”** – Hindu, Female, 2020

Moreover, according to Jacob’s (2012) findings, 33% of the minority women that were surveyed had faced discrimination at educational institutes due to their religious affiliation. While 20% of the respondents spoke about the discriminatory and negative attitude of the teachers, 64% of them chose not to answer whether their teachers discouraged discriminatory attitude or not, thereby reflecting a sense of fear and insecurity among women respondents.⁸⁸



Credit: Hudaisa Zehra

⁸⁶Life on the Margins. National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Jivan, J. J., & Jacob, P. (2012)

⁸⁷Ibid

⁸⁸Ibid

Seema Maheshwary

A Human Rights Defender working for Inter-faith Harmony

When ruminating about her experiences as a child at school and as a Hindu minority, Seema Maheshwary, shared:

"We are the marginalized among the marginalized. Our appearance and clothing make us prominent among the majority. In Hindu culture, we wear Bindiya, Sindoor, Ghaghra Choli, Saaris, but the environment here is getting too conservative. Therefore, a lot of women from the Hindu community have stopped wearing Saaris and Bindiya in public until they have their own celebrations and events. Women do not wear this dressing on a regular basis anymore.



There are, however, some communities that have made it necessary for women to wear their cultural dressing no matter the consequences. For e.g., women at vendor stalls that we see selling dry fruits, they wear their bangles and traditional dresses as they like to communicate their identity this way. People do misbehave with these women, and if women respond to them, then their religion i.e., Hinduism is made a target. They are taunted with unpleasant remarks, and this is what working women have to go through. If I talk about myself, I do like to wear Bindiya. But when I am in public, I take it off for safety so that no one judges me. These are all behavior issues.

If I talk about my school life, then I remember my teacher who used to dislike all non-Muslims. Her behavior towards Hindus was very harsh. I remember, one time, I took a new bottle to school. My teacher asked for any student to get her some water. Like all other students, I was excited to give her water from my bottle, and so I did. She drank, and a few seconds later, she realized that I was a Hindu. Then, she shouted on me and used a lot of bad words. I got scared as if I had done something very wrong. A Muslim student was sitting next to me, and she asked me to give her water and I did. But then the teacher also scolded that Muslim girl, and said that these people are 'kaafirs' and you should not be eating from their hands.

This other time in fifth grade, my friend and I were having a fight. The teacher approached us in anger, and my friend, in order to save herself, threw the Islamiyat book on floor and blamed me. She told the teacher that I had done this and that I am kaafir. Without even listening to a word from me, the teacher slapped me twice. I kept on crying telling her that I had not thrown any book on the floor, but my teacher never heard."

05

ENGAGING WITH RELIGIOUS MINORITY WOMEN AT THE GRASS- ROOTS LEVEL

*This **Section** documents the engagement of Shehri-CBE team with women belonging to the Christian and Hindu faith through a series of awareness raising and capacity building consultative sessions held in various cities of Sindh province*

As part of the continued efforts of Shehri-CBE to engage with religious minorities (women) at the grass-roots level to understand their challenges and impacts on livelihoods, a series of consultative and awareness raising eighteen (18) workshops were held in various cities of the Sindh province (See the table).

The objectives of these engagements are listed below:

- Education and capacity building of women in religious minorities, with an aim to enable them to better address violations of their human and fundamental rights, including gender based legal protections by seeking timely access to institutions of prosecution and justice, and enshrined fundamental rights
- Influencing policy making bodies for empowering religious minorities/women by strengthening laws and institutional systems for enabling access to all fundamental rights, that includes property rights



22-10-2020, Calvary Church, Pahar Gunj,
North Nazimabad, Karachi



24-02-2021, Baptist Church, Pahar Gunj,
North Nazimabad, Karachi

Some core topics of discussions included:

- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Laws for the protection of minority and women's rights in Pakistan
- Domestic Violence
- Violation of Human Rights of Women
- Child Marriage Restraint Act
- Sindh Hindu Marriage Act 2018
- Laws of inheritance, land and property and for prevention of discrimination based on applying of customary/informal and traditional practices
- Discrimination against Women



Ms. Qandeel Fatima Memon (Asst. Commissioner Hyderabad), speaking at session held on 7th November 2020 at Indus Hotel Hyderabad

To make the sessions participatory and relevant, the Shehri-CBE team took special care to hold sessions in Churches,



20-02-2021, New Revival Church,
Lalabad Ibrahim Haidri, Karachi



24-02-2021, Baptist Church, Pahar Gunj,
North Nazimabad, Karachi



20-02-2021, New Revival Church,
Lalabad Ibrahim Haidri, Karachi



17-11-2020, Shanti Nagar,
Tandoalalayar



07-11-2020, Indus Hotel, Hyderabad

Community Centres, in towns and villages where the communities reside and noted social mobilizers, activists and experts belonging to the religious minorities were engaged in communicating with the target audience so that a level of trust and confidence could be built. The target audience was informed about their rights and of legal and administrative avenues available to them to seek justice and representation. The level of understanding of minority women was first assessed by having them fill an evaluation form and the consultations were structured based on the community evaluation. In addition, documentation was done on the feedback received from them on the challenges the religious minority women are faced with.

These workshops were organized and coordinated by Sarwar Khalid and Rehan Ashraf with the help of local coordinators Mr. Junaid Ahmed Dahri at Hyderabad and Mr. Sohail Rahtore at Mirpurkhas & TandoAllayar. Approximately 726 participants attended these sessions (317 in Karachi, 228 in Hyderabad and 181 in Mirpurkhas/TandoAllayar).

Our observations are that besides educating and empowering these women, we must impress upon all concerned about the importance of financial empowerment. This will give them the security, the ability to make better decisions about education, health, and even enable them to become entrepreneurs and contribute to the family and the society.



Mr. Arbab Rahim (Asst. Commissioner Hyderabad), giving certificates to participants of the session held on 12th September 2020, Indus Hotel, Hyderabad



17-11-2020, Shanti Nagar, Tandoalalayar



13-11-2020, Indus Hotel, Hyderabad



20-02-2021, New Revival Church, Lalabad Ibrahim Haidri, Karachi

#	Date & Venue	Seminars / Workshops	No. Participants	Moderator / Speakers	Planning, Coordination and Execution
1	19-07-2020 St. John Church, Landhi No.2, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Advocate Tabassum Yousuf Fr. Iqbal Daniel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
2	25-07-2020 PVDP Conference Hall Mirpurkhas	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Shahzado Malick Mr. Mohd. Rafiq Leghari (UC Chairman) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Sohail Rahtore
3	12-08-2020 Baptist Church, Pahar Gunj, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Advocate Tabassum Yousuf Fr. Iqbal Daniel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
4	15-08-2020 Village BHELL Colony, Mirpurkhas	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Shahzado Malick Mr. Mohd. Bux Kapri (Civil Society Activist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Sohail Rahtore
5	12-09-2020 Indus Hotel, Hyderabad	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Shahzado Malick Advocate M. Parkash Mr. Arbab Rahim (AC Hyderabad) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Junaid Ahmed Dahri
6	23-09-2020 Calvary Church, Pahar Gunj, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	54	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Advocate Tabassum Yousuf Fr. Iqbal Daniel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
7	26-09-2020 Indus Hotel, Hyderabad	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ross Mahtani Advocate M. Parkash Mr. Veer Jee Kohli (Special Assistant to CM Sindh) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Junaid Ahmed Dahri
8	10-10-2020 Indus Hotel, Hyderabad	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ross Mahtani Mr. Naeem Ahmed Shaikh (DIG Police, Hyderabad Range) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Junaid Ahmed Dahri
9	22-10-2020 Calvary Church, Pahar Gunj, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Advocate Tabassum Yousuf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
10	24-10-2020 Indus Hotel, Hyderabad	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ross Mahtani Advocate M. Parkash Mr. Abdul Sattar Jatui, Director Civil Hospital Hyderabad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Junaid Ahmed Dahri
11	31-10-2020 Village Abdin Farm, Mirpurkhas	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Shahzado Malick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Sohail Rahtore
12	01-11-2020 New Revival Church, Azizabad, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Prof. Nuzhat Williams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
13	07-11-2020 Indus Hotel, Hyderabad	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Aijaz Ali Wassan Advocate M. Parkash Ms. Qandeel Memon (AC Hyderabad) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Junaid Ahmed Dahri
14	08-11-2020 New Revival Church, Khuda-ki-Basti, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Prof. Nuzhat Williams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
15	10-11-2020 Marriott Hotel, Karachi	"Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Zahid Farooq Mrs. Amra Javed Advocate Tabassum Yousuf Prof. Nuzhat Williams MPA Anthony Naveed MPA Mangla Sharma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf
16	13-11-2020 Indus Hotel, Hyderabad	Workshop on "Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Ross Mahtani Advocate M. Parkash Mr. Shabbir Jan Jiskani (Asst. Commissioner Hyderabad) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Junaid Ahmed Dahri
17	17-11-2020 Shanti Nagar, TandoAllahyar	Workshop on "Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Shahzado Malick Mr. Bhalji Rai (Civil Society Activist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Sohail Rahtore
18	28-11-2020 Abdul Aziz Farm Village, Mipurkhas	Workshop on "Empowering Minority Women for Informed Social Mobilization"	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr. Shahzado Malick Mr. Bhalji Rai (Civil Society Activist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarwar Khalid Rehan Ashraf Sohail Rahtore

CONCLUSION

In this *Study*, several challenges regarding the protection of the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan have been documented. Among religious minorities, the core focus has been on the Christian and the Hindu communities residing in the geographical space of Sindh and the city of Karachi. There has been a more detailed discussion on the context of 'gender', and how, within the already marginalized communities, a further layer of discrimination is added that jeopardizes the status of minority women.

A lot of effort has gone into accessing and sourcing secondary research that deals with the relevant aspects of the topic under discussion to highlight the key findings and recommendations in this Study. In addition, primary data has been generated through qualitative research where a number of interviews, meetings and focus group discussions have been conducted with noted civil society activists, lawyers, academics and religious personalities belonging to the Christian and the Hindu communities. However, this study was prepared under some limitations. The sample size of the interview respondents was limited in number and therefore the statements of the minority representatives cannot be generalized to reflect the full extent of the problem. Nevertheless, the in-depth information that has been drawn from these interviews serve to highlight the challenges faced by the majority at large.

In this concluding section, an effort has been made to bring out some new avenues to address this challenge rather than duplicating what has already been recommended. Some of the recommendations that already form a part of this discourse have been sourced and elaborated within a context that looks at a larger picture. That is to say, the recommendations that have been made do not only strictly target policing and legislation, but on what can also be done to prevent abuses from happening in the first place. It focuses on building a more tolerant and inclusive society at the grassroots, and how such desired objectives can be translated in terms of policy and institutional frameworks. Policy based recommendations have been made on some critical aspects related to the protection of minority rights by keeping 'gender minority' as the core focus. The aim is to put forward a policy framework that targets both issues of policing, prosecution and judicial role, as well as more preventive and structured approaches targeting the root cause of the problem so that a more inclusive and tolerant society is strived for.

Recommended Policy Framework

Issues already discussed in the earlier sections are addressed separately with specified policy-based recommendations.

Alignment of National Legislations with International Commitments

Pakistan is a signatory to a number of relevant international conventions, laws that relate to issues of human rights, minority rights, gender and child rights. However, it has been observed that our national laws and policies often do not synergize well with our international obligations.

It is recommended that a stakeholder committee of legal experts be formed that reviews all relevant national laws and policies, and recommends wherever required amendments to existing legislation and puts in place new legislation so that it is ensured that all our national laws and policies comply fully with our international commitments and obligations. It is to be then ensured that consensus-based recommendations become a part of the law.

Capacity Building - Judiciary and Police

Quite often lapses occur in policing, prosecution and judicial actions owing to limited understanding of sensitivities related to social, cultural and religious beliefs, and practices of religious minorities applicable at the international and national/provincial legal safeguards. This is more prevalent in the case of local policing and judicial forums at the lower district levels.

It is recommended that training and capacity building mechanisms be made compulsory at all levels of policing and judiciary on aspects related to social, cultural and religious practices of religious minorities, and relevant human rights and minority rights legal and administrative frameworks applicable at the national and provincial levels

Educational Reforms

One of the most serious challenges relates to historical distortions and lack of pluralistic learning that leads to sowing seeds of intolerance and hatred at a very early age in our children. Issues are more complicated at the level of madrassas and religious learning institutions. However, even in formal learning institutions, the situation is far from satisfactory. Intervention at this scale is of utmost urgency if we are to secure a tolerant and inclusive Pakistan in the future:

It is recommended that,

- *A broad consensus-based multi-competency committee be formed that includes representation from all religious minorities. The committee extensively reviews the curricula being used at our formal schooling institutions and recommends the removal of any content that either directly or indirectly contributes to building hatred or intolerance towards religious minorities*
- *The Committee should also recommend how national curricula at all learning levels (particularly at the primary level) can be made more pluralistic by incorporating learnings about diverse cultures, religions and communities*
- *A new subject – Cultural Diversity – be introduced that aims to build knowledge and respect among primary/secondary level school children about the religious and socio-cultural communal diversity of Pakistan*
- *Madrassa teaching reforms be undertaken to ensure that in no way the curricula or teachings, either directly or indirectly contributes to building hatred or intolerance towards religious minorities*
- *Eliminate religious or faith-based questions on forms for admission to educational institutions in order to avoid discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation*

Media Reforms

Although the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has established a well-defined Code of Conduct to monitor and penalize related violations, the lack of effective implementation and meaningful penalties serve as obstacles in achieving the desired impact.

It is recommended that,

- *Media houses need to set up unified mechanisms for effective monitoring and accountability that discourages the airing of hate content and forces content developers to be extra careful*
- *Develop complaint and grievance redress mechanisms so that any citizen can easily lodge a complaint against any perceived airing or publishing of hate content*

Electoral Reforms

There are some critical issues related to electoral laws and procedures that need to be addressed and have been pending for quite some time despite repeated advocacy efforts for change. In the course of this research, the existing recommendations were assessed and the following are being identified for action on an emergency basis.

It is recommended that,

- *Minorities should have dual voting rights so they can vote for their own representative as well as for a member running on the general seat in their constituency*

Evacuee Trust Property Law

This is an issue of major concern and many irregularities have been identified. The Evacuee Trust Property Board is a Federal Authority while the physical spaces/properties they manage are spread all over the country. It is incomprehensible that even after 73 years since the creation of Pakistan, we are still dealing with evacuee property. A phased process of ultimate dissolution of this Authority is being proposed.

It is recommended that,

- *Since 'Minorities' is a provincial subject after the invoking of the 18th Amendment, the role and functions of the Evacuee Trust Property Board need to be transferred to a viable institutional platform at the provincial level to make operations more transparent and access of the affected communities easier and faster*
- *In addition, the composition of the revised Board should be such that religious minority members are represented*
- *Process of handing over the properties be expedited and a timeline be set for completion of work and dissolution of the Authority*

Forced Conversions and Marriages

It is felt that the *Sindh Criminal Law (Protection of Minorities) Bill* has a good potential to address many of the issues related to forced conversions and forced marriages.

It is recommended that this law be effectively instituted within all the provinces of Pakistan and procedures be put in place for proper implementation and monitoring

Culture and Diversity Policy

There has been a lot of focus on structuring legal frameworks that address the consequences of various challenges that are emerging in the context of protecting the rights of religious minorities. While that is good, it is felt that there has been no focus on promoting practices that target the problem at the grassroots level – that assist in the building of a more tolerant and inclusive society. In many countries that have suffered owing to ethnic, religious, linguistic divides, often resulting in violence, there have been efforts made to craft policies and measures that aim to bring communities together by celebrating their cultural and religious diversities rather than allowing those differences to form the fault lines of conflict and contestations. One such initiative that has been taken is that of framing ‘Culture Policies’. We need to change attitudes and behaviors; otherwise, only firefighting measures will not resolve these challenges that find deep roots within our societal psyche.

A very successful and often cited case study is that of the Culture Policy framed in the city of Medellin, Colombia. Medellin, in not-too-distant a past was considered as the most violent city in the world and assumed the branding as a ‘Machine Gun City’. However, once under visionary leadership, a process of healing and rehabilitation then began, whereby the Culture Policy was at the core of that exercise.

The cultural policy, a public-private and social actors initiative, is the result of the awareness of the 90s for the need to build a city project due to the violence to which it was afflicted; it was based on the processes of cultural, territorial and city planning, and the consolidation of political-cultural thinking and citizen participation with groups who decided to enable resilience through art.

“As a practical matter, cultural policy can be most usefully considered as the sum of a government’s activities with respect to the arts (including the for-profit cultural industries), the humanities, and the heritage. Cultural policy, then, involves governmental strategies and activities that promote the production, dissemination, marketing, and consumption of the arts. A cultural policy encompasses a much broader array of activities than what was traditionally associated with an arts policy. The latter typically involved public support for museums, the visual arts (painting, sculpture, and pottery), the performing arts (symphonic, chamber and choral music; jazz, modern dance, opera and musical theater, and “serious” theater), historic preservation, and humanities programs (such as creative writing and poetry). A cultural policy would involve support for all the aforementioned activities, but also other publicly supported institutions such as libraries and archives; battlefield sites, zoos, botanical gardens, arboretums, aquariums, parks; as well as community celebrations, fairs, and festivals; folklore activities such as quilting, “country” music, folk dancing, crafts; perhaps certain varieties of circus performances, rodeos, and marching bands” –

Source: Mulcahy, 2010; Cultural Policy Theoretical Approaches, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 35:4, 319-330

The cultural-political project of Medellín, 2002-2014, is projected in the Plan for Culture 2011-2020. It undertakes culture as a competitive factor without abandoning equality and cares for vulnerable populations to achieve social justice in a context of guaranteeing rights, valuing diversity, territory, aesthetics and an understanding of the creations, memories and heritage as a foundation of shared meanings. The Municipal Development Plan 2012-2015 appropriated life, equality, education, innovation, knowledge and sustainable development, centered on the respect and empowerment of identity diversity, transparency and good governance as keys for Medellín; its goal is "to contrib

ute, through cultural action and public education, to the appreciation of life and diversity, as an imperative principle for peaceful coexistence"; it recognizes the efforts needed to make culture and education factors of social transformation; as well as conservation and respect for life; it recognizes artistic expression as the core of culture, public enjoyment, of the right to free expression, and reaffirms culture as a fundamental dimension of the integral development of citizenship and recognition of human diversity and social wealth.

*It is recommended that a '**Culture and Diversity Policy**' is framed that lays the groundwork of creating institutions, learning and educational platforms, protection and promotion of cultural and religious assets, heritage and crafts that leads to the promotion of cultural and religious tolerance and building of an inclusive society*

ANNEX

List of Informants

No.	Name	Affiliation	Religion	Date of the interview(s)	Interviewer
1.	Zahid Farooq	Joint Director, Urban Resource Center & Social Rights Activist	Christian	13 October 2020 10 November 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
2.	Uzma Bano	Gender Specialist, Karachi Neighborhood Urban Center	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
3.	Ravi Kumar Chouhan	Human Rights Defender	Hindu	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
4.	Professor Nuzhat Williams	President of Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)	Christian	3 November 2020	Hiba Shoaib
5.	Father. Iqbal Daniel	Priest	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
6.	Anila	Teacher	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
7.	Tabassum Yusuf	Advocate of High Court	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
8.	Noman Peter	National Commission Justice for Pakistan	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
9.	Sarwat Samson	Journalist	Christian	13 October 2020 19 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
10.	Sister Maria Mehboob	Education, Saint Joseph Convent, FC college	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
11.	Sister Catherine James	Education, Saint Joseph Convent, FC college	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
12.	Angela Dsa	President of CFI-Pakistan (GPFP) & Educationist	Christian	13 October 2020 22 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
13.	Seema Maheshwary	Human Rights Defender	Hindu	20 October 2020	Hiba Shoaib
14.	Kashif Anthony	National Commission Justice for Pakistan	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
15.	Mangla Sharma	Member, Provincial Assembly, Sindh, Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM)	Hindu	10 November 2020	Farhan Anwar
16.	Anthony Naveed	Member Provincial Asseble, Sindh, Pakistan People's Party (PPP)	Christian	10 November 2020	Farhan Anwar
17.	Rabica Juliet	High School Teacher at G.G Secondary School	Christian	13 October 2020 20 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
18.	Yasmeen Chaudary	Ex-employee of Pakistan Petroleum	Christian	13 October 2020	Farhan Anwar Hiba Shoaib
19.	Susan Thomas	PPP Ex City Councilor & Human Rights Defender	Christian	23 October 2020	Hiba Shoaib
20.	M. Parkash	Patron-in-Chief, District Hindu Panchayat, Hyderabad	Hindu	16 November 2020	Farhan Anwar

About the Authors

Farhan Anwar did his Bachelors in *Civil Engineering* and Masters in *Urban and Regional Planning*. His portfolio includes urban sustainability planning, smart cities, public policy, climate adaptation, and institutional strengthening and change management. Anwar served as an *Urban Reforms Consultant* to the *World Bank* from 2006-2013 and is presently serving the *World Bank* in the capacity of *Urban Planning Consultant* on the *Karachi Transformation Strategy* project. He presently serves as a Visiting Faculty at the *Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Social Sciences & Liberal Arts Department*, where he teaches a Bachelors course on *Sustainable Cities & Communities* and at the *Indus Valley School of Arts & Architecture, Karachi*, where he teaches Bachelors Course in the *Architecture Department on Urban Theories*. In addition, at *Habib University*, he teaches a Bachelors Course in *Urban Planning in the Social Development and Policy Program*. Anwar is the *Lead Author* of the *Sanitation Strategy, Government of Sindh* and the *Author of Pakistan's National Strategy and Action Plan for the Mangroves of the Future Regional Program*. He has a number of publications to his credit and contributed (2013-2016) a weekly column – *Elasti-cities* focused on urban planning, environment, and development issues of Karachi City in the *Express Tribune Newspaper* - <https://tribune.com.pk/author/4268/farhan-anwar/>



Hiba Shoaib is a third-year student pursuing a bachelor's degree in *Social Development and Policy* from *Habib University*. Currently, as a researcher at the *Trans-disciplinary Design and Innovation Lab of Habib University*, she is working on human-centered design solutions and gender-sensitive policies on the issue of female mobility in Karachi (*Her City Her Stories*). She is also a part of the global research program of the *Borderless* network - a global media channel based in New York City featuring local voices for a social change. Recently, two of her primary research studies '*Female Mobility: Women Traversing Gendered Public Spaces in Urban Karachi*' (lead author) and '*Low-skilled Labor Migrants: Struggles of a Pakistani Labor Migrant in Saudi Arabia*' were published in *Tehzib (Habib University's academic journal)*. Hiba was also on the President's List 2019 and qualified for the High Academic Achievement Scholarship in Fall 2019. Previously, she interned at *The Citizens Foundation and Akhuwat* for projects on poverty alleviation and education for the underprivileged. From 2019 - 2020, Hiba served as the *General Secretary* for *Habib University's Youth Chapter of the United Nations Association of Pakistan (UNAP)*, where she worked towards achieving the SDGs and was recognized as one of the top 10 UNAP members. On a full merit-scholarship given by the *U.S Department of State*, Hiba attended the *Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (KL-YES)* program to represent Pakistan as a cultural ambassador in the United States of America for a high school academic year (2014 – 2015).



SHEHRI-CITIZENS FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT (SHEHRI-CBE)

Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment was formed in 1988 (based in Karachi City), as a non-political, noncommercial, non-governmental organization (under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860) by a group of concerned citizens to provide the citizens with a platform to effectively voice their concerns in determining their future and taking action in arresting the deterioration in their living environment and propose reform with a view to improve the same. Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment is now fighting at the forefront of various issues of public concern related the environment. The organization is actively engaged in areas of work like public advocacy and public interest litigation, right to information, good governance, community policing, police reforms, urban mobility, climate change and last but not the least institutional reforms.

OBJECTIVES

- Establishment of an aware and pro-active civil society, good governance, transparency and rule of law.
- Promotion of research, documentation, dialogue and influence of public policies.
- To provide technical assistance and guidance to local area citizens groups on their local area and environment.
- Setting up an effective and representative local government system, e.g., capacity building and training.
- Preparation of a proper master plan/zoning plan for Karachi and effective implementation of the same.

HOW IS SHEHRI RUN

A volunteer Managing Committee, duly elected by the General Body for a term of two years, thereby functioning in an open and democratic manner. Membership is open to all who subscribe to its objective and memorandum.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) FOCUS

Shehri-CBE brings a focus in all its works on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that define the global development agenda of today. This Publication 'Religious Minorities and the Gendered Context in Pakistan – A Roadmap for Empowerment', creates strong linkages with the targets of Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities), Goal 16 (Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions), other than finding cross-linkages with the remaining goals as well.



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