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Pakistan

International Religious Freedom Report 2005

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The country is an Islamic republic, and the Constitution 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;" however, in practice the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. Islam is the state religion. Freedom of speech is constitutionally "subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam." The country was created to be a homeland for Muslims, although its founders did not envisage it as an Islamic state.

The Government took some steps to improve the treatment of religious minorities during the period covered by this report, but serious problems remained. The Government fails to protect the rights of religious minorities. Discriminatory legislation and the Government's failure to take action against societal forces hostile to those who practice a different faith fostered religious intolerance and acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities.

The Ahmadiyya religious minority continued to face legal bars to the practice of its faith. While other minority religious communities generally were able to worship freely, their members often faced governmental discrimination. Members of certain Islamic schools of thought also claimed governmental discrimination. Law enforcement personnel abused religious minorities in custody, leading to deaths in some cases. Security forces and other government agencies did not adequately prevent or address societal abuse against minorities. Specific government policies that discriminate against religious minorities include the use of the "Hudood" Ordinances and the blasphemy laws. The Hudood Ordinances impose elements of Qur'anic law on both Muslims and non-Muslims. The blasphemy laws provide the death penalty for defiling Islam or its prophets; life imprisonment for defiling, damaging, or desecrating the Qur'an; and 10 years' imprisonment for insulting the religious feelings of any citizen. Both the Hudood Ordinances and the blasphemy laws have been abused, in that they are often used against persons to settle personal scores. The provincial government in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) continued to pass directives and legislation in accordance with the conservative Islamic vision of its supporters. Despite the Islamic Ideology Council's rejection of the Hisba bill and the concerns of the federal government, the opposition and human rights groups, the NWFP passed the bill shortly after the end of the reporting period. The law currently is in abeyance, as its constitutionality is under review by the Supreme Court.

However, during the reporting period, the Government maintained its public calls for religious tolerance, pressured Islamic clergy to issue an injunction on sectarian violence and the killing of non-Muslims, revised implementation of the blasphemy law to curb abuses, maintained its ban on and actively attempted to curb the activities of sectarian and terrorist organizations, and proceeded with reform of the public education curriculum designed to end the teaching of religious intolerance.

Relations between religious communities were tense. Societal discrimination against religious minorities was widespread and societal violence against such groups occurred. Societal actors, including terrorist and extremist groups and individuals, targeted religious congregations. More than 125 deaths accrued from sectarian violence, including by the terrorist group Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, during the period covered by this report. Large numbers of victims came from both Sunni and Shi'a sects. The Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), a coalition of Islamist political parties, continued in its political rhetoric to call for the increased Islamization of the government and society. The MMA leads the opposition in the National Assembly, holds a majority in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Provincial Assembly, and is part of the ruling coalition in Balochistan.

However, some members of the MMA made efforts to eliminate its rhetoric against Christians, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, and Parsis, and under government pressure, many of its leaders joined various interfaith efforts to promote religious tolerance. Religious leaders, representing the country's six major Shi'a and Sunni groups, issued a religious injunction in May banning sectarian violence and the killing of non-Muslims. Clergy from all Islamic schools of thought and many minority faith communities joined together in September 2004 to form the World Council on Religions, an interfaith group designed to promote dialogue and tolerance. However, anti-Ahmadi and anti-Semitic rhetoric continued unabated, and a growing

movement against Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan emanated from some constituencies in the coalition. Sectarian violence and discrimination continued despite contrary calls from the government, Islamic religious leaders, and some parts of the MMA.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. During the period covered by the report, Embassy officials closely monitored the treatment of religious minorities and took a number of steps to improve their treatment. As part of its education reform initiative, the U.S. continued to help the Education Ministry revise its curriculum, including eliminating the teaching of religious intolerance. Embassy officials remained engaged with all parties involved in madrassah reform to encourage similar changes. Embassy officials pressed parliamentarians and the Government to revise blasphemy laws and the Hudood Ordinances to minimize abuses and raised concerns with government officials and religious leaders over growing rhetoric against Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan and sectarian strife in the Northern Areas. The Embassy also expanded contacts with all religious groups to promote moderation, to end sectarian strife and religiously motivated violence, and to support efforts at interfaith dialogue.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 310,527 square miles, and its population is approximately 154 million. Official figures on religious demography—based on the most recent census, taken in 1998—deem approximately 96 percent of the population or 148.8 million people to be Muslim, 2.02 percent or 2.44 million people to be Hindu, 1.69 percent or 2.09 million to be Christian, and 0.35 percent or 539,000 to be "other," including Ahmadi.

The majority of Muslims in the country are Sunni. Ten percent or approximately 14.9 million are Shi'a. The Shi'a claim these figures are inaccurate and that at least 20 percent of the Muslim population are Shi'a followers split between the Qom (approximately 40 percent) and Najaf (approximately 60 percent) schools of thought. Government estimates on Shi'a count approximately 750,000 Ismailis, most of whom are spiritual followers of the Aga Khan. An estimated 80,000 belong to the Bohra or other smaller schools of thought. Shi'a are found nationwide but have population concentrations in Karachi, Gilgit, and parts of Balochistan. Ismailis are found principally in Hunza, Karachi, and Baltistan. The majority Sunni Muslim community is divided into three main schools of thought (Brailvi, Deobandi, and Ahl-e-Hadith) and a socio-political movement, the Jamaat Islami (JI), which has its own theology, schools, and mosques. Ahl-e-Hadith adherents comprise, at most, 5 percent of Muslims, and are concentrated in Punjab. No reliable figures on JI adherents exist, as its membership always claims adherence to another school. Its adherents, however, are generally found in urban centers. Brailvi and Deobandi leaders both claim that their schools comprise up to 80 percent of the overall Muslim population. Most disinterested observers believe that the Brailvi remain the largest school, around 60 percent of all Muslims, with the Deobandi at around 20 percent, but growing. The Brailvi are the dominant majority in Sindh and Punjab. Deobandi are generally found in the Pashtun belt from northern Punjab, across the NWFP, and into northern Balochistan, although there are increasing numbers in Karachi and the Seraiki areas of Punjab.

Several smaller self-described Muslim groups exist, most notably approximately 200,000 Zikris found in Gwadar, Balochistan. Most Sunnis consider Zikris to be non-Muslims due to their unique religious ceremonies, including a separate Hajj held in Turbat, Balochistan. Ahmadis have been officially declared non-Muslim due to an assertion that Muhammed may not be the last prophet. Ahmadis have boycotted the census since 1974, rendering official numbers inaccurate. They claim at least 2 million adherents centered on their spiritual town of Chenab Nagar, Punjab (referred to as Rabwah by Ahmadis). In 1998, the Punjab Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution to change the name to Chenab Nagar against the wishes of the Ahmadi community.

Non-Muslims are officially 4 percent of the population, although their leaders claim the actual figure is approximately 10 percent. Christians, officially 1.69 percent of the population or 2.09 million, claim actually to have 4 million members, 90 percent of whom live in Punjab. The largest Christian denomination is the umbrella Protestant Church of Pakistan, a member of the Anglican Communion. Catholics are the second-largest group, and the remainder belong to various evangelical denominations. 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, Balochistan. A few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh have converted to Christianity. Hindus are officially 2.02 percent of the population with 2.44 million adherents. Their leaders claim an actual membership of around 4 million. Most Hindus live in Sindh, where they comprise approximately 8 percent of the population. Parsis, Sikhs, and Buddhists each have approximately 20,000 adherents, while the Baha'i claim 30,000. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi. Some tribes in Balochistan and NWFP practice traditional animist religions.

Less than 0.5 percent of the population is silent on religion or claims not to adhere to a particular religion. Social pressure is such that few people would claim not to be affiliated with any religion.

No data are available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals. Religion often plays an important part in daily life. Most Muslims offer prayers on Friday, Islam's holy day. Many also pray at least

once during the five prayer times each day. During the month of Ramadan, even many less observant Muslims fast and attend services. Approximately 70 percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worship regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu speakers do so.

Many varieties of Hinduism are practiced. Hindu shrines and temples are scattered throughout the country, although most of them are now used as residences. Attendance at religious services is much greater during Hindu festivals, such as Divali and Holi.

The Sikh community regularly holds ceremonial gatherings at sacred places in Punjab. Prominent places of Sikh pilgrimage include Nanakana Sahib (where the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak, was born in 1469), Hasan Abdal (a shrine where an imprint of his hand is kept), and Kartar Poora (also known as Daira Baba Nanak Sahib) in Narowal District (where Guru Nanak is buried).

Parsis, who practice the Zoroastrian religion, have no regularly scheduled congregational services, except during a 10-day religious festival in August called Naurooz ("new day"). All Parsis are expected to attend these services; most reportedly do. During the rest of the year, individuals offer prayers at Parsi temples.

Foreign missionaries operate in the country. The largest Christian mission group engages in Bible translation for the Church of Pakistan. 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 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, particularly on the Ahmadis. Due to Ahmadis' refusal to accept that Muhammed was the final prophet of Islam, a 1974 Constitutional amendment declares this self-described Islamic community to be non-Muslim. A series of subsequent changes to the Penal Code prevent the Ahmadis from practicing and propagating their faith. The Government has blocked similar movements to restrict both Zikris and Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan. Other religious communities were generally free to observe their religious obligations; however, religious minorities are, in some places, legally restricted from public display of certain religious images and, due to discriminatory legislation, are often afraid to profess their religion freely.

Freedom of speech is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interests of the "glory of Islam." Under the country's "blasphemy laws," any speech or action that denigrates Islam or its prophets is punishable by death. In addition, any speech or conduct that injures another's religious feelings is prohibited and punishable by imprisonment. These laws were rarely enforced, and the cases rarely brought to the legal system, when the injury was to a member of a minority religious community. Pressure from societal, religious, or political leaders routinely prevented courts from protecting minority rights. These same pressures forced justices to take strong action against any perceived offense to Sunni Islamic orthodoxy. Discrimination against religious minorities was rarely placed before the judiciary. Courts would be unlikely to act objectively in such cases. Resolving cases is very slow; there is generally a long period between filing the case and the first court appearance. Lower courts are frequently intimidated, delay decisions, and refuse bail for fear of reprisal from extremist elements. Bail in blasphemy cases is almost always denied by original trial courts on the logic that since defendants are facing the death penalty, they are likely to flee. Defendants can appeal the denial of bail (and many do), but bail rarely is granted by the High Court or the Supreme Court in advance of the trial. There were 54 blasphemy cases filed during the reporting period, 11 more than the previous period. According to figures compiled by the National Commission for Justice and Peace, between 1986 and 2004, 634 people were accused of blasphemy: 309 Muslims, 236 Ahmadis, 81 Christians, and 8 Hindus.

The country's Penal Code ostensibly incorporates a number of Islamic law (Shari'a) provisions, applying to all that allow victims to carry out physical retribution. 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. However, in March, the Supreme Court Chief Justice, issuing a stay in the Mukhtaran Bibi rape case, ruled that the Federal Shariat Court had no jurisdiction to review a decision by a provincial high court even if the Shariat Court should have had initial appellate jurisdiction, marking a blow to the power of the Shariat appellate benches. Approximately 1,500 to 2,000 persons were imprisoned under the Hudood Ordinances as of the end of the reporting period.

The Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion. The President and Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials are required to swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology."

State funding was provided 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 partition. Minority communities claim the Government does not spend adequate funds on their protection and upkeep. The Government collected a 2.5 percent tax on all Sunni Muslims, which was distributed to Sunni mosques and charities. No similar service was provided for other religions.

Sunni Muslims appeared to receive favorable consideration in government hiring and advancement. All those wishing to obtain government identification documents as Muslims have to declare an oath on belief in the finality of the Prophethood, a provision designed to discriminate against Ahmadis. Initial voter registration no longer requires such an oath, but the Election Commission claimed that any Muslim registrant, whose religion was challenged by the public, would have to take the oath. As a result, Ahmadis continued to boycott elections.

Several Muslim religious holidays are considered national holidays, including Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Azha, Ashura (the 9th and 10th days of the month of Muharram) and the Prophet Muhammed's birthday. Most businesses have limited hours during the month of Ramadan. Non-Muslim holidays are not observed, although Mohammad Ali Jinnah's birthday is celebrated as a holiday on Christmas Day.

The Constitution safeguards "educational institutions with respect to religion." 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 is also prohibited.

"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 were not provided with parallel studies in their own religions. In some schools, non-Muslim students could study "Akhlaiyyat," or Ethics. In practice, teachers induced 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 Muhammed, a measure designed to single out Ahmadis. Non-Muslims must have their religion verified by the head of their local religious community.

Parents were free to send children to religious schools, at their expense, and many did.

Islamic religious schools, known as madrassahs, are regulated by the Government. In accordance with the 2002 Madrassah Registration Ordinance, all madrassahs were required to register, cease accepting foreign financing, and accept foreign students only with the consent of their government. Out of an estimated 13,000 to 15,000 madrassahs, only a few hundred are not registered with one of the five independent madrassah boards and/or directly with the Government. No unregistered madrassahs have been shut down. The Government and the independent madrassah boards have agreed to a phased introduction of modern subjects, including math, English, and science at all madrassahs. While the boards have required their affiliated madrassahs to move forward, disbursement of promised government funding to support the process has been slow.

The MMA-led provincial government in NWFP continued to pass directives and legislation in accordance with the conservative Islamic vision of its supporters. If implemented, many of these initiatives would impose Islamic law on all citizens. Existing laws include: anti-obscenity measures, under which advertising has been torn down and stores have been fined for selling certain western recordings ; a complete ban on alcohol; a requirement for civil servants to pray five times daily, which has never been enforced; bans on public displays of women's photos and dancing, also not enforced; and a Shari'a bill that mirrored one already in place at the federal level since 1991 and which requires that all existing legislation, including in the education and financial sectors, be reviewed in light of Shari'a. The Islamic Ideology Council struck down the original MMA-sponsored provincial Hisba bill, under which a provincial authority is appointed and empowered to create, implement and enforce regulations to promote Islamic laws and values.

The Government, at its most senior levels, continued to call for interfaith dialogue and sectarian harmony as part of its program to promote enlightened moderation. It was instrumental in organizing the inaugural meeting of the World Council of Religions, an interfaith body of clerics and religious scholars devoted to interfaith dialogue. The President addressed the opening meeting in September 2004, and the Religious Affairs Ministry and provincial governments remained active in the group's activities. The Religious Affairs Ministry and the Council on Islamic Ideology, a constitutionally mandated government body, continued to sponsor interfaith and intersectoral workshops and meetings. The Religious Affairs Ministry played an active role in negotiating the intersectoral injunction against sectarian violence and the killing of non-Muslims in the country issued in May 2005.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government discourages and severely restricts public practice of the Ahmadiyya faith both by law and in practice. A 1974 constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslims because they do not accept Muhammed as the last prophet of Islam. However, Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and observe Islamic practices. In 1984, the Government added to the Penal Code Section 298(c), commonly referred to as the "anti-Ahmadi law." Used by the government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to target and harass Ahmadis, the section prohibits Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslims 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. The vague wording of the provision that forbids Ahmadis from "directly or indirectly" posing as Muslims has enabled mainstream Muslim religious leaders to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting form and for naming their children Muhammed. The constitutionality of Section 298(c) was upheld in a split-decision Supreme Court case in 1996. The punishment for violation of the section is imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine. An Ahmadiyya Muslim community report claimed that in 2004, 51 Ahmadis faced criminal charges under religious laws or because of their faith: 4 under the blasphemy laws, 19 under Ahmadi-specific laws, 1 under a religious law, and 27 under other laws but motivated by their Ahmadi faith.

The Government gave tacit endorsement to Islamic clerics' campaigns against the perceived dangers of the Ahmadiyya faith by permitting the annual conference on the finality of the prophethood. Ahmadis are prohibited from holding any public conferences or gatherings, and since 1983 they have been denied permission to hold their annual conference. Ahmadis are banned from preaching. The Government prohibits Ahmadi travel to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj or other religious pilgrimages; since July 2003, anyone wanting to travel on the Hajj must denounce the founder of the Ahmadiyya faith as a "cunning person and an imposter" on a printed oath that is part of the government registration process, thereby effectively preventing Ahmadis from fulfilling this tenant of the Islamic faith. Additionally, Ahmadi publications are banned from public sale; however, Ahmadis publish religious literature in large quantities for a limited circulation.

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. According to press reports, the authorities continued to conduct surveillance on the Ahmadis and their institutions. Several Ahmadi mosques reportedly have been closed; others reportedly have been desecrated or had their construction stopped. For example, in Taltay Aali, Gujranwala District, the local government barred the Ahmadi community from completing construction following Muslim attacks on the site. The Government does not prohibit, restrict, or punish parents for raising children in accordance with religious teachings and practices of their choice, nor does it take steps to prevent parents from teaching their children religion in the privacy of the home.

The Constitution allows reasonable restrictions on freedom of speech for the "glory of Islam." The Penal Code includes specific provisions that restrict speech and action against other religions. These "blasphemy laws", as they are collectively known, provide the death penalty 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. They were often used to harass and intimidate liberal Muslims, sectarian opponents, and religious minorities. They were also used to settle personal scores and business rivalries. While no accused have been executed under this law, the accused often spend years in prison. Blasphemy suspects were rarely granted bail and were often convicted by trial courts following threats to judges by extremists. Inmates and security forces have killed the accused in custody, and mobs have killed them after acquittal.

To end the filing of frivolous charges, the Government enacted a law in January 2005 that requires senior police officials to investigate any blasphemy charges before a complaint is filed. Human rights organizations had called for such changes since 2000. Initial indications on the law's impact were positive. Between January 1 and June 30, 2005, 17 blasphemy cases were registered. By contrast, during the last 6 months of 2004, a total of 37 cases were registered—15 against Muslims, 21 against Ahmadis, and 1 against a Christian—and only 9 cases since the revised legislation passed the National Assembly in October 2004. However, there were 54 blasphemy cases filed during the entire reporting period, 11 more than during the previous period. According to figures compiled by the National Commission for Justice and Peace, between 1986 and 2004, 634 people were accused of blasphemy: 309 Muslims, 236 Ahmadis, 81 Christians, and 8 Hindus.

There is no law against apostasy; however, societal pressure against conversion from Islam was so strong that any conversion almost certainly would take place in secret.

Civil marriages do not exist; marriages are performed and registered according to one's religion. The marriages of Hindu or Christian men remain legal upon conversion to Islam but are considered dissolved for marriages of Hindu or Christian women or of other non-Muslims that were performed under the rites of the previous religion. Children born to Hindu or Christian women who do not separate from their husbands, yet convert to Islam after marriage, are considered illegitimate unless their husbands also convert. Children

of non-Muslim men who convert are not considered illegitimate. Under Islamic law, a Muslim man can marry a woman of the Book (Jews or Christians) but cannot marry a Hindu woman. Muslim women may only marry Muslim men.

There are no legal requirements for an individual to practice or affiliate nominally with a religion. The Government does not penalize or legally discriminate against those not affiliated with any religion. In practice, societal pressure is such that very few people would admit to not belonging to a religion. Doing so would likely lead to significant discrimination. Religious belief or specific adherence to a religion was not required for membership in the ruling party or the moderate opposition parties, which did not exclude members of any religion. The MMA had non-Muslim Members of Parliament. However, in practice, each of its constituent parties generally restricted membership to its sectarian adherents. It would be virtually impossible for Ahmadis or Jews to join the MMA or its constituent parties. In practice, neither Ismailis nor Zikris could join the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazlur Rehman, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Sami ul-Haq, or JI. Shi'a claimed they were not welcome in JI, although JI leadership denied the assertion. The political arm of the sectarian extremist group Sunni Tehrik accepted only Brailvi members.

The Government does not restrict the formation of political parties based on a particular faith, 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. Deobandi and Ahl-e-Hadith leaders claimed the Government harassed their members due to political stances. Brailvis and Ahl-e-Hadiths claimed the Government, hoping to appease political extremists, favored the Deobandis and JI for jobs in state mosques, Islamic studies faculties at state schools, and government jobs with religious responsibilities. The Government denied such charges.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country, and proselytizing, except by Ahmadis, is permitted as long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge that they are not Muslim. However, all missionaries are required to have specific visas, valid from 2 to 5 years and allowing only 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 frequent.

Under the Anti-Terrorist Act, any action, 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; however, the law is applied selectively.

The Government does not restrict religious publishing in general; however, Ahmadi religious literature is banned. Publishing any criticism of Islam or its prophets or insults to another's religion is prohibited. Insults against minority religions were rarely prosecuted. For example, Ameer Hamza, a leader of the banned terrorist group Lashkar-e-Tayyibba, was not prosecuted for writing a highly derogatory book about Hinduism in 1999 called "Hindu Ki Haqeeqat" ("Reality of (a) Hindu"). Christian scriptures and books are readily available, but Christians have reported concerns about pressure leading to self-censorship. Ahmadis charge that they suffer from restrictions on their press. In July 2003, Tanvir Ahmed Asif and Abdul Qadir were charged with blasphemy, as well as violating the anti-Ahmadi law, for writing a book called "Religious Dalits of Pakistan," which explained the situation of Ahmadis around the country.

Publication of the Qur'an must include the original Arabic text. In May 2005, the Government confiscated Urdu translations of the Qur'an published in Canada that did not include the original Arabic. In November 2004, the Peshawar High Court overturned the blasphemy conviction of former Frontier Post copy editor Munawar Mohsin. Mohsin had published a letter to the editor in 2001 that was critical of the Prophet Muhammed. Foreign books must pass government censors before being reprinted. Books and magazines may be imported freely but are subject to censorship for objectionable sexual or religious content. An Islamabad magistrate ordered the November 22, 2004, issue of Newsweek destroyed due to objectionable photos accompanying an article on the murder of Dutch national Theo Van Gogh that supposedly desecrated the Qur'an.

Local and district governments restrict the distribution and display of certain religious images, such as the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ. Such images were readily available in other parts of the country.

The Government funded and facilitated Hajj travel but had no similar program for pilgrimages by religious minorities. In addition to prohibiting Ahmadi travel for the Hajj, the Government de facto prevented Baha'is from traveling to their spiritual center in Israel due to nonrecognition of that country.

The Government designates religion on passports and national identity documents. In November 2004, the Government began issuing new machine readable passports without the religion column. A conservative backlash and Islamist party protests led the Government to reverse course and restore the column in March 2005. Those wishing to be listed as a Muslim on such documents had to swear a belief in the finality of the Prophethood and denounce the Ahmadiyya movement's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslims.

Links with coreligionists in other countries were maintained relatively easily. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan reported no difficulties. Ismailis communicated regularly with their headquarters; their officials, including Prince Karim Aga Khan, visited the country. Under reciprocal visa arrangements, Indian Hindu and Sikh leaders and groups traveled frequently to the country.

The Constitution requires that the country's President and Prime Minister must be Muslims. All senior officials, including parliamentarians, must swear an oath to protect the country's Islamic identity. Government employees are not prohibited from displaying or practicing any elements of their faith. In NWFP, provincial regulations require all civil servants to pray five times daily; however, this was not enforced. Sunni Muslims appeared to receive favorable consideration in government hiring and advancement.

Religious minorities, including Shi'a, contended that the Government persistently discriminated against members of their communities in hiring for the civil service and in admissions to government institutions of higher learning. Promotions for all minority groups appeared limited within the civil service. These problems were particularly acute for Ahmadis, who contend that a "glass ceiling" prevents them from being promoted to senior positions and that certain government departments have refused to hire or retain qualified Ahmadis. All those wishing to obtain government identification documents as Muslims have to declare an oath on belief in the finality of the Prophethood, a provision designed to discriminate against Ahmadis. Religious minorities claimed the Government failed to provide their areas with equal public services and criticized the Religious Affairs Ministry for failing to take adequate steps to improve their socioeconomic development. The Ministry rejected these charges, claiming it spent 30 percent of its annual budget on minorities. Ahl-e-Hadith and Brailvi leaders contended that their groups were underrepresented in the hiring of clergy for government mosques and on the Islamic faculties of government colleges. They charged that members of JI dominated both the Religious Affairs Ministry and the Islamiyyat wing of the Education Ministry. Ahl-e-Hadith complained of under-representation on government-sponsored religious boards such as the Zakat and Ush'r Council.

Ahmadis continued to contend that they were denied voting rights through requirements that they register as non-Muslims. Members of the public can challenge any Muslim on the voter roles to take an oath swearing to the finality of the Prophethood of Muhammed and denouncing the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement. For this reason, Ahmadis have refused to register. There are reserved seats for minority members in both the National and Provincial Assemblies. Such seats are allocated to the political parties on a proportional basis determined by their overall representation in the Assembly.

Members of minority religions volunteered for military service in small numbers, and there are no official obstacles to their advancement. However, in practice non-Muslims rarely, if ever, 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 was Islamized during the 1980s. This included the adoption of a number of textbooks that included derogatory remarks against minority religions, particularly Hindus and Jews, and the generalized teaching of religious intolerance as acceptable. This curriculum continued to undergo a major revision to eliminate such teachings and to remove Islamic teaching from secular subjects. The Education Ministry cooperated with international donors and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in this multi-year effort and professed its intention to proceed despite objections from conservative religious elements. Students were free to practice their faith. Many Ahmadis and Christians reported discrimination in applying to government educational institutions due to their religious affiliation. Christians and Ahmadis reportedly have been denied access to medical schools, and societal discrimination against Ahmadis persists at many universities.

The Government nationalized all church schools and colleges in Punjab and Sindh in 1972. The Government of Sindh oversaw a piecemeal denationalization program from 1985 to 1995, and the Government of Punjab began a similar program in 1996. In 2001, the federal Government and the courts ordered the provincial governments to move forward with a complete denationalization process. Teachers' unions strongly objected, fearing for their job security, and have attempted to tie up denationalization in the court system. The 2003 denationalization of Forman Christian College, arguably the most prominent Christian-founded educational institution in the country, and its successful December 2003 handover to its original owners, the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), helped remove the legal hurdles. In May, the Sindh Government announced its intention to proceed with the handover of St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's colleges to the Catholic Board of Education. The cases of Gordon College in Rawalpindi and Murray College in Sialkot (both PCUSA) remained unresolved.

Government policies do not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority faiths. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which is mandated to safeguard religious freedom, has on its masthead a Qur'anic verse: "Islam is the only religion acceptable to God." The Ministry claims it spends 30 percent of its annual budget to assist indigent minorities, repair minority places of worship, set up minority-run small development schemes, and celebrate minority festivals. However, religious minorities question these figures, observing that localities and villages housing minority citizens go without basic civic amenities.

All religious groups experienced bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes when attempting to build houses of worship or to obtain land. These were similar to what nonreligious groups faced. Ahmadis were prevented from building houses of worship. For example, in Tatlay Aali, Gujranwala District, the Ahmadi community was barred from completing construction, following attacks on the site by local Muslims. Sunni Muslim groups built mosques and shrines without government permission and at times in violation of zoning ordinances.

The provincial and federal governments have legal responsibility for the upkeep of religious property abandoned during partition. Disputes with minority communities over the property and its upkeep may be reviewed by civil courts. While the Government has funded the upkeep and repair of some properties, minority communities continue to charge that its efforts in many cases are inadequate.

Criminal law allows offenders to offer monetary restitution to victims and allows victims to carry out physical retribution rather than seek punishment through the court system. This supposedly Islamic provision applied to all. Minorities claimed that minority offenders faced far higher, and minority victims received far lower, amounts of monetary restitution than did Muslims.

Also supposedly based on Islamic law, a fact much in dispute, the Hudood Ordinances criminalize rape, extramarital sex, property crimes, alcohol, and gambling. They apply equally to Muslims and non-Muslims. Hudood violations can be tried on either Qur'anic or secular standards of evidence. If Qur'anic standards are used, Muslim and non-Muslim and male and female testimony carries different weight, and harsh Qur'anic punishments can be applied. No successful cases have been brought under this standard. Cases have been successfully prosecuted under secular standards, in which testimony has equal weight, and jail terms and fines have been applied. Women were often spuriously charged with extramarital sex under this law and forced to remain in detention for long periods awaiting trial. To address this issue, the Government adopted new legislation in January 2005, requiring a court order prior to detention of women on such Hudood charges. Human rights activists charged that this change was insufficient and continued to campaign for the repeal of the Hudood Ordinances.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Police torture and mistreatment of those in custody remained a serious and common problem throughout the country and at times resulted in extrajudicial killings. It was usually impossible to ascertain whether religion was a factor in cases in which religious minorities were victims; however, both Christian and Ahmadi communities claimed their members were more likely to be abused. Minority communities charged that police frequently failed to take adequate steps to arrest and prosecute those responsible for crimes against their members. Prison conditions, except those for wealthy or influential prisoners, were extremely poor. Non-Muslim prisoners generally were accorded poorer facilities than Muslim inmates.

The policeman charged in the May 2004 death of Samuel Masih, a Christian who was charged under the blasphemy laws and who died after police torture, remained in detention pending trial.

On July 26, 2004, police illegally detained Hindu agricultural laborer Manu Kohli in Dadu District and subjected him to severe beatings and other forms of torture before releasing him. The two officers involved were charged with assault.

On August 19, 2004, Nasir Mukhtar, a Christian, died of police torture in Sheikhpura. Mukhtar had been arrested on August 16 on charges of theft. According to his father, Mukhtar had befriended Muslim youths who invited him to their home and then framed him with theft. Following severe police beatings during interrogation, police admitted Mukhtar to the Civil Hospital where he died. When local Christians staged a protest over the death, police used baton charges and tear gas to disperse them. Police charged 20 Christians with offenses related to the protests. The police officers involved in Mukhtar's death were charged with murder, but none were arrested.

On November 3, 2004, unidentified persons kidnapped Samuel Sethi, an 8-year-old Christian. His family paid the abductors the demanded ransom, but the abductors killed Sethi. Police recovered Sethi's corpse and registered a case; however, they refused to arrest those accused by neighbors. Sethi's family charged that the accused bribed police to remain free. After numerous failed appeals for justice, the family emigrated from the country.

On February 8, 2005, three Muslim men kidnapped 13-year old Fozia Zafar, a Christian, in Alipur Chattah. Despite eyewitness accounts and confessions of two of those involved, police refused to register a complaint. Fozia's father, Zafar Masih, went to the District Police Officer, who forced local officers to record the charges and detain the two suspects. Since the complaint, Masih has been dismissed from his local government job, and local Muslims have pressured him to drop the complaint. Fozia and her third kidnapper remained at large.

The Government was not responsible for disappearances based on a person's religion.

There were no reports of security forces engaging in rape or mutilation based on religion.

The blasphemy laws were routinely used to harass religious minorities and liberal Muslims and to settle personal scores or business rivalries. Individuals were detained and convicted on spurious charges and often spent years in jail before acquittal, generally at the appellate level. Unlike in previous reporting periods, there were no reports of police or inmates killing those accused of blasphemy in custody; however, mobs occasionally attacked and killed the accused prior to their arrest. Religious extremists continued to threaten to kill all those acquitted of blasphemy charges. High-profile accused often went into hiding or emigrated after acquittal. In January 2005, in an effort to stem abuse, new legislation entered into force requiring senior police officials to investigate all blasphemy accusations prior to the filing of charges. At the end of the reporting period, 22 remained in detention awaiting trial on blasphemy charges, and 9 were in prison following conviction.

At the end of the period covered by this report, the case against Tariq Butt, a member of the banned Muslim extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and a prisoner who in 2002 killed a Sufi Muslim convicted of blasphemy, was still pending.

There were no developments during the reporting period in the case of either Pervez Masih or Ranjha Masih, who remained in prison on blasphemy charges.

On July 27, 2004, a Muslim woman publicly accused 16-year-old Christian Salaf Tasneem Dean of Wah Cantt of throwing a copy of the Qur'an into a local dump after Dean's 11-year-old daughter had accidentally thrown her father's antique copy of the Qur'an in the garbage. The woman had a history of strained relations with Dean's family. A Muslim mob threatened to burn down the Dean family residence and tried to kill Tasneem. Local elders and police intervened and arrested the girl and her father. Police eventually released them both following negotiations between local Muslim and Christian leaders, but the family moved to a new location for its safety.

In October 2004, police charged Mohammad Ali, the Muslim owner of the Yarmook Paper Mill in Kasar, with desecrating the Qur'an. The charges followed protests in which students from a local college claimed the mill was recycling copies of the Qur'an to manufacture cardboard. The accused claimed business rivals organized the protests.

On November 29, 2004, the District Court of Faisalabad convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to life in prison Muhammad Iqbal, an Ahmadi from Chak, Faisalabad District. Iqbal, who converted to the Ahmadiyya community as a young man, had recently returned to his home village. He angered the local Muslim religious leader when he refused to abandon the Ahmadiyya faith on March 23, 2004. The leader claimed that Iqbal, during an argument in the local mosque, referred to Muhammed as a false prophet. Ahmadi leaders called this charge pure fabrication.

In December 2004, police charged Shahdat Ali, an Ahmadi, with setting fire to the Qur'an in Uncha Mangat, Hafizbad district. The accused was burning trash. Local children caught some burned papers and took them to a local cleric who had a history of preaching against the local Ahmadi community. The cleric alleged that the burned pages were from the Qur'an. Ali claimed they were simply old newspapers. At the cleric's insistence, police registered a case. Police arrested the accused and two Ahmadi accomplices.

On December 17, 2004, the trial court acquitted Anwar Masih, a Christian, of blasphemy charges originally filed in November 2003. Following the acquittal, members of the extremist group Lashkar-i-Mujahideen vowed to kill him. Masih remained in hiding.

On April 20, a mob in Spin Khak, Nowshera District, shot and killed Ashiq Nabi after his uncle filed blasphemy charges against him. Nabi allegedly desecrated a copy of the Qur'an during an argument with his wife. Before police could arrest him on the charges, Nabi fled the village. After a local Islamic religious leader issued an edict declaring Nabi an infidel whose punishment should be death, a 400-member mob trapped Nabi in a tree and shot him. Police told reporters that they were working to identify the religious leader who issued the edict and would arrest him.

In addition to experiencing prosecution under the blasphemy laws, Ahmadis were often charged, detained, and convicted under the so-called anti-Ahmadi laws. According to Ahmadi leaders, 39 remained in detention on charges under these sections of the law, while 11 were serving convictions. Ahmadi leaders also claimed that the Government used regular sections of the Penal Code against their members for religious reasons. They claimed nine members were in detention on such charges, but none were serving convictions.

On July 22, 2004, a Muslim mob attacked an Ahmadi youth Ghulam Ahmad Tahir following an anti-Ahmadi conference. Tahir fled for his own safety. The crowd charged that he threw stones at them, injuring a Muslim, and fired a pistol. Ahmadis disputed this account of events and asked for a medical report. Although one was never produced, police charged Tahir with assault.

On August 9, 2004, police charged Muhammad Ehsan, an Ahmadi, with trespassing and weapon possession in Chenab Nagar. Ehsan, who suffered from severe mental problems, was accused of climbing the roof of a mosque with a knife and Ahmadiyya literature. Despite evidence of his illness, police arrested Ehsan. Ahmadis denied that he was in possession of literature during the incident and claimed the arrest was simply on religious grounds.

In November 2004, police charged Zulfiqar Goraya, an Ahmadi, with violating the anti-Ahmadi laws by posing as a Muslim. Goraya had sent wedding cards that used the icon number 786, which stands for a popular Qur'anic verse, and that had the Asslam-o-Alikam (the Islamic greeting) and Inshallah (God willing) printed on them.

The Government did not impose onerous financial penalties due to religion.

The Government did not abuse converts to minority religions. Converts to the Ahmadiyya community were often accused of blasphemy, violations of the anti-Ahmadi laws, or other crimes. The Government arrested and prosecuted such individuals. Conversion to other minority religions generally took place in secret to avoid a societal backlash.

Conservative Islamists (generally Deobandis or JI) claimed the Government unjustly searched their homes, schools, and mosques as part of its continued crackdown on extremist and terrorist groups. The Government denied such allegations, noting the complainants all had previous ties to banned groups, making them reasonable targets.

Minority communities charged the Government was complicit in seizures of their property by Muslims and that the Government policy of dismantling illegal slum settlements disproportionately targeted minority communities.

On July 22, 2004, local government officials in Yuzman, Bahawalpur District, allotted four acres of residential land to two local Muslims. Twenty-six Hindu families had lived on the allotted land for the past 25 years. Protests from the Hindu community had no impact and the local government issued an eviction notice on December 29. Protests to the provincial government were ongoing without result at the end of the reporting period.

On August 12, 2004, Christians in Basti Bohar discovered that local Muslims had seized two acres of their local cemetery for use as agricultural land. The Christians filed a complaint with police, who ordered an investigation that was still ongoing at the end of the reporting period. In the interim, the land remained with the Muslims.

On November 9, 2004, the Christian community in Loghur, Kasur district staged a protest over destruction of their houses. An influential Muslim leader had allegedly bulldozed the houses and taken valuables in order to build a pathway to his property. The Christians had obtained an injunction from the High Court prohibiting the demolition. Police took no action.

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 both the brick-making and agricultural sectors. Christians and Hindus were disproportionately victims of this practice. In June, police raided sites in Sheikhpura district, Punjab Province, and freed more than 300 mostly Christian workers performing forced labor in brick kilns.

Islamists charged without proof that government forces damaged mosques and religious schools during military operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The Government vigorously denied the allegations.

Forced Religious Conversion

Forced and coerced conversions of religious minorities to Islam occurred at the hands of societal actors. Religious minorities claimed that Government actions to stem the problem were inadequate.

On August 27, 2004, a Muslim man abducted a 15-year-old Christian, Samina Izhaq, in Faisalabad. The abductor forced Izhaq to convert to Islam and live as his wife. On September 1, following the intervention of Christian NGOs, police freed Izhaq and charged her abductor with kidnapping.

There were no reports of the forced conversion of minor United States citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States. There were reports of the refusal to allow such citizens to return to the United States.

Abuses by Terrorist Organizations

There were several incidents involving the abuse of specific religious groups carried out by individuals or organizations designated as terrorist organizations by the Secretary of State under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Nationwide, the sectarian violence situation improved during the period covered by this report. Shi'a leaders claimed that the targeted assassinations of professional members of their communities, particularly in Karachi, virtually ended over the last year. They attributed this to Shi'a participation in the MMA and a generally improved relationship with Sunni sects.

Intrasectarian Sunni violence also appeared to decrease in most of the country during the reporting period. Deobandis reported that Sunni Tehrik had largely abandoned its assassination of Deobandi clergy and supporters in Sindh. Deobandi leaders reported one known assassination on October 9, 2004, when unknown gunmen in Karachi killed Mufti Jameel Ahmed Khan and an associate in their vehicle. The assassination might have been linked to a Deobandi-versus-Shi'a cycle of violence playing out at the same time in Punjab. On May 30, unknown assailants kidnapped, severely tortured, and killed JI senior official Aslam Muhahid in Karachi. The motives were unknown, but the killing appeared to be linked to political violence.

Several troubling trends continued despite this overall improved environment. Sectarian extremist and terrorist groups continued attacks on houses of worship and religious gatherings. The Government banned religious extremist organizations from holding any public gatherings in the wake of renewed sectarian violence in October 2004. Deobandi extremist groups included Lashkar-e-Janghvi, a designated foreign terrorist organization, and Sipah-i-Sahaba, a group banned under Pakistani law.

In October 2004, a cycle of sectarian violence in the Punjab, which had not seen any for several years, broke out. On October 1, a suicide bomber, likely affiliated with Lashkar-e-Janghvi, attacked a Shi'a mosque during Friday prayers in Sialkot, killing 31 and injuring more than 40. In retaliation, on October 7, a subsequently arrested member of the Shi'a extremist group Sipah-i-Mohammad, Amjad Shah, exploded two bombs during a gathering in Multan to mark the death of Deobandi extremist Maulana Azam Tariq. Thirty-nine persons were killed and 100 were injured. On October 10, a suicide bomber affiliated with Lashkar-e-Janghvi killed 4 and injured 10 when he detonated a device at the entrance to a Shi'a mosque in Lahore.

In addition, there appeared to be a new wave of attacks on celebrations at Sufi shrines in 2005, likely led by Deobandi extremists who long had termed the celebrations "idolatrous." On March 19, more than 40 died and more than 100 were injured from a bomb explosion at the shrine to Pir Syed Rakheel Shah in Jhal Magsi District, Balochistan during Shi'a and Brailvi ceremonies commemorating the saint's death. The Government blamed the attack on Lashkar-e-Janghvi. On May 27, a suicide bomber attacked the Bari Imam Shrine outside Islamabad during Shi'a and Brailvi ceremonies on the anniversary of the saint's death. At least 20 died and at least 100 were injured.

On January 8, Deobandi extremists shot and killed Shi'a cleric Agha Ziauddin Rizvi in Gilgit, Northern Areas, setting off a new wave of sectarian tension and violence in that region. In subsequent demonstrations in Gilgit, Karimabad, and Skardu, Shi'a rioters killed 15 Sunni. Sources familiar with the region claimed that both Shi'a and Deobandi extremist groups stepped up activities in Gilgit following the riots, creating two separate armed camps and a serious law-and-order problem. Extremists on both sides attacked properties belonging to adherents of the rival sect and assaulted its members. Both sides harassed and assaulted Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan in Gilgit, claiming they supported the opposite camp. On March 23, Shi'a assailants killed the former Inspector General of Police for the Northern Areas Sakhiullah Tareen in Gilgit. Sectarian tension in Gilgit remained unresolved at the time of the report, although the situation in other parts of the Northern Areas had returned to normal.

On May 30, a suicide bomber and 3 armed accomplices attacked a Shi'a mosque in Karachi, killing 5 and injuring at least 30. The Government termed it a sectarian attack and blamed Lashkar-e-Janghvi.

Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan came under threat of societal violence for the first time during the period covered by this report. In addition to conducting attacks against community members in Gilgit, Deobandi extremist groups vandalized schools and health clinics in the Northern Areas and the neighboring Chitral district of NWFP that the Aga Khan Foundation had established. On December 27, unknown assailants believed to be linked to Deobandi extremist groups killed two Ismaili employees of the Aga Khan Health Service Office in Chitral and burned vehicles belonging to the organization.

Al-Qa'ida-linked organizations maintained networks in the country, and its supporters periodically issued anti-Semitic statements. Hafiz Saeed, leader of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a designated foreign terrorist organization, consistently issued statements calling for holy war against Jews and Hindus. Government authorities charged 10 members of Jandullah, an extremist group linked to al-Qa'ida, with a string of

bombings including the January 15, 2004, attack on the Pakistan Bible Society office in Karachi.

In accordance with the Anti-Terrorist Act, the Government banned the activities of and membership in several religious extremist and terrorist groups. The Anti-Terrorist Act allows 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 of the groups that the Government banned still remained active.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government took steps to bolster religious freedom during the period covered by this report.

In January 2005, the President signed into law new procedures for the implementation of both the blasphemy laws and the Hudood Ordinances. Under the new procedures, senior police officials must investigate all blasphemy cases before charges are filed, and a court order must precede women's detention under the extramarital sex provisions of the Hudood Ordinances. Human rights campaigners had agitated for such changes since 2000 but, by the end of the reporting period, were skeptical of their impact and continued to press for outright repeal of the laws. However, early indications were that the perceived changes were reducing the abuse of the laws. In May the Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology stated that "Hudood Laws are not divine scriptures and thus can be changed."

The Government maintained its existing ban on terrorist and sectarian organizations known to be active in the country. The assets of such organizations remained frozen, and their identified leaders were under surveillance. Although most of the banned organizations continued to try and operate, the Government policies of monitoring, periodic raids on safe houses, periodic detention of leaders and activists, and denial of financial resources were effective in diminishing such groups' impact.

The Government remained in active negotiations with the sectarian boards, or wafaqs, which oversee the vast majority of the country's Islamic religious schools, or madrassahs. During the period covered by this report, the wafaqs began utilizing paid investigators to ensure the compliance of all member madrassahs with previous bans on the teaching of religious and sectarian hatred and the use of madrassahs for terrorist or extremist recruiting. Wafaqs oversaw an ongoing phase-in of modern subjects such as English, math, and science at the government's request. Wafaqs also complied with government reporting requirements on foreign students and audited accounts. In May, the Chair of the Education Minister created a new Madrassah Reform Committee to resolve outstanding questions on registration, examination and disbursement of \$100 million (approximately 5.8 billion rupees) in available funds to qualified madrassahs. However, by the end of the reporting period, the committee had failed to make headway and funding remained stalled.

In March 2005, the Government presented draft legislation for creation of a National Human Rights Commission. The Government continued to work with the international community to revise the draft legislation to ensure a strong, independent monitoring body.

A 3-year Human Rights Mass Awareness and Education Project, which the Government began in 2001 with funding from the Asian Development Bank, concluded in 2004. The program actively engaged several NGOs. The Government continued to include human rights awareness as part of its police training program.

In May, 58 religious leaders representing the 6 major Islamic schools of thought in the country issued a joint religious injunction, or fatwa, against sectarian attacks on Muslims and, less directly, the killing of non-Muslims in the country. The Religious Affairs Minister was the driving force behind the fatwa and facilitated its negotiation.

In September 2004, Islamic, Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Parsi leaders held the inaugural meeting of the World Council of Religions in Islamabad. President Musharraf firmly backed the initiative, assisted in the council's organization, and presided over its opening session. The Council's goal was to promote increased interaction and dialogue among various faiths. The Council continued to organize sessions throughout the country with the support of local and provincial governments. In addition, the Religious Affairs Ministry and the Islamic Ideology Council organized a number of smaller intersectoral and interfaith meetings and dialogue sessions. As a result of these meetings, Deobandi and JI religious and political leaders significantly toned down anti-Christian and anti-Hindu rhetoric.

On Christmas 2004, the Government displayed its commitment to "enlightened moderation," an agenda focused on tolerance and religious harmony. Leaders including the President urged intercommunal peace, and state-owned television devoted much of its programming to Christmas rather than typical coverage of Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah, whose birthday is celebrated on December 25.

Courts took some steps toward administering the law fairly where religious matters were concerned. Original trial courts acquitted two blasphemy defendants during the period covered by this report. In September 2004, the Sessions Court Lahore acquitted Iftikhar Ahmed, a Muslim, for desecration of the Qur'an in 2000. It found that he suffered from a mental disorder. In December 2004, the trial court cleared Anwar Masih of charges that he insulted the Prophet in 2003. The court found all evidence against Masih to be hearsay. In November 2004, the Peshawar High Court overturned the blasphemy conviction of Munawar Mohsin, former Frontier Post copy editor, who was originally convicted in 2003 for publishing a letter to the editor derogatory of the Prophet.

In response to JI and Deobandi calls for the Government to declare Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan to be non-Muslims, the Government made clear it would not accede to the campaign and openly defended the development work of the Aga Khan Foundation. The President maintained regular contact with the Aga Khan and accompanied him on a May trip to the Northern Areas where most of the Aga Khan's followers resided. The Government also refused to give in to Islamist pressure to abandon curriculum reform and the concept of a national educational examination board.

According to press reports, after Saudi authorities arrested 40 Pakistani Christians for proselytizing in April, the Government pressured Saudi Arabia successfully for the prisoners' release.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

Relations between the country's religious communities remained tense. Violence against religious minorities and between Muslim sects continued. Most believed that a small minority were responsible for attacks; however, discriminatory legislation and the teaching of religious intolerance in public schools created a permissible environment for attacks. Police at times refused to prevent violence and harassment or refused to charge persons who commit such offenses.

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 does not intervene to prevent violence.

On July 23, 2004, several thousand Sunni Muslims demonstrated in the Ahmadi-majority city of Chenab Nagar (Rabwah) over a decision to relocate the local police station. The station, which had included a small makeshift mosque, had been constructed on land loaned by the Ahmadiyya community. The local Islamic leadership objected to the return of the mosque site to the Ahmadi owners. On September 6, the provincial government, bowing to public pressure, ordered the site returned to police.

On July 30, 2004, unknown assailants shot at Shahid Ahmad Dar, an Ahmadi, in Lahore. The assailants fired after yelling religious insults at Dar while he was returning home from shopping. He was not injured.

On August 11, 2004, a mob led by local Muslim religious leaders attacked a construction site in Tatlay Aali, Gujranwala district, where Ahmadis were building a new house of worship. Police ordered the Ahmadis to cease construction. The Ahmadiyya community obtained permission from local authorities to proceed, but the mob again attacked the sight, and police barred construction from continuing indefinitely.

On August 21, unknown assailants shot and killed Barkatullah Mangla, an Ahmadi lawyer and president of the local Ahmadiyya community in Sargodha. The murder took place shortly after Mangla returned home from offering his nightly prayers. Assailants called at his home, asked to see him, and then shot him in his garden. No one had been arrested by the end of the reporting period.

In November 2004, Muhammad Ishaq Danish converted to the Ahmadiyya community. Upon learning of his conversion, his brother beat him with a hockey stick until he lost consciousness and then expelled him from the family home.

On December 20, 2004, Ahmadis were replacing the roof on a house in Sahiwal, Sarghoda district, which was used as a place of worship. At the instigation of local Muslim religious leaders, a mob of 30 attacked the construction site and burned both the new roof and items in the worship room. Police took no action against those responsible.

Sectarian violence against Christians continued during the period covered by this report.

On October 20 and 24, 2004, unknown assailants threw bombs into the courtyard of a Christian church in Rawalpindi. In both cases, parish staff discovered the grenades and contacted police. The bomb disposal unit deactivated them before they could explode.

On March 16, a mob attacked a group of more than 60 women who had gathered in a Christian church in Miskeen Musharaf Colony in Islamabad for prayer and fasting. More than 150 persons attacked the women, grabbing them by the hair, beating them, and damaging church property. The local Muslim religious leader objected to the construction of the church building located about 100 meters from his mosque, and he and his students reportedly led the attack on the women.

On March 28, five gunmen opened fire on Christians leaving Easter services at a church in Lahore, killing one and injuring seven. Police arrested two of the assailants. The motivation for the attack appeared to be a land dispute between local Muslims and the Christian community. The Muslims wanted Christians to relinquish the land on which their church and graveyard were constructed. The land, provided decades ago to the Christian community by the Muslims' ancestors, had surged in value with the expansion of Lahore.

On April 7, Pastor Shamoan Babar and his Catholic driver, Daniel Emmanuel, were found dead on a Peshawar road. Unknown assailants had kidnapped the two on April 5, and police surmised they had been tortured and shot several times while bound. Some reports claimed Babar's body was mutilated. Babar's family claimed that he had received threats prior to his death warning him to stop his religious activities. Police suspected that Babar's non-religious business activities might have been the motivating factor in the crime; however, the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA) believed the killings to be religiously motivated.

On April 23, seven or eight Muslim youths attacked Shahbaz Masih, a Catholic in Mandi Bahauddin district. The assailants dragged Masih into a field and beat him, breaking both his legs and leaving him there. They then called his parents and informed them that he was dead. His parents found him and took him to the local hospital. According to local Christian leaders, Masih's friendly relationship with his Muslim employer motivated the attack. Muslims in the district felt that Masih was not sufficiently subservient to his employer.

Hindus faced societal violence, often directed at their temples, during the period covered by this report. Criminals targeted Hindu businessmen for kidnap, particularly in Karachi. Hindus claimed they were forced to pay ransoms after police did little to recover kidnap victims.

On May 21, unidentified persons killed Bhagat Mohan Bheel, the Hindu caretaker of a temple at Sanjero, Sanghar District. The assailants then ransacked the temple, destroying statues. Police made no arrests. On October 15, 2004, unidentified persons occupied the Hindu temple of Baba Ganga-Nath in Hyderabad at gunpoint. The police took no action to reclaim the building.

In the past, Sikhs had not faced societal violence in the country; however, on September 25, a Muslim mob attacked the Sikh Gurudwara Junam Asthan in the village of Nankana Sahib, causing damage to the shrine. A government report, which stated that the land on which the Guru Nanak Degree College was located rightfully belonged to the Gurudwara, angered the mob. The National Assembly called on the Punjab provincial government to prosecute those responsible. Police arrested several persons in connection with the case. In May 2005, the Punjab Government issued a notification upgrading Nankana Sahib to a district, an action that gives the area additional autonomy and revenue rights and that helped appease the Sikh community.

Ahmadis suffered from societal harassment and discrimination. Even the rumor that someone might be an Ahmadi or had Ahmadi relatives could stifle opportunities for employment or promotion. Most Ahmadis were home-schooled or went to private, Ahmadi-run schools. Ahmadi students in public schools often were subject to abuse by their non-Ahmadi classmates. The quality of teachers assigned to predominately Ahmadi schools by the Government reportedly was poor. In 2002, in response to a question from Islamic clerics, President Pervez Musharraf, who had been accused of favoring Ahmadis, declared that he believed Ahmadis to be "non-Muslims."

While many Christians belonged to the poorest socioeconomic groups and faced discrimination, the reason might have more to do with ethnic and social factors than with religion. Many poor Christians remained in the profession of their low-caste Hindu ancestors, most of whom were "untouchables." Their position in society, although somewhat better today than in the past, did not reflect major progress despite more than 100 years of consistent missionary aid and development. Christian students reportedly were forced to eat at separate tables in public schools that are predominately Muslim.

Ismailis reported that they were the objects of resentment of Sunni Muslims due to the comparative economic advances they had made. The Government had not harassed Ismailis; however, they reported that they frequently were pressured to adopt certain practices of conservative Muslims or risk being ostracized socially.

Although there were very few Jewish citizens in the country, anti-Semitic press articles were common in the vernacular press. NGO sources pointed out that since India's 1992 establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, the Pakistani media, both mainstream and Islamic, sometimes referred to India as the "Zionist threat on our borders."

Nonetheless, the attitude of the media was not reflected in the actions of the Government. The Government cooperated in the capture of those responsible for the 2002 abduction and killing of Wall Street Journal correspondent Daniel Pearl.

Some Sunni Muslim groups published literature calling for violence against Ahmadis, Shi'a Muslims, other Sunni sects, Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan, and Hindus. Some newspapers frequently published articles that contained derogatory references to religious minorities, especially Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews. Sermons at mosques frequently railed against Ahmadis, other Muslim groups, Hindus, and increasingly Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan.

Proselytizing generally was considered socially inappropriate among Muslims; missionaries faced some difficulties due to this perception. For example, some Sunni Muslim groups opposed missionary activities and at times issued verbal threats against missionaries to discourage them from working.

Discrimination in employment based on religion appeared widespread. In particular, Christians had difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, although Christian activists said that the employment situation had improved somewhat in the private sector in recent years. Christians and Hindus also found themselves disproportionately represented in the country's most oppressed social group, bonded laborers; illegal bonded labor was widespread. Agricultural, brick-kiln, and domestic workers often were kept virtually as slaves. The majority of bonded labor in those sectors was non-Muslim. All were subject to the same conditions, whether they were Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. In June, police raided sites in Sheikhpura district, Punjab Province, and freed more than 300 mostly Christian workers performing forced labor in brick kilns. Although the Government removed colonial-era entries for religious affiliation from government job application forms to prevent discrimination in hiring, the faith of some, particularly of Christians and Hindus, often could be ascertained from their names.

Islamic private schools known as madrassahs came to the forefront after September 11, 2001, due to their perceived use as training and recruiting grounds for extremist and terrorist organizations. Subsequent studies showed that only a small fraction of schools fell into this category. The five boards or wafaqs that oversaw most of the country's madrassahs had already agreed with the Government to undertake substantial reforms. All wafaqs mandated the elimination of teaching that promoted religious or sectarian intolerance and terrorist or extremist recruitment at madrassahs. They appointed inspectors to ensure compliance. All inspectors mandated that affiliated madrassahs supplement religious studies with modern subjects, including English, math, and science. Phased-in approaches were underway at each wafaq's members. Bureaucratic delay continued to stymie release of government funds for this purpose. Wafaqs also mandated the registration of foreign students with the Government and restricted foreign private funding of madrassahs. Registration and examination issues remained under active discussion with the Government. Some unregistered and Deobandi-controlled madrassahs in the FATA and northern Balochistan continued to teach extremism. Similarly the Dawa schools run by Jamat-ud-Dawa continued such teaching and recruitment for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a designated foreign terrorist organization.

Human rights groups claimed that rape was often used against women to humiliate and dishonor them. Minority rights groups claimed that Hindu and Christian women were especially vulnerable.

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.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom with the Government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. representatives met and spoke regularly 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. Chief concerns during this reporting period included the blasphemy laws, the Hudood Ordinances, curriculum reform in the public education and madrassah education systems, treatment of the Ahmadiyya community, sectarian violence, and growing societal pressure on Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan. U.S. Embassy officials, including the Ambassador, met with leaders from communities of all faiths and NGOs working on religious freedom issues.

The U.S. Embassy continued to raise concerns informally about the abuse of the blasphemy laws and Hudood Ordinances with the Government, parliamentarians, and officials. Embassy officials participated in a number of seminars that NGOs organized to discuss these issues with a wide spectrum of stakeholders. During all of these discussions, Embassy officials continued to stress the need for the Government to end abusive and excessively harsh implementation of these laws. The new legislation that the Government enacted in January 2005 represented an important positive step in this direction. In addition to general advocacy on the law, the Embassy continued to monitor a number of high-profile ongoing blasphemy cases and appeals, including the case of Pervez Masih, and provided information to interested parties in the

United States.

As part of its overall public education reform program, valued at \$100 million (\$5.8 billion rupees), the United States provided substantial financial support to the Government's curriculum reform initiative, which included eliminating the teaching of religious intolerance.

Embassy officials regularly monitored progress on madrassah reform and encouraged such progress. During the period covered by this report, the Ambassador met with the Religious Affairs Minister to obtain his views on progress toward reform and to urge government cooperation. Senior State Department and Education Department officials also raised concerns about the need for swift reform of the madrassah system with the Education Minister. Embassy officials encouraged and facilitated study by those involved in madrassah reform of the relationship between religious schools and state authorities in the United States, as a possible model for Pakistan.

The Embassy carefully monitored treatment of the Ahmadiyya community. During discussions with Islamic religious leaders, Embassy officials urged reconciliation with the Ahmadiyya community and an end to persecution of this minority. Embassy officials also raised and discussed treatment of the Ahmadis with parliamentarians, encouraging an eventual repeal of anti-Ahmadi laws and a less severe application in the interim.

Embassy officials regularly met with religious and political leaders from all major Islamic groups. During these meetings, they raised the need to end sectarian violence and to define a more cooperative relationship between the sects. Embassy officials encouraged interfaith and intersectorian dialogue initiatives, such as the World Council of Religions. In meetings with officials from the Islamic Ideology Council and the Ministry of Religion, Embassy officials encouraged the bodies to play an active role in promoting sectarian harmony. The Ambassador raised specific concerns about growing sectarian violence in the Northern Areas with the Religious Affairs and Interior Ministers, urging the Government to take corrective action. In particular, he delivered a demarche to the Minister of Religious Affairs on concerns regarding increasing societal pressure on Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan and urged the Minister to take all necessary steps to prevent violence, discrimination, and maltreatment of the Ismaili followers of the Aga Khan.

The Embassy continued programs designed to promote religious tolerance and better understanding of religion in the United States. In April 2004, it provided financial support for the annual American Studies conference organized by the Area Study Center of Quaid-i-Azam University focused on "Politics and Religion in the United States." Also in April, a Fulbright scholar from the Department of Theology at Loyola University spent 2 weeks working with the faculty of the Islamic Research Institute. A grant enabled an NGO in Karachi to conduct a series of videoconference discussions with U.S. interlocutors on the challenges of bringing up young people in the Islamic faith in the modern world.

The Embassy continued to monitor developments in high profile violence against minorities, such as the Easter attacks in Lahore, and provided information to interested parties in the United States.

The Embassy also assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up specific cases involving religious minorities.

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