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2010 Report on International Religious Freedom - Pakistan

[Covers the period from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010]

The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion and it requires that laws be consistent with Islam. The constitution states that "subject to law, public order, and morality, every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion;" in practice however, the government limited freedom of religion. Freedom of speech was also constitutionally "subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam."

Despite the government's steps to protect religious minorities, the number and severity of reported high-profile cases against minorities increased during the reporting period. Organized violence against minorities increased; for example, there was violence against Christians in Gojra, Punjab, and a terrorist attack on Ahmadi in Lahore, Punjab. There were instances in which law enforcement personnel abused religious minorities in custody. Security forces and other government agencies did not adequately prevent or address societal abuse against minorities. Discriminatory legislation and the government's failure or delay in addressing religious hostility by societal actors fostered religious intolerance, acts of violence, and intimidation against religious minorities. Specific laws that discriminated against religious minorities included the anti-Ahmadi provisions of the penal code and the blasphemy laws which provided the death penalty for defiling Islam or its prophets. The Ahmadiyya community continued to face governmental and societal discrimination and legal bars to the practice of its religious beliefs. Members of other Islamic sects, Christians, Sikhs, and Hindus also reported governmental and societal discrimination.

Relations between religious communities remained tense. Societal discrimination against religious minorities was widespread, and societal violence against such groups occurred. Nongovernmental actors, including terrorist and extremist groups and individuals, targeted religious congregations. A domestic insurgency led by religious militants increased acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities and exacerbated existing sectarian tensions. Extremists demanded that all citizens follow a strict version of Islam and threatened brutal consequences if they did not abide by it. Extremists also targeted violence against Muslims advocating for tolerance and pluralism, including followers of Sufism.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. During the reporting period, U.S. embassy officials closely monitored the treatment of religious minorities, worked to eliminate the teaching of religious intolerance, and encouraged the amendment or repeal of the blasphemy laws.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 310,527 square miles and a population of 174 million. Approximately 95 percent of the population is Muslim (75 percent Sunni, 25 percent

Shia). Groups composing 5 percent of the population or less include Hindus, Christians, Parsis/Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Sikhs, Buddhists, Ahmadis, and others. According to the Ministry for Minorities Affairs, Sikhs have approximately 30,000 adherents and Buddhists 20,000. According to a Parsi community center in Karachi, the number of Parsis (Zoroastrians) dropped to 1,750 in 2010 as compared to 2,039 in June 2006. The Baha'i claimed that the number of Baha'is is growing, with approximately 30,000 adherents. The number of Ahmadis living in the country, according to Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya, is nearly 600,000, although it is difficult to establish an accurate estimate because Ahmadis, who are legally prohibited from identifying themselves as Muslims, generally choose not to identify themselves as non-Muslims. Some tribes in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPk) (formerly known as the North West Frontier Province) practiced traditional animist religious beliefs; other religious groups include Kalasha, Kihals, and Jains. Less than 0.5 percent of the population, as recorded in the 1998 census, was silent on religious affiliation or claimed not to adhere to a particular religious group. Social pressure was such that few persons claimed no religious affiliation.

No data were available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals; however, religious beliefs often played an important part in daily life. Most Muslims offered prayers on Fridays (Islam's holy day) and many prayed daily. During the month of Ramadan, even less observant Muslims fasted and attended services. Approximately 70 percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worshiped regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu-speaking Catholics did so. Attendance at Hindu and Sikh religious services increased during festivals.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion. It also declares that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religious beliefs freely; however, the government imposes limits on freedom of religion, particularly on Ahmadis.

Religious parties opposed any amendments to the constitution affecting its Islamic clauses, especially the ones relating to Ahmadis. In April 2010 the 18th Amendment to the constitution was passed without amending constitutional clauses affecting minorities, including blasphemy and Ahmadi-specific laws.

Freedom of speech was subject to "reasonable" restrictions in the interest of the "glory of Islam," as stipulated in sections 295(a), (b), and (c) of the penal code. The consequences for contravening the country's blasphemy laws were death for defiling Islam or its prophets; life imprisonment for defiling, damaging, or desecrating the Qur'an; and 10 years' imprisonment for insulting "another's religious feelings." Some individuals brought charges under these laws to settle personal scores or to intimidate vulnerable Muslims, sectarian opponents, and religious minorities. Under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), any action, including speech, intended to incite religious hatred was punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment. In cases in which a minority group claimed its religious feelings were insulted, the blasphemy laws were rarely enforced, and cases were rarely brought to the legal system. A 2005 law required that a senior police official investigate any blasphemy charge before a complaint was filed. This law was not uniformly enforced.

Laws prohibiting blasphemy continued to be used against Christians, Ahmadis, and members of other religious groups, including Muslims. Lower courts often did not require adequate evidence in blasphemy cases, which led to some accused and convicted persons spending years in jail before higher courts eventually overturned their convictions or ordered them freed. Original trial courts usually denied bail in blasphemy cases, claiming that because defendants could face the death penalty, they were likely to flee; however, the state has never executed anyone under the blasphemy laws. Many defendants appealed the denial of bail, but bail often was not granted in advance of the trial. Lower courts frequently delayed decisions, experienced intimidation, and refused bail for fear of reprisal from extremist elements.

The penal code incorporates a number of Islamic law (Shari'a) provisions. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions that reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The Federal Shariat Court and the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court served as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinance, which criminalizes rape, extramarital sex, property crimes, alcohol, and gambling; judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslim. A 2005 Supreme Court ruling allows the full Supreme Court to bypass the Shari'a bench and assume jurisdiction in such appellate cases in its own right and prohibits the Federal Shariat Court from reviewing decisions of the provincial high courts. The Federal Shariat Court may overturn legislation it judges inconsistent with Islamic tenets, but such cases can be appealed to the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court and ultimately may be heard by the full Supreme Court. The Federal Shariat Court applies to Muslims and non-Muslims, such as in cases relating to Hudood laws. Non-Muslims were allowed to consult the Federal Shariat Court in matters which affected them or violated their rights.

Criminal law allowed offenders to offer monetary restitution to victims and allowed victims to carry out physical retribution rather than seeking punishment through the court system. The "Qisaas and Diyat" law calls for either providing retribution for murder and other violent crimes (qisaas) or compensation money to the victim of the crime (diyat). Religious minorities claimed that the amounts of monetary restitution were far higher for minority offenders and far lower for minority victims than for Muslims.

Under Shari'a Hudood referred to punishments for certain crimes such as theft, fornication, consumption of alcohol, and apostasy. The country's Hudood Ordinance often relied on harsh and discriminatory interpretations of Qur'anic standards of evidence and punishment that applied equally to Muslims and non-Muslims. If Qur'anic standards were used, Muslim and non-Muslim and male and female testimony carried different weight. Until the passage of the 2006 Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act, cases of rape and adultery were also heard under the Hudood Ordinance, which led to numerous abuses against women. The 2006 law moved these cases to secular rather than Shari'a courts; thousands of women have now been released from jail, although social ostracism continued in some cases.

The government designated religious affiliation on passports and requested religious information in national identity card applications. A citizen must have a national identity card to vote. Those wishing to be listed as Muslims must swear their belief that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet and denounce the Ahmadiyya movement's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslims, a provision designed to discriminate against Ahmadis. As a result Ahmadis continued to boycott elections.

The constitution provides for "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle the government does not restrict organized religious groups from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy; however, in practice religious minorities suffered from restrictions of this right. District-level authorities consistently refused to grant permission to construct non-Muslim places of worship, especially for Ahmadiyya and Baha'i communities, citing the need to maintain public order. There were instances of minority places of worship being seized by land mafias or being illegally sold by government authorities. There is no official restriction on the construction of Ahmadiyya places of worship; however, Ahmadis were forbidden from calling them mosques. Ahmadis also reported that their mosques and community land were routinely confiscated by local governments and given to the majority Muslim community. District governments often refused to grant Ahmadis permission to hold events publicly; therefore, they held their meetings in members' homes. The government can shut down these gatherings if neighbors reported hearing the recitation of Qur'anic verses.

Representatives of the Sikh community in Punjab and Sindh reported the illegal sale of gurdwara lands by the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB). In April 2010 it was disclosed that the ETPB transferred approximately 72 acres (574 kanals) of gurdwara land in Lahore to the Defence Housing Authority. Despite protests by the Sikh community, the ETPB continued its plan to sell gurdwara land, which was not allowed under the 1925 Sikh Act. Similarly, Christian leaders in Sindh opposed a proposed sale of Saint Andrews Church in Karachi.

The government provided funding for construction and maintenance of mosques and for Islamic clergy. The provincial and federal governments have legal responsibility for certain religious properties belonging to minority communities that were abandoned during the 1947 partition of the country and India. Minority communities claimed the government did not spend adequate funds on the protection and upkeep of those properties. The government collected a 2.5 percent zakat (tax) on all Sunni Muslims and distributed the funds to Sunni mosques, madrassahs, and charities. The government did not impose similar requirements on other religious groups.

Government policies did not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority religious groups. Religious minorities were legally restricted from public display of certain religious images and, due to discriminatory legislation and social pressure, were often afraid to profess freely their religious beliefs. The 2008 establishment of the Ministry for Minority Affairs removed responsibility for protection of religious minorities from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry of Minority Affairs, a stand-alone, cabinet level ministry that has the "aim to protect the rights of minorities as envisaged under the 1973 constitution of Pakistan" is headed by Shahbaz Bhatti, a Roman Catholic. The Ministry for Minority Affairs' budget covers assistance to indigent minorities, the repair of minority places of worship, the establishment of minority-run small development projects, and the celebration of minority religious festivals. These expenses were previously covered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Religious minorities claimed that the Ministry for Minority Affairs is underfunded and that localities and villages that were home to minority citizens went without basic civic amenities.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, Zakat, and Ushr was primarily responsible for organizing participation in the Hajj and other Islamic religious pilgrimages. The federal government, however, also consults the ministry on matters such as blasphemy and educational reforms. The ministry organized events aimed at promoting peace and religious tolerance and also carried out research on these subjects. In June 2010 the ministry reconstituted the Sufi Advisory Council as the National Sufi Council with the objective of promoting free religious thought and the establishment of Sufi Centers and research activities on Sufi Islamic thought.

The government observed Islamic holy days as national holidays.

The government, at its most senior levels, continued to call for interfaith dialogue and sectarian harmony to promote moderation, tolerance, and minority rights.

The constitution safeguards "educational institutions with respect to religion." No student can be forced to receive religious instruction or participate in religious worship other than his or her own. The denial of religious instruction for students of any religious community or denomination was also prohibited.

Islamiyyat (Islamic studies) was compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. Although students of other religious groups were not legally required to study Islam, they were generally not offered parallel studies in their own religious beliefs. In some schools non-Muslim students may study Akhlaqiyyat, or Ethics. Parents may send children to religious schools, at the family's expense, and private schools were generally free to teach or not to teach religious studies as they choose. Madrassahs, private schools run by Islamic groups, were prohibited from teaching sectarian or religious hatred or encouraging sectarian or religious violence, although some did.

The constitution specifically prohibited discriminatory admission to any governmental educational institution solely based on religious affiliation. Government officials stated that the only factors affecting admission to government educational institutions were students' grades and home provinces; however, students must declare their religious affiliation on application forms. This declaration was also required for private educational institutions, including universities. Students who identified themselves as Muslim must declare in writing that they believe that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet, another measure that singled out Ahmadis. Non-Muslims must have their religious affiliation verified by the head of their local religious community.

Private schools run by Islamic clerics or madrassahs varied greatly in their curriculum and character. They may offer after-school nondegree Islamic religious instruction, a full

degree course in Islamic religious studies based on degree parameters set by one of the country's five madrassah boards, a full degree course in regular studies based either on the government's matriculation standards or the British A level curriculum, certificate courses in vocational training, or some combination thereof. Madrassahs may have students on a part-time, full-time day, full boarding basis, or some combination thereof. In some rural communities, madrassahs were the only form of education available.

In recent years a small, yet influential, number of madrassahs have, in violation of the law, taught extremist doctrine in support of terrorism. In an attempt to curb the spread of extremism, the 2002 Madrassah Registration Ordinance required all madrassahs to register with one of the five independent boards (wafaqs) or directly with the government, cease accepting foreign financing, and accept foreign students only with the consent of their government. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as of June 2010, 19,104 madrassahs had been registered. Of these 770 madrassahs were registered in 2009 alone; however, many civil society organizations and education experts disputed the number of madrassahs operating across the country.

A 2005 framework for cooperative registration of madrassahs, including provision of financial and educational data and expanded oversight of the prohibition on the teaching of sectarian or religious hatred and violence, remained stalled due to political upheaval and jurisdictional battles within the previous government. The government and the independent madrassah boards had agreed to a phased introduction to all madrassahs offering full-time education of secular subjects, including mathematics, English, and science. The civilian government considered madrassah reform a priority but has made little progress in this regard. Officials at the Ministry of Religious Affairs cited a lack of funds as an obstacle to attaining the goal of madrassah reforms. They claimed that, at present, the government does not have any funds to carry out the plan, although in the past three years secular subjects were introduced in some madrassahs through government support.

The government announced, but has not approved, a uniform curriculum for madrassahs, with a more secular tone. The Secretary General of the Deobandi Madrassah Board (the Wafaq-ul-Madaris-al-Arabiyya), Maulana Mohammad Hanif Jalandhri, opposed this policy in April 2009 stating that no interference by the government would be tolerated and no revision of madrassah curriculum would be accepted without consultation and approval of the five sectarian boards.

All wafaqs continued to mandate the elimination of teaching that promoted religious or sectarian intolerance and terrorist or extremist recruitment at madrassahs. Inspectors from the boards mandated that affiliated madrassahs with full-time students supplement religious studies with secular subjects. Wafaqs also restricted foreign private funding of madrassahs. A comparatively small, yet influential, number of unregistered and Deobandi-controlled madrassahs continued to teach extremism and/or allow recruitment of their students by terrorist organizations. Similarly, the Dawa schools, run by Jamaat-ud-Dawa, a charitable front for the banned Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, continued such teaching and recruitment for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a designated foreign terrorist organization. Following the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, attributed to Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, the Punjab provincial government took over management of several Jamaat-ud-Dawa institutions.

In an effort to end Taliban violence in the Swat valley, the KPk government, led by the Awami National Party (ANP), concluded a peace deal in February 2009 with extremist organization Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) that included a commitment to implement the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation (NAR) in the Malakand division of the KPk. In April 2009 President Asif Ali Zardari signed the NAR, making it effective. Based on previous attempts in 1994 and 1998 to establish Shari'a (interpreted locally as "swift justice"), the NAR established limits for deciding civil and criminal cases, recreated qazi (religious judges) chosen by the state, and established a local appeals court whose judges were selected by the Peshawar High Court. Civil society in general and the minority religious community in particular expressed concern about the effects of creating an alternative religious-based system of justice in Swat. NAR defenders pointed out that, under the constitution, all laws must already conform to Islam. In this respect, they said, the NAR was not a new regulation.

The deal was signed with the expectation that local militants would disarm in return for the implementation of Shari'a through the NAR. After the President signed the NAR, however, the militants refused to disarm and extended their patrols to Buner District of the Malakand Division. Amid growing incidents of violence by the militants, the army launched a military operation on April 26, 2009, resulting in the largest mass migration in the country's history since partition and clearing much of the territory claimed by the Taliban. The NAR has been inoperative since the start of military operations in April 2009. At the end of the reporting period, military operations were ongoing in the FATA and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.

The government does not restrict religious publishing in general; however, the sale of Ahmadi religious literature was banned. The law prohibited publishing any criticism of Islam or its prophets or insults to another's religious beliefs.

The government does not prohibit, restrict, or punish parents for raising children in accordance with religious teachings and practices of their choice, nor did it take steps to prevent parents from teaching their children religious instruction in the privacy of the home.

There were no legal requirements for an individual to practice or affiliate nominally with a religious group; however, the constitution required that the president and prime minister be Muslims. All senior officials, including members of parliament, must swear an oath to protect the country's Islamic identity. Government employees were not prohibited from displaying or practicing any elements of their religious beliefs.

Missionaries (except Ahmadis) were permitted in the country and can proselytize, as long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge they are not Muslim. Missionaries were required to have specific visas valid from two to five years and are allowed one entry into the country per year. Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries were available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems were common.

In accordance with the Anti-Terrorism Act, the government banned activities of and membership in several religious extremist and terrorist groups. The act allowed the government to use special streamlined courts to try violent crimes, terrorist activities, acts or speech designed to foment religious hatred, and crimes against the state; however, many banned groups remained active.

The government does not recognize either civil or common law marriage. Marriages were performed and registered according to one's religious group. The marriages of non-Muslim men remained legal upon conversion to Islam. If a non-Muslim female converted to Islam, and her marriage was performed according to her previous religious beliefs, the marriage was considered dissolved. Children born to Hindu or Christian women who converted to Islam after marriage were considered illegitimate unless their husbands also converted. The only way the marriage can be legitimated and the children made eligible for inheritance was for the husband to convert to Islam. The children of a Muslim man and a Muslim woman who both converted to another religious group were considered illegitimate, and the government can take custody of the children. The registration of Hindu and Sikh marriages has been a long-standing demand of these communities. In May 2009 the Scheduled Caste Rights Movement (SCRM) demanded legislation for Hindu marriage registration during a seminar in Islamabad. The minorities' representatives were of the view that in the absence of Hindu and Sikh marriage registration, women faced difficulties in getting a share of their parents' and husbands' property, accessing health services, voting, obtaining a passport, and buying or selling property.

The government did not restrict the formation of political parties based on a particular religious group, religious belief, or interpretation of religious doctrine. The government monitored the activities of various Islamist parties and affiliated clergy due to prior links to terrorist and extremist organizations. There were reserved seats for religious minority members in both the national and provincial assemblies. The seats were allocated to the political parties on a proportional basis determined by their overall representation in the assembly. The national assembly has 13 members of minority religious groups, 10 of whom hold reserved seats for minorities and three of whom hold reserved seats for women. As part of the 18th Amendment, the senate now has four reserved seats for

religious minorities, one from each province. Reserved seats for minorities also existed in the provincial assemblies: three in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, eight in Punjab, nine in Sindh, and three in Balochistan. Minorities were represented in the local government system with a minimum of one seat per zila, tehsil, and union council, as stipulated under the provincial Local Government Ordinances. In 2010 Balochistan passed the Local Government Act which, according to its language, implements a policy of religious minority representation based on population, with a minimum of two seats.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally enforced existing legal restrictions on religious freedom.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of assembly, Ahmadis have been prohibited from holding conferences or gatherings since 1983. They were also banned from preaching and from traveling to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj or other religious pilgrimages. Ahmadiyya publications were also banned from public sale, but they published religious literature, circulated only within Ahmadi communities.

The constitution provides for the right to establish places of worship and train clergy, but in practice these rights were restricted for Ahmadis. Authorities continued to conduct surveillance on Ahmadis, and several Ahmadiyya mosques reportedly were closed or confiscated; others reportedly were desecrated or their construction stopped.

Public pressure routinely prevented courts from protecting minority rights and forced judges to take strong action against any perceived offense to Sunni orthodoxy. Discrimination charges against religious minorities were rarely brought before the judiciary. According to several NGOs, cases against Christians and Ahmadis continued to increase during the reporting period. Lower courts were frequently subjected to intimidation, delayed issuing decisions, and refused bail for fear of reprisal from extremist elements. Original trial courts usually denied bail in blasphemy cases, arguing that defendants facing the death penalty were likely to flee. As with the majority of cases in the country, many defendants appealed the denial of bail, but bail was often not granted in advance of the trial.

There were no reports of district governments restricting the distribution and display of certain religious images, . Such images were openly displayed and sold in Christian communities. Foreign books must pass government censors before being reprinted. Books and magazines were imported freely but were subject to censorship for objectionable sexual or religious content. Sacred books for religious minorities, except Ahmadis, were freely imported. Hindus faced some difficulty in importing books from India. Other groups did not face hardship in obtaining religious materials although availability may be limited to some specific bookstores or religious centers.

Religious belief or specific adherence to a religious group was not required for membership in the ruling party or the moderate opposition parties. All political parties, including religious parties, had a separate minority wing, and some of the religious parties gave seats to religious minorities in provincial assemblies after the 2008 general elections.

The government sometimes funded and facilitated Hajj travel but had no similar program for pilgrimages by religious minorities. Due to the passport requirements to list religious affiliation and denounce the Ahmadi prophet, Ahmadis were restricted from going on the Hajj because they were unable to declare themselves as Muslims. Because the government does not recognize Israel, religious believers regardless of religious affiliation were unable to travel to Israel on pilgrimage. This especially affected Baha'is, since the Baha'i World Centre, the spiritual and administrative heart of the community, was located in northern Israel.

Discrimination against Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis in admission to higher education institutions persisted. There were no reports of discrimination against Christians when they applied for entry to universities and medical schools. Shi'a leaders did not report that they were subjected to discrimination in hiring for the civil service or admission to government institutions of higher learning. Sikh leaders reported they faced restrictions in securing admissions at college and university level as they were required to obtain a

certificate of permission from the Evacuee Trust Property Board, which they said was a lengthy process that discouraged Sikhs from pursuing higher education.

Promotions for all minority groups appeared limited within the civil service. These problems were particularly acute for Ahmadis, who contended that a "glass ceiling" prevented their promotion to senior positions, and certain government departments refused to hire or retain qualified Ahmadis. The government discriminated against some groups, such as Ahl-e-Hadith and Bareilvi, in hiring clergy for government mosques and the military and faculty members for Islamic studies positions in government colleges.

Members of minority religious groups volunteered for military service in small numbers, and there were no official obstacles to their advancement; however, in practice non-Muslims rarely rose above the rank of colonel and were not assigned to politically sensitive positions. A chaplaincy corps provided services for Muslim soldiers, but no similar services were available for religious minorities.

The public school curriculum included derogatory remarks in textbooks against minority religious groups, particularly Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews, and the teaching of religious intolerance was widespread. The government continued to revise the curriculum to eliminate such teachings and remove Islamic overtones from secular subjects.

Officials used bureaucratic demands and bribes to delay religious groups trying to build houses of worship or obtain land. Although Ahmadis were often prevented from building houses of worship, Sunni Muslim groups built mosques and shrines without government permission, at times in violation of zoning ordinances and on government-owned lands without repercussions.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Police reportedly tortured and mistreated those in custody on religious charges and were accused of at least one extrajudicial killing in a blasphemy case. For example, on September 16, 2009, a young Christian man, Robert Fanish, who had been accused of blasphemy, died while in police custody. The case prompted widespread media attention, and several human rights groups asserted that he had been killed extrajudicially. Christian and Ahmadiyya communities claimed their members were more likely to be abused. Non-Muslim prisoners generally were accorded poorer facilities than Muslim inmates.

According to the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), in 2009 112 cases were registered under the blasphemy laws. Of the 112 persons, 57 were identified as Ahmadis, 47 Muslims, and eight Christians. A total of 1,032 persons have been charged under the blasphemy laws between 1987 and 2009.

Ahmadiyya leaders claimed the government used sections of the penal code against their members for religious reasons. The government used anti-Ahmadi laws to target and harass Ahmadis and often accused converts to the Ahmadiyya community of blasphemy, violations of anti-Ahmadi laws, or other crimes. The vague wording of the provision that forbids Ahmadis from directly or indirectly identifying themselves as Muslims enabled officials to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting and for naming their children Muhammad. According to the Rabwah-based Jamaat-e-Ahmidaya, as of June 2010 42 Ahmadis faced criminal charges under Ahmadi-specific laws or blasphemy laws, and 25 Ahmadis faced false charges under other sections of the penal code.

According to Ahmadiyya leaders, at the end of the reporting period, six Ahmadis were in prison; one was facing life imprisonment, three were facing death sentences, and two were incarcerated on charges of preaching. The Ahmadiyya community claimed the arrests were groundless and based on the detainees' religious beliefs. Several criminal cases, ranging from killings to destruction of property, were filed against prominent members of the Ahmadiyya community during the reporting period. The cases remained unprosecuted, and the accused were allowed to post bail.

Authorities routinely used blasphemy laws to harass religious minorities and vulnerable Muslims and to settle personal scores or business rivalries. Authorities detained and

convicted individuals on spurious charges. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid confrontation with or violence from extremists, often continued trials indefinitely.

The government did not subject individuals to forced labor or enslavement based on religious beliefs; however, minority community leaders charged that the government failed to take adequate action to prevent bonded labor in the brick-making and agricultural sectors. Christians and Hindus were disproportionately victims of this illegal practice.

As a result of militant persecution against religious minorities in the FATA and Malakand Division and ensuing military operations against the militants, thousands of people including hundreds of Sikh families left the affected areas and took shelter in other parts of the country. The government provided relief to Sikh internally displaced persons. By the end of the reporting period, most had returned to their homes.

In contrast to the previous reporting period, there were no reports of members of the Sikh community being forced to pay jizya (non-Muslim tax).

In June 2010 militants blew up the shrine of Mian Umar Baba in the Chamkani area of Peshawar. Police registered a case; however, no arrests were made by the end of the reporting period. This was the first attack on any shrine in Peshawar since March 5, 2009, when militants attacked the shrine of popular Pashtun poet Rehman Baba.

Unknown terrorists attacked two separate Ahmadi congregations in Lahore during Friday prayers on May 28, 2010. The attackers used explosive devices, grenades, and automatic weapons. More than 86 persons died and 124 persons were injured. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, President Zardari, and Prime Minister Gilani condemned the attack ordered an immediate inquiry. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) issued a statement on May 28 condemning the attack and criticizing the government for failing to increase security at Ahmadi places of worship in light of terrorist threats against the Ahmadiyya community. The HRCP called on the government to provide foolproof security for the Ahmadiyya community.

According to International Christian Concern (ICC), on May 16, 2010, approximately 40 Muslim militants assaulted the Christian Abundant Life Church in Karachi. The armed militants threatened to kill the Christians in the Saifal Marree Goth Surjani area, where the church is located. After the militants left, the pastor approached the Surjani police station to inform them about the attack and threats; however, the police filed a report against four Christians for threatening Tariq Muhammad, a Muslim convert from Christianity who led the militant group and formulated the plan to demolish the church and build a mosque. At the end of the reporting period, the four Christians were in hiding.

According to Compass Direct News (CDN), in May 2010 police illegally detained three Christians, Atif Masih, Kamran Masih, and Naveed Gill, on false charges of alcohol possession in Sialkot, Punjab, at the request of their Muslim employer, Rana Ejaz, after refusing to work on Sundays.

According to CDN, in May 2010 Zafar Masih, a Christian, fled his town in Punjab, after accusing Ali Ahmed, a 28-year-old businessman, of beating and raping his 12-year-old daughter on May 12. CDN claims that Masih attempted to file a First Information Report against Ahmed at the Tatlay Aali police station, but Station House Officer (SHO) Iqbal Ojjhra refused to accept it, and then allegedly pressured Masih to withdraw the application. Masih has since been threatened by Imtiyaz Kharral, a local politician and the area's largest land owner. On May 13 Kharral called a meeting at his farmhouse with SHO Ojjhra, local Muslims, police officers, Masih and his family, and the other Christian families of the town. Kharral allegedly gave the Christians two options: Masih could drop his charges or the Christians could relocate elsewhere.

On May 6, 2010, according to Assist News Service, at least five Christian boys, including Shoaib Ilyas, Chaman Ashraf, Ashar Masih, Neeta Masih, and Sunny, were forced to leave their homes in Lahore after being accused of committing blasphemy by desecrating a banner inscribed with Qur'anic verses. The whereabouts of the boys remained unknown at the end of the reporting period.

On April 1, 2010, unidentified militants in Faisalabad attacked a car carrying three Ahmadi men, fired multiple shots, killed brothers 60-year-old Sheikh Ashraf Parvez and 57-year-old Sheikh Masood Jawad, and Jawad's 24-year-old son Asif Masood. There were reports that victims had been previously threatened because of their religious affiliation.

According to CDN on March 28, 2010, police filed false charges of alcohol possession against 47 Christians, including two children and eight women, in an attempt to intimidate and extort money from them. CDN reported that police broke into the home of Shaukat Masih and his wife, Parveen Bibi, ransacked the home and assaulted Bibi, and threatened to charge them and 45 other Christians with alcohol possession if they did not pay a bribe. They refused to pay.

According to ICC in March 2010 Qamar David, a Christian man, was sentenced to life imprisonment and fined 101,000 rupees (approximately \$1,187) for making blasphemous remarks about the Qur'an and the Prophet Mohammad.

According to Assist News Service, on March 2, 2010, Munir Masih and Ruqqiya Bibi, a Christian couple, were sentenced to 25 years in prison for defiling the Qur'an after touching it with unwashed hands.

According to Assist News Service, on March 1, 2010, in Wandu, a village in Gujranawala District of Punjab, Gulzar Kanwal, a 34-year-old Christian woman, was accused of blasphemy by a shop owner after she refused to sell him her cosmetics shop. As word spread of the accusations, an angry mob of hundreds of local Muslims gathered in front of Kanwal's shop, shouting slogans against her. Although Kanwal was found to be not guilty of blasphemy, she received death threats.

On February 27, 2010, seven people were killed and another 44 injured in Dera Ismail Khan and Faisalabad during religious processions celebrating Eid Miladun Nabi. The violence was attributed to sectarian clashes between Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, and Bareilvi groups.

On January 14, 2010, authorities in Ahmad Nagar confiscated an Ahmadiyya mosque and transferred it to non-Ahmadi Muslims on the grounds of "preempting the extreme law and order disturbance" when extremist religious elements threatened to take over the mosque by force. The district coordination officer cited the anti-Ahmadiyya constitutional amendment to justify his actions.

In January 2010 militants in the Tirah valley of the Orakzai Agency kidnapped three Sikhs and demanded a ransom of 30 million rupees (approximately \$351,600). The militants killed one of the three, Jaspal Singh, on February 21 when the ransom was not paid by the deadline. Security forces secured the release of the other two men.

In January 2010 land belonging to Ahmadis in Rabwah was confiscated and sold at public auction. The auction notice contained a "Special Note" indicating that neither Ahmadis nor their relatives could bid on the property, and any land purchased could not be subsequently sold to Ahmadis.

On December 27, 2009, a suicide bomber attacked a Shi'a religious procession in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, killing eight persons and injuring 80. There has been no attribution of responsibility for the attack.

In September 2009 police instructed Ahmadi shopkeepers of Green Town in Lahore to remove Qur'anic verses from their shops to avoid being attacked by Muslim extremists. Under the constitution Ahmadis were not permitted to participate as members of the Muslim community. The shopkeepers noted that the verses had been displayed on their shops for many years and claimed that Sunni shopkeepers had raised the issue with police due to jealousy and business rivalries.

According to Pakistan Christian Post, on August 28, 2009, militants shot and killed six Christians and injured seven others in Quetta, Balochistan.

On July 31, 2009, and August 1, 2009, Muslim mobs, reportedly inspired by supporters of the banned Sipah-e-Sahba Pakistan (SSP) sectarian extremist organization, attacked the

Christian communities living in Gojra and Korian localities, near Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, following allegations that local Christians had desecrated the Qur'an. The mob killed eight Christians and burned nearly 100 houses as police failed to stop the violence. The national assembly adopted a unanimous resolution condemning the Gojra killings, and the Punjab Minorities Affairs Minister registered a case against the participants. At the end of the reporting period, police had arrested 42 individuals in connection with the Gojra incident. Of those arrested 34 were released on bail and eight were still in custody at Toba Tek Singh. In the Korian case, police arrested 54 individuals, of whom 43 were released on bail and 11 remained in jail. The provincial government initiated a program to construct new houses for members of the Christian community who lost their homes in the violence. The reconstruction program was ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

On June 30, 2009, a fistfight erupted into an alleged incident of blasphemy that sparked a mob attack on a Christian community in the district of Kasur, Punjab, prompting 700 persons to flee their homes. Federal Minister for Minorities Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti offered compensation to the affected families. There was no new information on this case at the end of the reporting period.

On June 23, 2009, CDN reported that police imprisoned Arshad Masih, a Christian man from Gujranwala, in a Sialkot jail and abused him in custody. Reportedly, police abused Masih because his father was a Christian preacher. Although he was officially charged with robbery, he was later granted bail on the strength of testimony that he was not among the robbers. Due to the physical abuse he suffered in custody, he was sent to the Allama Iqbal Memorial Hospital. According to CDN authorities allegedly ordered him to be silent about the abuse. There was no further information on this case by the end of the reporting period.

In May 2009 two students of a seminary in Chakwal, Punjab, entered the home of an Ahmadi, Mubashir Ahmed, and tried to behead him. Neighbors intervened and saved his life, but he was severely injured. One student was caught and brought to a local police station, but the other escaped. Police opened an investigation and were seeking the other assailant. There was no new information on this case by the end of the reporting period.

On April 17, 2009, authorities released Catholics James Masih and Buta Masih from prison; they were convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to 10 years in prison in November 2006 for allegedly burning a Qur'an.

On March 4, 2009, 15 Ahmadis were charged under Section 298c of the penal code for calling their place of worship a mosque and for offering Eid prayers there. They were also charged with posing as Muslims. According to reports the arrests were the result of a business dispute. The Ahmadis were released on bail, but the case is ongoing. There was no new information on this case by the end of the reporting period.

There was no new information on the January 2009 killing in Kotri, Sindh Province, of an Ahmadi shopkeeper, Saeed Ahmed. At the time a spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community claimed that Ahmed was killed because of his faith.

In January 2009 police arrested four Ahmadi teenagers and an adult in Layyah, Punjab, on charges of blasphemy. Some local clerics reportedly attempted to incite violence following the incident. The accused were released on bail in November 2009; their case went to trial in December 2009 and remained ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

In January 2009 police arrested Hector Aleem in Rawalpindi on charges of sending a blasphemous text message from his cell phone. After a hearing in an antiterrorism court, Aleem, who is a member of an agency that works for Christians' rights, was cleared of the blasphemy charges, but not of abetting a crime. A government official told CDN religious extremists heavily influenced the decision telling the judge, "If you release him (Aleem), then we will kill him outside." At the end of the reporting period, the blasphemy charges against Hector Aleem had been dropped, but he remained jailed on charges of fraud and smuggling.

In September 2008 authorities arrested 10 Ahmadis under Ahmadi-specific sections of the penal code. On October 11, 2008, eight more Ahmadis were added to the same case. All individuals arrested were released on bail.

The Punjab provincial government permitted Muslim religious leaders to hold an anti-Ahmadi conference in Rabwah on September 7, 2008, on the anniversary of the constitutional amendment that declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims. During the conference panelists repeatedly spoke of how Ahmadis were "Wajib-ul-Qatl" (liable to death).

In 2008 an antiterrorism court acquitted five persons who were arrested for the 2005 attack on Ahmadi worshippers in Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab, that resulted in killing eight and injuring 20 persons. There was no new information on this incident by the end of the reporting period.

There were no new developments in the case of Mohammad Shafeeq Latif who was sentenced to death in 2008 for blasphemy after he allegedly defiled the Qur'an and used derogatory language to refer to the Prophet Mohammad. At the end of the reporting period, he remained jailed in Sialkot, Punjab.

The Ahmadis were released on bail, but the case was ongoing.

There were no new developments in the May 2008 case against Pastor Frank John, who was charged with blasphemy as he was conducting a religious convention in Lahore, Punjab.

In January 2008 police in Nankana Sahib, Punjab, charged an Ahmadi businessman, Manzoor Ahmed, with destroying pages that included religious inscriptions. At the end of the reporting period, he remained in jail.

Minority communities claimed the government was complicit in seizures of their property by Muslims, and that the policy of dismantling illegal slum settlements disproportionately targeted minority communities. These groups also accused the government of inaction in cases where extremist groups attacked places of worship belonging to minority groups.

Forced Religious Conversion

Forced and coerced conversions of religious minorities to Islam occurred at the hands of societal actors. Religious minorities claimed government actions to stem the problem were inadequate. The NCJP noted abductions and forced conversions of Christians and Hindus were on the rise. It reported that in December 2009, 20 Christians and 21 Hindus were forced to convert to Islam during the year, of whom 15 were men, 13 women, and four children. In March 2010 the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimated that as many as 20 to 25 girls from the Hindu community were abducted every month and forcibly converted to Islam.

On May 19, 2010, a Christian girl who was kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam was reunited with her family after three years separation. Tina Barkat, now 28, was kidnapped by the family of a friend, who, together with her uncle, forced her to convert to Islam and marry one of their relatives.

On December 21, 2009, a 15-year-old Hindu girl was abducted by a Muslim neighbor from her home in Katchi Mandi, Liaquatpur. Her parents later learned that she was being held captive in a madrassah, and she had been forced to convert to Islam and marry.

Abuses by Rebel or Foreign Forces or Terrorist Organizations

There were several incidents involving the abuse of religious groups by individuals or organizations designated as terrorist organizations by the U.S. Secretary of State under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and by armed sectarian extremist groups with strong links to such organizations.

Sectarian violence continued in different parts of the country during the reporting period, with attacks on the Shi'a minority, particularly in Dera Ismail Khan, Quetta, Hangu, Kohat, Tank, DG Khan, Gilgit, and Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. Throughout the

reporting period, attacks, threats, and violence by Islamic extremists occurred across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Attacks on houses of worship, religious gatherings, and religious leaders linked to sectarian, religious extremist, and terrorist groups resulted in hundreds of deaths during the reporting period. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shi'a extremists continued during the reporting period, and several religious minority individuals and communities were the targets of religious violence across the country. Examples of these cases include the following:

On February 20, 2010, members of the Sipah-e-Sahaba anti-Shi'a extremist organization, disguised among Deobandi protestors, fired upon a Brailvi religious procession in Faisalabad. This caused a riot in which protestors set fire to a police station and the home, mosque, and madrassah of a leading Deobandi cleric. The violence left one person dead and 20 injured.

In January 2010 militants blew up six shrines and exhumed the body of a spiritual leader in Stori Khel area of Orakzai Agency. Locals said heavily armed militants came to the area of the Stori Khel tribe and dug up the grave of spiritual leader Anwarul Haq. They desecrated the remains and then took them to an unknown location.

On December 27, 2009, a roadside bomb exploded near a Shi'a religious procession in Karachi. At least 26 persons were injured. The bombing was attributed to the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. On December 29, 2009, a suicide bomber attacked a second Shi'a religious procession in Karachi, killing 25 persons and injuring more than 50. Following the attack, protestors rioted, destroying private businesses and government property. This attack was also attributed to the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

On September 2, 2009, two unidentified gunmen attacked the convoy of Religious Affairs Minister Hamid Seed Kazmi, killing Kazmi's bodyguard and shooting the minister in the leg. Minister Kazmi is a prominent Brailvi religious scholar and a vocal critic of the Taliban. Brailvi leaders blamed Taliban insurgents for the attack.

Targeted assassinations of clergy remained a key tactic of several groups, including banned sectarian organization Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP), terrorist organization Lashkar-i-Jhangvi (LJ), and Sipah-i-Mohammad Pakistan (SMP). SSP and LJ targeted both Shi'a and Barelvis, whereas SMP targeted Deobandis.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The government took steps to bolster religious freedom during the reporting period.

As part of the 18th Amendment, the government allocated four reserved seats for religious minorities, one from each province, in the senate. Minority groups welcomed the move.

Minority prisoners were given places to worship inside jails, and the government provided additional security to minorities as they observed and celebrated their holy days.

After the attacks on Christians in Gojra and Korian in July and August 2009, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Minorities formed a subcommittee specifically to review blasphemy laws and prepare recommendations for changes. The subcommittee, headed by MNA Nafisa Shah, held several consultations with representatives of religious minorities and human rights activists and discussed options on how the damaging effects of the blasphemy laws could be eliminated.

During the reporting period Sindh provincial police freed over 1,500 bonded laborers, a majority of whom were Hindu.

According to ICC, on June 2, 2010, police freed a family of Christian brick kiln workers in Raiwind, who had been held captive for a year. ICC reported that Muhammad Nawaz, the Muslim owner, held hostage Asghar Masih, Rehana Bibi, and their three children at a brick kiln. According to ICC Nawaz raped Rehana and her eldest daughter repeatedly, tortured and chained the victims to prevent their escape, and that Asghar escaped and

informed Pakistani officials. The police then raided the brick kiln, freed the victims, and arrested Nawaz.

In April 2010 President Ali Asif Zardari announced the establishment of a "hotline" in the Ministry for Minorities Affairs for direct reporting of the most serious cases of violence against religious minorities in the country. The hotline has an extension to the president for emergency calls from members of the minority community subjected to violence.

At a Christmas dinner in December 2009, Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani announced the allotment of housing plots for 500 Christian slum dwellers who had been evicted from Chak Shahzad and had been living without housing in Islamabad. At the same occasion, he announced that Christians would be called "Masihi," followers of the Messiah, as they requested.

The government continued to celebrate 10 religious festivals of minority groups at the national level. Also, the Minister for Minority Affairs, religious institutions, and nongovernmental organizations continued to organize interfaith meetings and dialogue sessions in an attempt to reduce violence against minority communities. Ahmadis refused to participate in events organized by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, as they consider themselves to be a Muslim sect.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Relations among religious communities remained tense. Violence against religious minorities and between Muslim sects continued. Most believed a small minority was responsible for attacks; however, discriminatory laws and the teaching of religious intolerance created a permissive environment for such attacks. Police often refused to prevent violence and harassment or refused to charge persons who committed such offenses. Conversion to other minority religious groups generally took place in secret to avoid societal backlash.

According to ICC in June 2010, the leaders of Katcha Khoh, a Muslim village, ordered 250 Christian families to leave their homes in Khanewal district, Punjab Province. The Christian residents reportedly were expelled for objecting too strenuously to sexual assaults by Muslims on Christian girls and women. The group did not contact the local police for fear that it would only result in false charges being brought against it under blasphemy laws.

According to ICC on June 3, 2010, 14 Muslims extremists in Sahiwal, Pakistan attacked Mumtaz Masih, a pastor, Noreen, his pregnant wife, and his brother after they were accused of proselytism.

According to CDN on April 13, 2010, Marwat Masih, a Christian barber in Sargodha's Gulshan-e-Bashir, was beaten and sodomized by eight Muslims after cutting the beard of Qandeel Cheema, a 19-year-old Muslim high school student. Cheema told Masih that he had lived and studied in Lahore and wanted a more modern look. After initially refusing Masih cut his beard. Shakeel Cheema, Qandeel's older brother, witnessed the incident and had Masih bound and beaten by Shakeel and seven others, breaking his ribs, wrist, and leg bones. Afterwards, he was sodomized by the eight men. As of the end of the reporting period, police refused to file a First Information Report against Cheema and his accomplices.

According to CDN on April 5, 2010, Sania James, a Christian woman, was abducted at gun point and forced to marry Mohammad Shahbaz Ali, a Muslim farmer. James Ayub, Sania's father, had taken out a loan from Ali, his former employer, for his oldest daughter's wedding. The gunmen allegedly told her father that he would see his daughter again only if he paid off the 250,000 rupees (approximately \$2,930) loan plus 30 percent interest. Sania was able to escape.

According to Assist News Service, Sidra Sarwar, a 14-year-old Christian girl, was abducted at gun point on August 28, 2009, and raped by three Muslim men. In order to avoid prosecution, Muhammad Khalid, one of the abductors, married her after she became pregnant. She escaped and returned to her family on December 20, 2009. The police

declared the three men innocent on May 13, 2010. The girl and her family continued to receive threats.

On August 5, 2009, a factory owner and a laborer were killed and dozens of workers injured in a leather factory on the Muridke-Sheikhupura road near Kathiala village after a factory official allegedly incited laborers to violence by accusing the owner of desecrating Qur'anic verses.

Mobs occasionally attacked individuals accused of blasphemy and their families or their religious communities. When blasphemy and other religious cases were brought to court, extremists often packed the courtroom and made public threats against an acquittal. Religious extremists continued to threaten to kill those acquitted of blasphemy charges. Accused persons often went into hiding or emigrated after acquittal.

Ahmadi individuals and institutions long have been victims of religious violence, much of it organized by religious extremists. According to a spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community, since the promulgation of anti-Ahmadi laws in 1984, 108 Ahmadis have been killed on religious grounds.

In September 2009 Ulema in Karachi announced that they would celebrate September 11 as a day of protest, declaring that Ahmadiyat was a fitna (chaos) and that Ahmadis are blasphemers.

On June 13, 2010, according to India Today, two persons were injured in an explosion in Lahore when an explosive device detonated outside the Ahmadi-owned Shezan Factory. The police were investigating whether the attack had targeted Ahmadis.

On May 31, 2010, in the town of Narowal, Abid Butt stabbed Naimatullah Ahmed, a 55-year-old Ahmadi, and his son Mansoor Ahmed. Naimatullah died of knife wounds, and Mansoor was taken to the hospital. The attacker escaped, but was quoted as threatening to not leave any Ahmadi alive.

On March 19, 2010, unknown individuals kidnapped Iftikhar-ul-Haq, an Ahmadi lawyer from Quetta, at gunpoint and held him for a ransom of 100 million rupees (approximately \$1.17 million dollars.). While he was held, he was accused of distributing Ahmadi literature and converting others. He was also asked to name Ahmadi community officials and businessmen. He was released for 3,085,000 rupees (\$45,000) on April 7.

According to the Asian Human Rights Commission, on January 5, 2010, two masked gunmen on motorcycles shot Muhammad Yusuf, a 70-year-old retired Ahmadi professor, in Lahore. He died on route to the hospital.

The Hindu community living in Sindh Province reported they were increasingly the target of kidnappings for ransom. Criminals targeted Hindu businessmen for abductions, particularly in Karachi, Sindh. Hindus claimed they were forced to pay ransom because police did little to recover kidnapping victims.

On March 4, 2010, The Nation reported that as many as 65 Dalit (low caste Hindu) families were displaced due to rising incidents of kidnapping and insecurity in District Tharparkar District, Sindh.

On September 5, 2009, unidentified extremists set ablaze religious books of Sikhs and Hindus in a joint temple, the Guru Nanak Darbar at Kandhkot, Sindh. The incident deeply disturbed the Hindus and Sikhs throughout the province, and the Pakistan Hindu Foundation issued a call for three-day mourning period, after which Hindus observed a strike in various districts of the province.

Despite recent attacks against Sikhs in the FATA, societal violence against the Sikh community remained comparatively rare.

Ismailis reported they were the objects of resentment of Sunni Muslims due to their comparative economic well-being. Ismailis reported they frequently faced societal pressure to adopt conservative Islamic practices or risk being socially ostracized.

Some Sunni Muslim groups published literature calling for violence against Ahmadis, Shi'a Muslims, other Sunni sects, and Hindus. Some newspapers frequently published articles that contained derogatory references to religious minorities, especially Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews.

Discrimination in employment based on religious affiliation appeared widespread. Christians had difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, although Christian activists stated that the situation had improved somewhat in the private sector in recent years.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. embassy and consulate officers maintained a dialogue with government, religious, and minority community representatives to encourage religious freedom and discuss the blasphemy laws, curriculum reform in public education and madrassah education systems, treatment of the Ahmadiyya and Christian communities, and sectarian violence.

Officers investigated and monitored human rights cases involving religious minorities and pressed government officials to respond swiftly and effectively to these incidents, as well as to improve the regular protection of and outreach to minority groups.

Following the May 28, 2010, attacks on the Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, the Department of State, the embassy, and consulate general Lahore publicly condemned the attacks and called for a thorough investigation.

Embassy officials, including the ambassador, and visiting State Department officials met with government officials as well as leaders from communities of all religious groups and nongovernmental organizations working on religious freedom issues. For example, during her October 2009 visit to Pakistan, Secretary Clinton visited the shrine of the Bari Imam in Islamabad. She also met with the imam of the 17th century Badshahi Mosque in Lahore. Under Secretary for Global Affairs Otero chaired a roundtable with minority leaders. Embassy and consulate personnel participated in interfaith dialogue efforts organized by Pakistani religious and civil society organizations.

Embassy officials also raised with parliamentarians the treatment of Ahmadis, Christians, and Hindus. During Ramadan embassy and consulate officials hosted several iftars (evening meal during Ramadan).

Embassy officials participated in a Christmas celebration at Adyala jail in Rawalpindi in December 2009, an interfaith reception in honor of the Arch-Bishop of the Philippines in January 2010, and a "Holi" Hindu Religious Festival in March 2010.

The embassy also hosted three speakers that addressed religious issues in Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore. Imam Yahya Hendi, chaplain at Georgetown University, spoke about "Islam in America." He interacted with religious scholars, madrassa administrators, members of the Council of Islamic Ideology, and students and teachers in Islamabad and Karachi. Clarence Lusane addressed minority rights and met with religious scholars. Safiya Ghori discussed the topics of women and Islam with various audiences.
