

Pakistan (38)



24/5/04

U.S. Department of State

**U.S. Department of State Annual Report on International Religious Freedom for 2003 – Pakistan – December 2003**

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Released by the U.S. Department of State Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor on December 18, 2003, covers the period from July 1, 2002, to June 30, 2003.

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions are to be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, in practice the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. Pakistan is an Islamic republic; Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims, although it was not envisaged by its founders as an Islamic state. Religious freedom is "subject to law, public order, and morality"; accordingly, actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophet are not protected. In addition, the Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes some elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and religious minorities. In July 2002, President Musharraf announced by executive order that elections (the first since he took office through a military coup, effectively suspending the Constitution) would be held in October 2002. At the same time, he announced the Legal Framework Order (LFO), a set of amendments to the Constitution. The Government, with the concurrence of the Supreme Court, considers these now to be part of the Constitution, although they have not been approved by any elected body; opposition parties disagree. On November 23, 2002, Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali was sworn in, and with that transfer of power from the President to the Prime Minister, the Constitution was effectively reinstated, although the controversy over the LFO continues.

There were no significant changes in the Government's treatment of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. The Government fails in many respects to protect the rights of religious minorities. This is due both to public policy and to the Government's unwillingness to take action against societal forces hostile to those who practice a different faith. The accretion of discriminatory religious legislation has fostered an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which contributes to acts of violence directed against minority Muslim groups, as well as against Christians, Hindus, and members of Muslim offshoot groups, such as Ahmadis and Zikris. The Government does not encourage sectarian violence and during the period covered by this report specifically condemned it; however, there were instances in which the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence directed at minority religious groups. The lack of an adequate government response contributed to an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities. Parties and groups with religious affiliations have been known to target minority groups.

Prior to the October 2002 elections, President Pervez Musharraf announced the reinstatement of joint electorates, ending a 15-year practice, which had been sanctioned by the Constitution, that prevented religious minorities from voting for local representatives in the provincial and national assemblies. In addition, in August 2002, the Government announced that reserved seats in the assemblies for religious minorities would be restored

in the October 2002 elections.

In the October 2002 elections, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious parties that includes both Sunni and Shi'a groups, won approximately 20 percent of the seats in the National Assembly, far more than its component parties had previously won. It did even better at the provincial level, gaining a majority in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and governing through a coalition Baluchistan. The MMA contingents in the National Assembly and Baluchistan Provincial Assembly called for the implementation of stronger forms of Shari'a law. Minority groups claim the MMA's outspoken calls for Islamic laws and morals have made the social climate more hostile to people of other religions.

Specific government policies that discriminate against religious minorities include the use of the "Hudood" Ordinances, which apply different standards of evidence to Muslims and non-Muslims and to men and women for alleged violations of Islamic law; specific legal prohibitions against Ahmadis practicing their religion; and blasphemy laws that most often are used against reformist Muslims and Ahmadis. The number of cases filed under the blasphemy laws continued to be significant and more than 100 persons were detained for blasphemy offenses as of the end of the period covered by this report. Several high profile blasphemy cases remained unresolved because the courts repeatedly postponed hearings and the Government did not press the courts to proceed. However, the Lahore High Court overturned several lower court convictions, acquitting several blasphemy defendants, during the period covered by this report. Approximately 1,600-2,100 persons were imprisoned under the Hudood Ordinances as of the end of the period covered by this report.

Relations between different religious groups frequently were tense, acts of sectarian and religious violence continued, and scores of deaths were attributed to sectarian violence during the period covered by this report. The worst religious violence was directed against the country's Shi'a minority, who continued to be disproportionate victims of individual and mass killings.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialogue and policy of promoting human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has a total area of 310,527 square miles, and its population is approximately 150 million. According to the most recent census, taken in 1998, an estimated 96 percent of the population are Muslim; 1.69 percent are Christian; 2.02 percent are Hindu; and 0.35 percent are "other" (including Ahmadis). The majority of Muslims in the country are Sunni. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the Muslim population is Shi'a, including some 550,000 to 600,000 Ismailis. Most Ismailis in the country are followers of the Aga Khan; however, an estimated 50,000 Ismailis, known as Borahs, are not.

Religious minority groups believe that they are underrepresented in government census counts. Official and private estimates of their numbers can differ significantly. The most recent official census estimates place the number of Christians at 2.09 million and the Ahmadi population at 286,000. The communities themselves each claim membership of approximately 4 million. Estimates for the remaining communities are less contested and place the total number of Hindus at 2.8 million; Parsis (Zoroastrians), Buddhists, and Sikhs at as high as 20,000 each; and Baha'is at 30,000. The "other" category includes tribes whose members practice traditional indigenous religions and who normally do not declare themselves to be adherents of a specific religion, and those who do not wish to practice any religion but remain silent about that fact. Social pressure is such that few persons would admit to being unaffiliated with any religion.

Punjab is the largest province in the country; with 70 million persons, it contains almost half of the country's total population. While Sunni Muslims are the vast majority in Punjab,

more than 90 percent of the country's Christians also reside there, making them the largest religious minority in the province. Approximately 60 percent of Punjab's Christians live in rural villages. The largest group of Christians belongs to the Church of Pakistan, an umbrella Protestant group; the second largest group belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The rest are from different evangelical and church organizations.

Christians and Hindus each constitute approximately 1 percent of the populations of Sindh and Baluchistan provinces. These two provinces also have a few tribes that practice traditional indigenous religions and a small population of Parsis (approximately 7,000 persons). The Ismailis are concentrated in Karachi (in the Sindh Province) and the northern areas. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi, although some live in Islamabad and Peshawar (in the NWFP). Christians constitute approximately 2 percent of Karachi's population. The Roman Catholic diocese of Karachi estimates that 120,000 Catholics live in Karachi, 40,000 in the rest of Sindh, and 5,000 in Quetta, Baluchistan. Evangelical Christians have converted a few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh. An estimated 100,000 Hindus live in Karachi. According to local Christian sources, between 70,000 and 100,000 Christians and a few thousand Hindus live in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP).

Ahmadis, who consider themselves Muslims but do not accept that Muhammad was necessarily the last Prophet, are concentrated in Punjab and Sindh. The spiritual center of the Ahmadi community is the large, predominantly Ahmadi town of Rabwah in Punjab.

No data are available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals. However, because religion is tied closely to a person's ethnic, social, and economic identity, religion often plays an important part in daily life. Most Muslim men offer prayers at least once a week at Friday prayers, and the vast majority of Muslim men and women pray at home or at the workplace during one or more of the five daily times of prayer. During the month of Ramadan, many otherwise less observant Muslims fast and attend mosque services. Approximately 70 percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worship regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu speakers do so.

The Shikharis (a hunting caste now mostly employed as trash collectors in urban Sindh) are converts to Islam, but eat foods forbidden by Islam.

Many varieties of Hinduism are practiced, depending upon location and caste. Hindu shrines are scattered throughout the country. Approximately 1,500 Hindu temples and shrines exist in Sindh and approximately 500 in Baluchistan. Most shrines and temples are tiny, no more than wayside shrines. Attendance at religious services was much greater during Hindu festivals, such as Divali and Holi.

The Sikh community regularly holds ceremonial gatherings at sacred places in the Punjab. Prominent places of Sikh pilgrimage include Nanakana Sahib (where the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, was born), Hasan Abdal (a shrine where an imprint of his hand is kept), and Andkarta Poora or Daira Baba Nanak Sahib in Sialkot District (where Guru Nanak is buried).

Parsis, who practice the Zoroastrian religion, have no regularly scheduled congregational services, except for a 10-day festival in August during which they celebrate the New Year and pray for the dead. All Parsis are expected to attend these services; most reportedly do. During the rest of the year, individuals offer prayers at Parsi temples. Parsis maintain a conscious creedal and ceremonial separation from other religions, preserving rites and forbidding marriage to members of other religions.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country. The largest Christian mission group operating in Sindh and Baluchistan engages in Bible translation for the Church of Pakistan (a united church of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans), mostly in tribal areas. An Anglican missionary group fields several missionaries to assist the Church of Pakistan in

administrative and educational work. Roman Catholic missionaries, mostly Franciscan, work with persons with disabilities.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, in practice the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion.

The Constitution provides that there is no taxation for propagation of a religion that is not one's own, no obligation to receive instruction in a religion that is not one's own, and no denial of admission to public schools on the basis of religion. According to the Constitution, the country is an Islamic republic, and Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims, although it was not envisaged by its founders as an Islamic state. Under the Constitution, both the President and the Prime Minister are to be Muslims, and all senior officials are required to swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology." Freedom of speech is provided for; however, this right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" that can be imposed "in the interest of the glory of Islam." Actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophets are not protected.

Under the Constitution, the Ahmadi community is defined as non-Muslim because Ahmadis do not believe that Mohammed was the last prophet of Islam; however, most Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims.

The Constitution protects religious minorities from being taxed to support the majority religion; no one can be forced to pay taxes for the support of any religion other than his own. For example, Sunni Muslims are subject to the "zakat," an annual religious tax of 2.5 percent of their income; however, Shi'a Muslims and other religious minorities do not pay the "zakat."

Separate categories exist for different religions in the administration of specific religious sites. Hindus and Sikhs, because of population shifts that occurred between India and Pakistan after partition, come under the auspices of the Evacuee Property Board, which is located in Lahore and is empowered to settle disputes regarding Hindu and Sikh property. However, Hindus and Sikhs also may settle such disputes in civil courts. Christian churches are free to take their disputes over religious property and management to the courts. Some minorities have expressed displeasure over government management of religious property.

In Sindh, Muslim mosques and shrines come under the purview of the Auqaf Administration Department, a branch of the provincial government devoted to the upkeep of shrines and mosques, facilities for pilgrims, and the resolution of disputes over possession of a religious site. In both Sindh and Baluchistan, the Government has provided funds for the upkeep and repair of the Hindu Gurumander temple in Karachi and funded the repair of Hindu temples damaged by Muslim rioters protesting the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu mobs in Ayodhya, India, in 1992.

Permission to buy land comes from one municipal bureaucracy, and permission to build a house of worship from another. For all religious groups, the process appears to be subject to bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes.

In December 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that all forms of interest (riba) are un-Islamic and directed the Government to implement an interest-free banking and financial system by July 1, 2001. In June 2001, the Shari'a Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court extended for 1 year the deadline for implementation of this judgment. However, on June 24, 2002, the Supreme Court vacated the earlier decision and remanded the case to the Federal

Shariat Court for reconsideration. The Federal Shariat Court took no further action on this issue during the period covered by this report.

The Constitution safeguards "educational institutions with respect to religion." For example, under the Constitution, no student can be forced to receive religious instruction or to participate in religious worship other than his or her own. The denial of religious instruction for students of any religious community or denomination also is prohibited under the Constitution.

"Islamiyyat" (Islamic studies) is compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. Although students of other faiths legally are not required to study Islam, they are not provided with parallel studies in their own religions. In some schools, non-Muslim students may study "Ikhlaqiyyat," or Ethics, rather than Islamiyyat. In practice teachers compel many non-Muslim students to complete Islamic studies.

The Constitution specifically prohibits discriminatory admission to any governmental educational institution solely on the basis of religion. Government officials state that the only factors affecting admission to governmental educational institutions are students' grades and home provinces. However, students must declare their religion on application forms. Muslim students must declare in writing that they believe in the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed, a measure designed to single out Ahmadis, who do not necessarily adhere to this tenet of Islam. Non-Muslims must have their religion verified by the head of their local religious community. Many Ahmadis and Christians reported discrimination in applying to government educational institutions due to their religious affiliation.

On June 19, 2002, the Government announced the Madrassa Registration Ordinance of 2002, which went into effect immediately. Under the ordinance, all madrassas (Muslim religious schools) were required to register with the Pakistan Madrassa Education Board and provincial boards. Madrassas failing to do so were to be fined or closed. The Ordinance prohibited madrassas from accepting grants or foreign aid from foreign sources, while madrassas offering courses in science, math, Urdu, and English would be eligible for government funding in these subjects. Foreign madrassa students were to be required to obtain no objection certificates (NOCs) prior to admission. The ordinance was designed to regulate the madrassas, where many poor children are educated, and to combat religious extremism. Madrassas were given 6 months to comply with the ordinance.

Approximately 1,200 out of approximately 7,000 madrassas, with an estimated 700,000 students, had registered as of the end of the period covered by this report. However, most madrassas refused to cooperate, and the religious political parties rallied crowds in opposition to the reform. Several sects governing the madrassas formed a joint body to combat the "pressure of the West against the Islamic identity of Pakistan and its madrassas"; this body was later dismantled quietly. The Government sponsored talks on the Ordinance with madrassa leaders, but no agreement was reached. After the October 2002 elections, the issue was effectively put on hold. As of the end of the period covered by this report, no madrassas have been closed or otherwise penalized for failure to comply with the Ordinance.

On June 2, the Provincial Assembly of NWFP, dominated by the MMA, unanimously approved the NWFP Shari'a Act 2003, ruling that all future legislation should be in accordance with Shari'a law, that existing legislation should be reviewed in light of Shari'a, and that education and financial sectors should be brought in line with Islamic teaching. For the first time in the country's 56-year history, a Shari'a Act was passed by a provincial legislature; however, the Act is almost identical to the 1991 Shari'a Act passed at the federal level, which was already binding on the entire country.

The Act stipulates that the law is not applicable to non-Muslims. Nonetheless, minority groups, including the All-Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA), requested that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court declare the Act in contradiction to the Constitution and the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1998 APMA successfully blocked the passage of a similar bill in the national Senate. In May, a directive by the provincial NWFP Government ordered civil servants to pray five times a day and urged businesses to close during prayer hours. The prayer directive followed curbs on the sale of music and videos; destruction of posters featuring women and advertising Western products; and the imposition of a complete ban on alcohol, medical examinations of women by male doctors, male coaches for female athletes, and male journalists covering women's sports. Provincial police detained 150 shopkeepers for selling music CDs and videos, as part of the NWFP Government's "anti-obscenity" drive; most were released after a night in jail and payment of fines.

A second bill, known as the Hisba Act, was being drafted but had not yet been introduced in the Provincial Assembly as of the end of the period covered by this report. It would mandate the creation of a Hisba (accountability) Department to promote religious observance through a system of local ombudsmen.

Several Muslim religious holidays are considered national holidays, including Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Azha, Ashura (the 9th and 10th days of the month of Muharram) and the Prophet Mohammed's Birthday. Most businesses have limited hours during the month of Ramadan.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government does not ban formally the public practice of the Ahmadi faith, but the practice is restricted severely by law. A 1974 constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be a non-Muslim minority because, according to the Government, they do not accept Mohammed as the last Prophet of Islam. However, Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and observe Islamic practices. In 1984, the Government added Section 298(c) into the Penal Code, prohibiting Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslim or posing as Muslims; from referring to their faith as Islam; from preaching or propagating their faith; from inviting others to accept the Ahmadi faith; and from insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. This section of the Penal Code has caused problems for Ahmadis, particularly the provision that forbids them from "directly or indirectly" posing as Muslims. This vague wording has enabled mainstream Muslim religious leaders to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting form and for naming their children Mohammed. The constitutionality of Section 286(c) was upheld in a split-decision Supreme Court case in 1996. The punishment for violation of this section is imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine. This provision has been used extensively by the Government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to target and harass Ahmadis. Ahmadis also are prohibited from holding any public conferences or gatherings.

The Constitution provides for the "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle the Government does not restrict organized religions from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy. However, in practice Ahmadis suffer from restrictions on this right. Several Ahmadi mosques reportedly have been closed; others reportedly have been desecrated. Ahmadis also are prohibited from being buried in Muslim cemeteries. According to press reports, the authorities conducted surveillance on the Ahmadis and their institutions.

The "blasphemy laws" are contained in Sections 295, 296, 297, and 298 of the Penal Code and address offenses relating to religion. Section 295(a), a colonial-era provision, originally stipulated a maximum 2-year sentence for insulting the religion of any class of citizens. In 1991 this sentence was increased to 10 years. In 1982 Section 295(b) was added, which stipulated a sentence of life imprisonment for "whoever willfully defiles, damages, or desecrates a copy of the holy Koran." In 1986 during the martial law period, another amendment, Section 295(c), established the death penalty or life imprisonment for directly or indirectly defiling "the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed." In 1991 a court ruled invalid the option of life imprisonment for this offense. Section 296 outlaws voluntary disturbances of religious assemblies, and Section 297 outlaws trespassing on burial grounds. Section 298(a), another colonial-era provision, forbids the use of derogatory

remarks about holy personages. Personal rivals and the authorities have used these blasphemy laws, especially Section 295(c), to threaten, punish, or intimidate Ahmadis, Christians, and even orthodox Muslims. No person has been executed by the State under any of these provisions; however, some persons have been sentenced to death, and religious extremists have killed persons accused under the provisions. The blasphemy laws also reportedly have been used to "settle scores" unrelated to religious activity, such as intra-family or property disputes. There were 67 blasphemy cases pending throughout the country as of the end of the period covered by this report.

President Musharraf attempted to modify the blasphemy laws in April 2000. The attempted reform would have required complainants to register new blasphemy cases with the local deputy commissioners instead of with police officials, in an attempt to reduce the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws. Religious and sectarian groups mounted large-scale protests against the proposed change and some religious leaders stated that if the laws were changed, even just procedurally, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves. In May 2000, in response to increasing pressure and threats, Musharraf abandoned the proposed reforms to the blasphemy laws.

When blasphemy and other religious cases are brought to court, extremists often pack the courtroom and make public threats against an acquittal. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid a confrontation with or violence from extremists, often continue trials indefinitely. As a result, those accused of blasphemy often face lengthy periods in jail and are burdened with increased legal costs and repeated court appearances. One example is the case of Younis Sheikh (see Section II, Abuses of Religious Freedom). Since September 2002, Sheikh's appeal has been continuously postponed by the Lahore High Court because of pressure from religious groups.

Under the Anti-Terrorist Act, any act, including speech, intended to stir up religious hatred is punishable by up to 7 years of rigorous imprisonment. Under the act, bail is not to be granted if the judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the accused is guilty. The law is selectively applied, however. Many extremists, including Hafiz Sayeed, leader of the former Lashkar-e-Taiba, have been quoted extensively calling for Hindus to be killed and for jihad against Westerners, without any repercussions from the authorities for this inflammatory speech.

The Government does not restrict religious publishing; however, the Government restricts the right to freedom of speech with regard to religion. Speaking in opposition to Islam and publishing an attack on Islam or its prophets are prohibited. The penal code mandates the death sentence for anyone defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed, life imprisonment for desecrating the Koran, and up to 10 years' imprisonment for insulting another's religious beliefs with intent to outrage religious feelings. Although prosecutions for publishing appear to be few, the threat of the blasphemy law is ever present.

In January 2001, Government authorities closed down a leading provincial newspaper, the "Frontier Post," and arrested five of its employees, following the publication of a letter to the editor that contained comments that were critical of Islam. Government law enforcement officials failed to prevent a mob from setting fire to the newspaper's printing presses on January 30, 2001, and shutting down publication for 3 months. The arrested employees were later released, with the exception of Munawar Mohsin, the night editor who had accepted the letter for publication. Mohsin was charged with blasphemy; his case was pending as of the end of the period covered by this report.

Ahmadis charge that they suffer from restrictions on their press. Christian scriptures and books are available in Karachi and in traveling bookmobiles, but Christians have reported concerns about pressure leading to self-censorship. Hindu and Parsi scriptures are freely available. Foreign books and magazines may be imported freely, but are subject to censorship for objectionable religious content.

The Government restricts the distribution and display of certain religious images, such as

the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ.

In January 2002, the Government eliminated the country's system of separate electorates, which had been a longstanding point of contention between religious minorities and human rights groups on one side and the Government on the other. With the elimination of the separate electorate system, political representation is to be based on geographic constituencies that represent all residents, regardless of religious affiliation. Minority group leaders believe this change may help to make public officials take notice of the concerns and rights of minority groups. Because of their concentrated populations, religious minorities could have significant influence as swing voting blocks in some constituencies. Few non-Muslims are active in the country's mainstream political parties due to limitations on their ability to run for elective office under the previous separate electorate system.

However, the return of joint electorates eliminated parliamentary and assembly seats reserved for minorities. Some minority leaders complained that these seats should have been retained after the joint electorate system was eliminated.

While minorities welcomed the opportunity to be able to elect local representatives to the national and provincial assemblies, it was unlikely that any of the future elected officials would come from minority groups; having reserved seats for the minorities, they believed, would do more to increase their presence in law-making bodies. In August 2002, the Government announced that reserved seats for religious minorities would be restored in the October 2002 elections. Now, non-Muslims vote twice: once for the general candidate, and once for the seat set aside for their particular religion.

In May 2002, under increasing pressure from fundamentalist leaders, the Government reinstated a column on the voter registration form that requires Muslims to take an oath accepting the finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed. When joint electorates were restored in January 2002, this oath was removed from voter registration forms, but religious leaders protested heavily because voter lists no longer identified Ahmadis. In June 2002, the Election Commission announced that it would accept objections to Ahmadis who registered to vote as Muslims from members of the public. Voters with objections filed against them are required either to sign an oath swearing to the finality of the prophethood of Mohammed or be registered as non-Muslims on the voter list. In protest, the Ahmadi community notified the President on September 5, 2002, that they would boycott the October 2002 elections. No Ahmadis are known to have broken the boycott, but there has been no change in the Government's policy as a result.

Links with coreligionists in other countries are maintained relatively easily. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan report no difficulties. Ismailis are in regular contact with their headquarters, and their officials, including Prince Karim Aga Khan, visit the country regularly. Under reciprocal visa arrangements, Indian Hindu and Sikh leaders and groups travel regularly to the country. However, the Government prohibits Ahmadis from participating in the Hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia), and Baha'is are effectively prohibited from traveling to their spiritual center in Israel because Pakistan does not recognize Israel as a state.

The Government designates religion on citizens' passports. To obtain a passport, citizens must declare whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim; Muslims also must affirm that they accept the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed, declare that Ahmadis are non-Muslims, and specifically denounce the founder of the Ahmadi movement.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country.

Proselytizing (except by Ahmadis) is permitted as long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge they are not Muslim. However, all missionaries are required to have specific missionary visas, which have a validity of 2 to 5 years and allow only one entry into the country per year. Only "replacement" visas for those taking the

place of departing missionaries are available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems are frequent.

The authorities sometimes prevent leaders of politico-religious parties from traveling to certain areas if they believe that the presence of such leaders would increase sectarian tensions or cause public violence.

Civil marriages do not exist; marriages are performed and registered according to one's religion. Upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian men remain legal; however, upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian women, or of other non-Muslims that were performed under the rites of the previous religion, are considered dissolved. Children born to Jewish or Christian women who convert to Islam after marriage are considered illegitimate only if their husbands do not also convert, and if women in such cases do not separate from their husbands. Children of non-Muslim men who convert are not considered illegitimate.

While there is no law instituting the death penalty for apostates (those who convert from Islam), social pressure against such an action is so powerful that most such conversions reportedly take place in secret.

Members of minority religions volunteer for military service in small numbers, and there are no official obstacles to their advancement. However, in practice non-Muslims do not rise above the rank of major general and are not assigned to politically sensitive positions. Ahmadis report severe discrimination in the civil service. They complain that a "glass ceiling" prevents them from being promoted to top positions and that certain government departments have refused to hire or retain qualified Ahmadis.

The Government nationalized all church schools and colleges in Punjab and Sindh in 1972. The Government of Sindh gradually denationalized church schools (without providing compensation) from 1985 to 1995. The Government of Punjab devised a plan to denationalize schools and return them to their original owners in 1996. In Punjab several schools belonging to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (PCUSA) and other denominations were denationalized and returned to the former owners starting in 1998. In November 2001, the Government of Punjab notified PCUSA of the denationalization of six schools. The Church gained possession of three of the schools, but a group of teachers filed a case in civil court challenging the denationalization and obtained stay orders against the PCUSA. The government has retained possession of the other three schools while the case is still pending. On March 19, the Punjab Government returned Forman Christian College, arguably the most prominent Christian-founded educational institution in the country, to PCUSA. The fate of two other major nationalized institutions, Gordon College in Rawalpindi (PCUSA) and Murree College, Muree (Church of Pakistan), remained undecided as of the end of the reporting period.

On some university campuses, groups of students, primarily from radical religious organizations, clashed with and intimidated other students, instructors, and administrators over issues such as language, syllabus content, examination policies, grades, doctrine, and dress. Some faculty members at Punjab University in Lahore attempted to remove from the English curriculum words and ideas deemed inappropriate for Islamic society, but they were not successful.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, entrusted with safeguarding religious freedom, has on its masthead a Koranic verse: "Islam is the only religion acceptable to God." The Ministry claims it spends 30 percent of its annual budget to assist indigent minorities, to repair minority places of worship, to set up minority-run small development schemes, and to celebrate minority festivals. However, religious minorities question these expenditures, observing that localities and villages housing minority citizens go without basic civic amenities. The Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), using official budget figures for expenditures in 1998, calculated that the Government actually spent \$17 (PRs 850) on each Muslim and only \$3.20 (PRs 16) on each

religious minority citizen per month.

Government policies do not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority faiths. For example, all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, are subject to certain provisions of Shari'a. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions, which reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The federal Shari'a court and the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinances, and judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslims. The federal Shari'a court also may overturn any legislation judged to be inconsistent with the tenets of Islam. In the Malakand division and the Kohistan district of the NWFP, ordinances require that "all cases, suits, inquiries, matters, and proceedings in the courts shall be decided in accordance with Shari'a." These ordinances define Shari'a as the injunctions found in both the Koran and the Sunna (tradition) of the Prophet Mohammed. Islamic law judges, with the assistance of the Ulema (Islamic scholars), under the general supervision of the Peshawar High Court, try all court cases in the Malakand Division and the Kohistan District. Elsewhere in the country, partial provisions of Shari'a apply.

The Penal Code incorporates the doctrines of Qisas (roughly, "an eye for an eye") and Diyat ("blood money"). Qisas was invoked in tribal areas. For example, victims' families reportedly have been allowed to kill murderers after conviction by a "jirga" (council of tribal elders). Diyat occasionally was applied as well, particularly in the NWFP, in place of judicial punishment. According to this principle, only the family of the victim, not the State, may pardon a defendant. Christian activists alleged that when a Muslim kills a non-Muslim, the killer can redress the crime by paying Diyat to the victim's family; however, a non-Muslim who kills a Muslim does not have that option and must serve a jail sentence or face the death penalty.

The martial law-era Hudood Ordinances criminalize non-marital rape, extramarital sex, and various gambling, alcohol, and property offenses. The Hudood Ordinances, which aim to make the Penal Code more Islamic, provide harsh punishments for violations of Shari'a, including death by stoning for unlawful sexual relations and amputation for other crimes. The Ordinances are applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some Hudood Ordinance cases are subject to Hadd, or Koranic, punishment; others are subject to Tazir, or lesser, punishment. Although both types of cases are tried in ordinary criminal courts, special rules of evidence apply in Hadd cases, which discriminate against non-Muslims. For example, a non-Muslim may testify only if the victim also is non-Muslim. Likewise, the testimony of women, Muslim or non-Muslim, is not admissible in cases involving Hadd punishments. Therefore, if a Muslim man rapes a Muslim woman in the presence of women or non-Muslim men, he cannot be convicted under the Hudood Ordinances. The Hadd punishments require a high standard of evidence. In the 20 years since the Hudood Ordinances were adopted, not a single Hadd punishment has been carried out. However, on the basis of lesser evidence, ordinary punishments such as jail terms and fines were imposed.

For both Muslims and non-Muslims, all consensual extramarital sexual relations are considered a violation of the Hudood Ordinances; if a woman cannot prove the absence of consent in a rape case, there is a risk that she may be charged with a violation of the Hudood Ordinances for fornication or adultery. The maximum punishment for this offense is public flogging or stoning; however, there are no recorded instances of either type of punishment since the 1980s. According to a police official, in a majority of rape cases, the victims are pressured to drop rape charges because of the threat of Hudood charges being brought against them. In March 2002, Zafran Bibi was sentenced to death for a violation of the Hudood Ordinances, in a case that drew national and international attention to the Hudood ordinances. Bibi filed rape charges against her brother-in-law, but when a medical exam indicated that she already was pregnant at the time of the alleged rape, her father-in-law then accused her of adultery with another person as a way to settle an old rivalry and protect his son. A lower Shari'a court convicted her of adultery and sentenced her to death by stoning. When Bibi's husband claimed to be the father of the child she carried, refuting the charge of adultery, the Federal Shariat bench overturned the verdict and

acquitted Bibi on June 6, 2002. A Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Women has criticized the Hudood Ordinances and recommended their repeal. The Commission also stated that the laws on adultery and rape have been subject to widespread misuse, and that 95 percent of the women accused of adultery are found innocent in the court of first instance or on appeal. However, the Commission pointed out that, by that time, the woman may have spent months in jail, suffered sexual abuse at the hands of the police, and seen her reputation destroyed. The Commission found that the main victims of the Hudood Ordinances are poor women who are unable to defend themselves against slanderous charges. According to the Commission, the laws also have been used by husbands and other male family members to punish their wives and female family members for reasons that have nothing to do with perceived sexual impropriety. At least one-third of the women in the jails in Lahore, Peshawar, and Mardan in 1998 were awaiting trial for adultery under the Hudood Ordinances. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan stated that this ratio remained unchanged during 2001; no new estimates are available for the period covered by this report. However, no Hadd punishment has been imposed since the Hudood Ordinances went into effect.

Human rights monitors and women's groups believe that a narrow interpretation of Shari'a has had a harmful effect on the rights of women and minorities, as it reinforces popular attitudes and perceptions and contributes to an atmosphere in which discriminatory treatment of women and non-Muslims is accepted more readily. Some Islamic scholars also stated privately that the Hudood Ordinances are a misapplication of Shari'a.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Police torture and other forms of mistreatment of persons in custody are common. However, there were no confirmed reports of torture of prisoners or detainees because of their religious beliefs during the period covered by this report. Rehmat Masih died at Lahore Services Hospital on April 1 after reportedly being brutally tortured by police. Rehmat Masih and a fellow Christian, Iqbal Masih, both sanitary workers at the civil secretariat, were taken into custody by the Sanda police on March 2. They were charged with stealing law books, while more than 10 Muslim clerks, secretaries, and other office staff, who had direct access to the books, were not blamed. Rehmat did not accept the theft charges. A senior official, who reportedly wanted to protect the real culprit, pressured police to torture Rehmat Masih. The two suspects were illegally held for police interrogation for 20 days, after which Rehmat Masih was sent to the Lahore District Jail on March 27. He was again severely tortured by police. When his condition started to deteriorate, he was admitted to the hospital, where he died. After his death, protesters demanded that the Government issue murder charges against the police. One protester, Rehmat Masih's nephew, was struck on the head by a police baton and subsequently died. The All Pakistan Minorities Alliance registered a complaint against the police and senior official, but as of the end of the reporting period, no action had been taken.

There have been instances in which police have used excessive force against individuals because of their religious beliefs and practices; however, it sometimes is difficult to determine whether religious affiliation is a factor in police brutality. The police also have failed to act against persons who use force against other individuals because of their religious beliefs (see Section II). The Government admits that police brutality against all citizens is a problem. However, both the Christian and Ahmadi communities have documented instances of the use of excessive force by the police and police inaction to prevent violent and often lethal attacks on members of their communities.

The law regulates arrest and detention procedures; however, the authorities do not always comply with the law, and police arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Violence in Punjab has prompted the Government on several occasions to round up hundreds of members of religious extremist groups and students at madrassas believed to be terrorist recruiting centers and training grounds. The police also arrest demonstrators, including members of religious minorities.

Prison conditions, except for the "class A" facilities provided to wealthy and politically high-profile prisoners, are extremely poor and constitute a threat to the life and health of prisoners. According to the NCJP and the Center for Legal Aid, Assistance, and Settlement (CLAAS), non-Muslim prisoners do not enjoy the same facilities as Muslim inmates.

No estimate of the total number of religious detainees exists; however, the Government has arrested and detained numerous Muslims and non-Muslims for their religious beliefs and practices under the blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws. According to the NCJP, religious minorities constitute a proportionally greater percentage of the prison population. Government officials state that although religious minorities account for approximately 5 percent of the country's population, 25 percent of the cases filed under the blasphemy laws are aimed at religious minorities. According to one report, between 1984 and 2002, there were 150 blasphemy cases filed against Ahmadis, 31 against Christians, and 7 against Muslims. There were 67 blasphemy cases pending throughout the country as of the end of the period covered by this report.

The blasphemy laws were intended to protect both majority and minority faiths from discrimination and abuse; however, in practice these laws frequently are used by rivals and the authorities to threaten, punish, or intimidate religious minorities. Credible sources estimate that several hundred persons have been arrested since the laws were implemented; however, significantly fewer persons have been tried. Most of the several hundred persons arrested in recent years have been released due to a lack of sufficient evidence. However, many judges reportedly have issued guilty verdicts to protect themselves and their families from retaliation by religious extremists. When blasphemy and other religious cases are brought to court, extremists often pack the courtroom and make public threats about the consequences of an acquittal. Lower level magistrates generally were more susceptible to pressure by religious extremists than the higher-level judiciary. The Government provided protection to human rights lawyers defending accused blasphemers following threats and attacks on lawyers by religious extremists. Many of those accused of blasphemy face harassment and even death before reaching trial, during incarceration, or even after acquittal on clear-cut proof that the charges were false. Islamic extremists have categorically vowed to kill all accused blasphemers, regardless of judicial acquittals. As a result, the accused often are denied requests for bail on the grounds that their lives would be at risk from vigilantes if released. When released, many of the acquitted go into hiding until they can secure asylum.

Yusuf Ali, a Sufi Muslim who had been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death in August 2000, was shot and killed in the Lahore Central Jail by another inmate on June 11, 2002. The prisoner who killed Ali, Tariq Butt, was a member of the banned Muslim extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. At the end of the period covered by this report, Butt was confined in Lahore's Central Jail, and the case against him was still pending. Some prison officials were arrested in connection with the incident, including an Assistant Superintendent, who reportedly took responsibility for the incident and stepped down. As of the end of the reporting period, the shooting was still under investigation by the authorities and no legal or punitive actions had been taken against the prison officials.

Blasphemy laws often target members of the Ahmadi community. According to Ahmadi sources, 89 Ahmadis were charged formally in criminal cases on a "religious basis" (including blasphemy) in 2002, compared to 70 cases in 2001 and 166 cases in 2000. In March 2002, a foreign Ahmadi of Pakistani origin was arrested, tried, and acquitted of publishing blasphemous pamphlets. In April 29, 2001, four Ahmadis, including Abdul Majeed, president of the local Ahmadi community, were charged with blasphemy for constructing minarets and the Mihrab (prayer niche inside the mosque in the wall facing Mecca) of an Ahmadi mosque; the case was still under trial at the District and Sessions Court in Layyah District, Punjab, at the end of this reporting period.

The 1999 blasphemy case against Mohammad Nawaz, an Ahmadi leader in Okara District, Punjab, was still pending, although Nawaz and his two sons (who had also been charged) were released on bail after several days of imprisonment.

The blasphemy laws can also be used to harass Christians, often resulting in cases that drag on for years. On April 26, Ranjha Masih was sentenced to life in prison by the District and Sessions Court in Faisalabad, allegedly for damaging a Muslim signboard during a bishop's funeral in 1998. Masih has been detained without bail since his arrest on May 8, 1998. The judge postponed the verdict several times. As of the end of the reporting period, Masih planned to appeal his case to the Lahore High Court.

On April 1, 2001, police registered a blasphemy case against Pervez Masih, a Christian who ran a private school in Sialkot district, Punjab. According to CLAAS, the Sunni Muslim owner of another private school charged Masih with blasphemy because he was jealous of Masih's success in attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim students. However, according to the press reports, Pervez Masih was charged because he answered a student's questions about Mohammed's life. Masih remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report, and the case against him is still pending at the District and Sessions Court in Daska, Sialkot district. On June 29, 2002, Augustine Ashiq Masih was sentenced to death on blasphemy charges originating in 2000. His appeal against the death sentence was under consideration at the Lahore High Court at the end of the reporting period.

Some blasphemy cases that had lingered for years were resolved during this reporting period. Aslam Masih, an elderly man who was accused of defiling the Koran in November 1998 and denied medical treatment after being badly beaten at the time of his arrest, was acquitted by the Lahore High Court on June 4, 2003. In overturning Masih's lower court conviction of May 2002, the Lahore High Court judge chastised the prosecution for producing only hearsay evidence. During the trial proceedings, a witness for the prosecution retracted the statement attributed to him by police, accusing them of concocting it. Two Christian brothers, Salim and Rashid Maseeh, who had been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment in May 2000 by a lower court in Punjab, were acquitted by the Lahore High Court on March 19 and released from jail. On August 15, 2002, the Supreme Court dismissed blasphemy charges filed against Ayub Masih in 1996, stating the charges stemmed from a land dispute between Masih's family and their Muslim neighbors. Masih had been sentenced to death in 1998 and spent 4 years in solitary confinement on death row.

Police also arrested Muslims under the blasphemy laws; government officials maintain that approximately three-quarters of the total number of blasphemy cases actually brought to trial involved Muslims. Often the cases are drawn out, with a very lengthy appeal process. In July 2002, a lower court sentenced Wajihul Hassan to death for allegedly having made derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed during phone calls to a lawyer. In September 1998, a Shi'a Muslim, Ghulam Akbar, was convicted of blasphemy in Rahimyar Khan, Punjab, for allegedly making derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed in 1995, and he was sentenced to death. Akbar's death sentence was the first such sentence for a Muslim for a violation of the blasphemy law. Akbar is presently in Multan District Jail, and his appeal against the death sentence is still pending before the Bahawalpur Bench of the Lahore High Court. In October 2001, a Sunni Muslim, Dr. Younis Sheikh, was sentenced to death for blasphemy in Rawalpindi, Punjab, reportedly for stating in front of his students at Capital Homeopathic College that the Prophet Mohammed's first marriage was not conducted according to Islamic law and custom and that Mohammed could not have been a Muslim before he had received his revelation from God because the Muslim religion logically had not existed until then. His appeal was still pending with the Lahore High Court at the end of the period covered by this report. On April 29, Irshad Bibi, a Muslim woman who tried to mediate an argument between a tonga (horse-drawn passenger wagon) driver and a shopkeeper in the town of Pasrur in Sialkot District, had her clothing torn by the shopkeeper. When she went to a police station to file a report against the shopkeeper, he and two accompanying maulvis (religious leaders) provoked her into an argument by insulting her. One of the maulvis then registered a police case against her for insulting his beard, which is considered an insult to the Prophet Mohammed. Bibi's case was pending a hearing at the end of the reporting period.

In the autumn of 2001, the Government took steps to curb religious extremism and

militancy, imposing some limits on freedom of association, religion, and movement, and banning two of the country's groups known to incite sectarian violence and religious extremism, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Mohammad Pakistan. In January 2002, the Government banned five other groups: Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Tehrik-e-Jafria and Tehriki-Nifaz-i-Shariat-i-Mohamadi (TNSM). Police raided offices, mosques, and madrassas linked with these groups; announced a ban on fundraising activities; and arrested almost 3,000 party members. Most of those arrested were later released without being charged. During the period covered by this report, most of the banned parties re-named themselves, in order to subvert the ban and continue operations. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi has become Inteqam-e-Haq ("Revenge for the Truth"), and Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan has been re-named Hizbollah. Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan is now Millat-e-Islamia, Lashkar-e-Taiba is now Jamaat Al Dawa, and Jaish-e-Muhammad is now Tehrik-ul-Furqaan. Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Maulana Masoud Azhar, who was initially put under house arrest in January 2002, was released approximately 3 months later; then, 6 weeks after the release, he was again put under house arrest; Masoud Azhar was finally released on December 14, 2002 by the Lahore High Court, and has kept a low profile since then. Professor Hafiz Saeed, leader of Jamaat Al Dawa, has been allowed to address rallies and make inflammatory speeches in which he has threatened Westerners resident in the country.

Arrests of members of extremist groups continued during this reporting period, although on a much smaller scale than in the previous period. The central Government's efforts to control extremism have sometimes been flouted by the provincial governments. On November 16, 2002, a group of men accompanying Maulana Sufi Mohammad, the chief of TNSM, were arrested at the Afghan border in Kurram Agency, Northwest Frontier Province, on their return from Afghanistan. All were imprisoned in Dera Ismail Khan Jail; most were later released on bail. On January 28, police raided the office of a militant organization in Dera Ismail Khan and arrested 21 men who allegedly belonged to Haraket-ul Mujahedin, now named Jamiat-ul-Ansar. According to initial details, police claimed to have recovered illegal arms from the office, but all arrested were released within a week, reportedly because of pressure from the MMA-dominated provincial Government, which claimed the men had only assembled to attend a funeral. All charges were dropped.

SSP Leader Maulana Mohammad Azam Tariq, who was arrested in a 1999 crackdown on extremists, released after a year of imprisonment, and arrested again in February 2002, was allowed to contest the October 10, 2002, elections from jail, despite a number of terrorism and murder cases pending against him in anti-terrorism courts. He was released on October 30, 2002, on the orders of the Lahore High Court.

Following the killings of four Sunni clerics on January 28, 2001, Sunni Muslim students participated in violent demonstrations and arson attacks in Karachi (see Section III). The Government dispatched police, paramilitary, and military forces to disperse the demonstrators, and several students and police officers were injured. Following a wave of sectarian killings between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims (see Section III), the Government arrested between 150 and 250 alleged Sunni and Shi'a militants in Karachi in early 2002. Government officials stated that the arrests and a public call for religious leaders to enforce a code of conduct resulted in a reduction of such killings during the traditionally violent period of Muharram. Shortly after the killing of Shi'as at a mosque in Karachi in February, the Government ordered all places of worship protected. At the time of some religious holidays during this reporting period, the regular army was deployed in sensitive areas to help maintain public order.

Forced Religious Conversion

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported that on January 3, a 6-year-old Sikh girl was kidnapped by members of the Afridi tribe, in a remote tribal area of the Northwest Frontier Province. The alleged kidnapper claimed that the girl was actually 12 years old, and that she had converted to Islam and therefore could not be returned to live with her non-Muslim family. There were no other specific reports of forced religious

conversion, including of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Religious minorities state that members of their communities, especially minors, sometimes are pressured by private groups and individuals to convert to Islam.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government took some specific steps to improve the situation of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. A 3-year Human Rights Mass Awareness and Education Project, begun by the Government in 2001 with funding from the Asian Development Bank, is ongoing. The Government also continued to promote human rights awareness in its training of police officers.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

Many religious and community leaders, both Muslim and non-Muslim, reported that a small minority of extremists account for the vast majority of violent acts against religious minorities. However, discriminatory religious legislation has encouraged an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which has led to acts of violence directed against Ahmadis, Shi'as, Christians, Hindus, and Zikris. Members of religious minorities are subject to violence and harassment, and police at times refuse to prevent such abuses or charge persons who commit them (see Section II). Wealthy religious minorities and those who belong to religious groups that do not seek converts report fewer instances of discrimination.

Incidents of sectarian violence still occurred with considerable frequency. In February three Sunni Muslim scholars, including the head of an Islamic school, were shot in the head and killed in three separate drive-by shootings. On February 22, 9 Shi'a Muslims were killed and 10 were injured by attackers while they were worshipping at a Shi'a mosque in Karachi. About 25 worshippers were believed to be inside the building when at least 3 men, riding on 2 motorcycles, opened fire with automatic weapons and then fled. Some 5,000 people gathered for the funeral procession, which turned violent. Enraged mourners smashed cars and shop windows. Authorities suspended a deputy police superintendent and another police official for failing to protect the mosque. The holy month of Moharram, traditionally a period of sectarian clashes, passed with no major incidents.

On June 8, 12 Shi'a police trainees were killed and several others were wounded when gunmen on motorcycles opened fire on their vehicle in the southwestern city of Quetta. Eighteen members of the banned Sipah-e-Sahaba were arrested the next day, and four of them were charged with "masterminding" the attack. Their cases were pending as of the end of the period covered by this report.

During this reporting period, investigations proceeded slowly on previous incidents of sectarian violence. Two suspects were arrested in connection with the September 4, 2001, shooting of Ali Hussain Naqvi, a prayer leader at a Karachi Shi'a mosque. Three suspects were detained for the September 10, 2001, killing of senior bureaucrat Altaf Hussain Bangash in Karachi. Shi'a doctors have been the victims of targeted killings in recent years. Three suspects were arrested for the killing of Dr. Jameeluddin and injuring of nurse Nighat Seema in Karachi on October 3, 2001. Two suspects were apprehended for the February 12, 2002, shooting of Dr. Rashid Mehdi. These cases were pending with the local courts as of the end of the period covered by this report. Two people were being held in the case of Syed Gul Iman Shah, killed on October 10, 2001, in front of the Karachi technical college of which he was principal. The investigation remained open. The cases of Allama Razi Haider and his 11-year-old son, police constable Syed Didar Hussain Shah, Syed Hasan Abadi, Syed Jawwad Ali, Syed Hamid Ali Rizvi, and Dr. Aale Safdar were also all still under investigation. Numerous other sectarian killings also remain unresolved.

Ahmadi individuals and institutions long have been victims of religious violence, much of which is instigated by organized religious extremists. Ahmadi leaders charge that militant Sunni mullahs and their followers sometimes stage marches through the streets of Rabwah, a predominantly Ahmadi town and spiritual center in central Punjab. Backed by crowds of between 100 and 200 persons, the mullahs reportedly denounce Ahmadis and their founder, a situation that sometimes leads to violence. The Ahmadis claim that police generally are present during these marches but do not intervene to prevent trouble. In August 2001, a mob destroyed an Ahmadi mosque in Sheikhpura; authorities did not stop the violence and later arrested 28 Ahmadis in connection with civil disorder. The Ahmadis were quickly released, but there have been no steps to prosecute the real offenders or compensate for the loss of the mosque.

Several Ahmadis were killed during the period covered by this report. On February 25, Mian Iqbal Ahmed, a lawyer and District President, was killed at his home in Rajanpur by unknown gunmen. On September 1, 2002, Maqsood Ahmed was killed in Faisalabad. Dr. Rashid Ahmed, a medical doctor, was killed at his clinic in Rahim Yar Khan on November 9, 2002. Abdul Waheed was killed on November 14, 2002, in Faisalabad. All of these killings appeared to have been motivated by anti-Ahmadi sentiment.

In July 2001, Sheikh Nazir Ahmed, an Ahmadi leader in Faisalabad, was killed. The accused, Behram Khan, was arrested and then released on bail. His case is still pending. On September 14, 2001, Noor Ahmed and his son Tahir were killed and two others were injured in an armed attack on their house in Narowal. Two of the four people accused of killing them were tried and then acquitted in early 2003. In October 2001, Ahmadi Ejaz Ahmed Basra and his son Shahjehan were shot and killed in Ghatilalian. Basra had provided evidence in a trial against several men accused of killing five Ahmadis the previous year, and the shooting was thought to be in retaliation for his testimony. Three of six people suspected of the shooting were arrested, but there have been no developments in their cases. In January 2002, Ghulam Mustafa Mohsin, an Ahmadi who had received previous death threats, was killed in his home in District Toba Tek Singh. There were no developments in this case during this reporting period.

Sectarian violence against Christians increased during the period covered by this report. In May small bombs exploded at two Christian hospitals in Tank and Bannu, Northwest Frontier Province. No one was injured or killed; both blasts are currently under investigation. In March 2002, an attack on a Presbyterian church in Islamabad left five persons dead, including two foreign nationals. On August 5, 2002, three extremists attacked Murree Christian School near Islamabad, killing six staff. On August 9, 2002, three nurses were killed and 21 people injured in an attack on a Christian hospital in Taxila. One of the militants was killed in the attack. Members of the extremist group responsible for the attacks on the Presbyterian church, the hospital in Taxila, and the Murree Christian School were later killed in a shootout with the security services. On September 25, 2002, in Karachi, seven workers at the Christian charity Institute of Peace and Justice were killed execution style, tied up and gagged before being shot in the head at point blank range. The charity's former chairman died four months earlier under mysterious circumstances. On December 25, 2002, 3 Christian girls were killed and 16 people injured when 2 militants attacked a church with hand grenades in Chianwali village in Sialkot District, Punjab. Three police officers were suspended for negligence related to the Christmas attack. As of the end of the reporting period, the suspects were still at large, and the plaintiffs in the case were under pressure by Muslim militants, the police, and scared relatives to drop their charges. Three-quarters of the Christian residents have left the village. In October 2001, masked gunmen opened fire at the St. Dominic Church in Bahawalpur, killing 11 persons and injuring more than a dozen worshippers. The case was closed in March 2002, after the main suspect, Shakil Anwar of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (now Inteqam-e-Haq) was killed in a confrontation with police. Attacks against Western targets also increased Christians' sense of insecurity and vulnerability. The Government strongly condemned the attacks against Christians.

Anti-Christian sentiment fuelled hate campaigns from various Islamic militant groups. For

example, on January 9, the Islamic organization JeshIhle-Alqiblat Al-Jihadi Alsari Al-Alami published a pamphlet in Urdu and Arabic calling on Muslims to kill nonbelievers, terming the act as the duty of every Muslim. Authorities reportedly initiated an investigation. On March 23, the MMA issued similar threats in Lahore. In January the Pakistani Catholic Bishops' Justice and Peace Commission urged the Government to end "hate speech" against minority religions, claiming that hate campaigns had led to a dramatic increase in crimes and discrimination against non-Muslims.

During late 2002 and early 2003, there reportedly was a rise in crimes against Christian women. Women and girls were beaten, kidnapped, gang-raped, disfigured, and forced to convert to Islam at gun- or knife-point. In April a 9-year old Christian girl who worked as a live-in maid in Faisalabad, was beaten and raped by her Muslim employers.

In response to the passage of the Shari'a Law in March, more than 100 activists took the law into their own hands in the Northwest Frontier Province. They used stones and iron rods to destroy billboards featuring women in advertisements. The failure of police to stop the attacks on billboards led to the sacking of the provincial police chief by the federal Government. In June dozens of extremists attacked a circus in Gujranwala. They torched the tents, injuring more than 100 people. Police arrested 28 activists of the Shaba-i-Milli and Jamaat-i-Islami.

Ahmadis suffer from societal harassment and discrimination. Even the rumor that someone may be an Ahmadi or have Ahmadi relatives can stifle opportunities for employment or promotion. Most Ahmadis are home-schooled or go to private Ahmadi-run schools. Those Ahmadi students in public schools often are subject to abuse by their non-Ahmadi classmates. The quality of teachers assigned to predominately Ahmadi schools by the Government reportedly is poor. In late May 2002, in response to a question from Islamic clerics, President Musharraf denounced Ahmadis as "non-Muslims."

While many Christians belong to the poorest socioeconomic groups, this may be due more to ethnic and social factors than to religion. These factors also may account for a substantial measure of the discrimination that poor Christians face. Many poor Christians remain in the profession of their low caste Hindu ancestors (most of whom were "untouchables"). Their position in society, though somewhat better today than in the past, does not reflect major progress despite more than 100 years of consistent missionary aid and development. Christian students reportedly are forced to eat at separate tables in public schools that are predominately Muslim.

Ismailis report that they are the objects of resentment of Sunni Muslims due to the comparative economic advances they have made. Ismailis have not been harassed by the Government nor have they been targeted by extremist groups; however, they report that they frequently are pressured to adopt certain practices of conservative Muslims or risk being ostracized socially.

Anti-Semitic sentiment appears to be widespread, and anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist press articles are common.

Shikharis generally are ostracized by other Muslims, primarily because of their dietary practices.

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

Persons who have been accused under the blasphemy laws (see Section II), including those acquitted of the charges against them, often face societal discrimination. On July 5, 2002, Zahid Shah, a Muslim who had been accused and acquitted of blasphemy charges, was stoned to death in Punjab by a mob of approximately 300 villagers enforcing the fatwa of a

cleric. Within a week, police had arrested 29 people in connection with the stoning. However, those arrested were later released, and no convictions had been reported in this case as of the end of the period covered by this report. On July 6, 2002, Pervez Masih, a Christian high school principal who was arrested in April 2001 based on allegations by Muslim schoolboys he tutored, was attacked by a fellow prison inmate, Akhtar Bashir.

Proselytizing generally is considered socially inappropriate among Muslims; missionaries face some difficulties due to this perception. For example, some Sunni Muslim groups oppose missionary activities and have at times issued verbal threats against missionaries in order to discourage them from working.

While there is no law instituting the death penalty for apostates (those who convert from Islam), social pressure against such an action is so powerful that most such conversions reportedly take place in secret. According to missionaries, police and other local officials harass villagers and members of the poorer classes who convert. Reprisals and threats of reprisals against suspected converts are common.

Discrimination in employment based on religion is believed to be widespread. Christians in particular have difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, although Christian activists say that the employment situation has improved somewhat in the private sector in recent years. Christians and Hindus also find themselves disproportionately represented in the country's most oppressed social group, bonded laborers. Illegal bonded labor is widespread. Agriculture, brick-kiln, and domestic workers often are kept virtually as slaves. According to the NCJP, the majority of bonded labor in those sectors is non-Muslim. All are subject to the same conditions, whether they are Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. In 1999 the Government removed colonial-era entries for sect from government job application forms to prevent discrimination in hiring. However, the faith of some, particularly of Christians, often can be ascertained from their names.

There are a number of NGOs and civic groups that promote interfaith dialogue. In January the Pakistani Catholic Bishops' Commission for Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism declared 2003 a National Year of Peace. Accordingly, during the year a number of interreligious meetings, religious festivals, literary courses, and other events centered on peace and dialogue took place. Several Muslim leaders applauded the bishops' initiative. In February the Sacred Heart Church in Lahore hosted a peace service, attended by people of various faiths.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialogue and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. representatives maintained regular contacts with major Muslim and minority religious groups. Embassy officers also maintained a dialogue with government, religious, and minority community representatives to encourage religious freedom and to discuss problems.

Embassy officers closely monitored the status of religious freedom and acted when appropriate. Embassy officials attended the trials of several individuals charged with blasphemy, including the trial of Dr. Younis Sheikh. In addition, senior embassy officials expressed concern about the Ayub Masih and Younis Sheikh cases with senior Pakistani government officials. Embassy officials encouraged government officials to pursue aggressive investigations of incidents involving the bombing of churches. The Embassy also assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up on specific cases involving religious minorities.

The Embassy sponsored several academics to travel to the United States with the International Visitors Program to take part in programs that focus on religious freedom and pluralism. The United States also began to implement a \$100 million educational reform program designed to positively impact both public and private institutions, including