

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	216
Land:	Pakistan
Kilde:	Minority Rights Group International
Titel:	State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 – Pakistan.
Udgivet:	6. juli 2011
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	25. august 2011

Title	State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 - Pakistan
Publisher	Minority Rights Group International
Country	Pakistan
Publication Date	6 July 2011
Cite as	Minority Rights Group International, <i>State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 - Pakistan</i> , 6 July 2011, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e16d3658.html [accessed 23 August 2011]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher.

State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2011 - Pakistan

In 2010, ongoing hostilities in Afghanistan had a direct impact on Pakistan, which has also borne the biggest burden from the attendant refugee flows. This, coupled with the inevitable pressures from militants, has made the maintenance of law and order a close to impossible task. In addition, the country was devastated by the worst floods in its history in June, affecting nearly 20 million people, with a death toll estimated in excess of 2,000, and nearly US \$10 billion worth of damage. These events contributed to further displacement of populations, accompanied by ethnic and religious tension.

According to a statement made by the Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy (PODA) at the 2010 UN Forum on Minority Issues, women in general were particularly affected by the floods, given that they were more likely to have been at home when the flooding struck, were less likely to have been able to swim, and would have felt a responsibility to try to rescue children and animals. The statement also mentioned that women from minority groups in particular often do not have a national identity card, meaning that those who survived would not have been able to claim relief and compensation in the period following the flooding.

As is perhaps inevitable in these conditions, the situation for minorities worsened during the year, leading Ibn Abdur Rehman, Secretary-General of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, to declare that the organization had recorded an increase in hatred of minorities by extremists. In addition, minorities in Pakistan continue to face day-to-day societal discrimination and marginalization, impacting on development outcomes. For women from minority groups, this is compounded by the discrimination that they experience as women, and may also be compounded by caste-based discrimination. A recent survey reported by the AHRC found that primary school enrolment rates for girls belonging to scheduled Hindu castes in Pakistan were just 10.2 per cent; the national female primary enrolment rate was given as 48 per cent. Overall, 87 per cent of women from scheduled Hindu castes were illiterate, compared to 58 per cent of women nationally. This indicates a huge discrepancy in regard to access to education between this minority group and the Muslim majority. The AHRC also reports that religious minority women have limited employment options, and are most often found in low-status work, such as manual scavenging or cleaning in urban areas, or subsistence or bonded agricultural labour in rural areas. Gender discrimination and patriarchal norms within their own communities mean that few women within minority communities are able to retain control over income that they bring into the family. Violence against women also remains a considerable problem. At the end of the year, the country's Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill remained in 'legislative limbo', having been passed by the National Assembly in August 2009, but then allowed to lapse by the Senate.

Under such circumstances it was perhaps inevitable that the tension between religious communities grew, with widespread discrimination and persistent violence perpetrated by armed groups and individuals. Tensions were heightened in multi-ethnic cities such as Karachi with regular attacks against residents. There was a sharp rise in kidnappings, with Pakistan's Hindu community particularly affected. One report suggested that in Lyari district of Karachi alone there were 10-15 such kidnappings a month, with similar estimates in Balochistan. According to the AHRC, this has included the kidnapping and forced marriage of young Hindu girls. In one case documented by the AHRC in March 2010, a 17-year-old Hindu girl was kidnapped by three Muslim brothers, raped by one of them, and pressured into marrying her rapist and converting to Islam. Allegedly, local police took no action.

The continued non-recognition of Ahmadiyya, seen as violating Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws by declaring themselves believers in Islam, means that this community of around 600,000 continues to face serious discrimination in all areas of life. The requirement of religious affiliation on national identity cards excludes them from being registered as Muslim, meaning that they are unable to vote in elections. In 2010, there were regular reports of violence against Ahmadiyya, including attacks on two mosques in Lahore on 28 May which resulted in 94 casualties and injured over 100 more. Three days later, gunmen attacked victims who were still recuperating in the city's Jinnah Hospital.

Sikhs too have come under pressure. According to last year's edition of *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, Sikhs in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) controlled by the Taliban were being made to pay a tax, *jizya*. Pressure on the community has since increased. A group of Sikhs were kidnapped in the Khyber and Orakzai regions in early 2010. The BBC reported that one of the men was later discovered beheaded, although other news agencies reported that two were killed. In April, 72 hectares of *gurdwara* (i.e. the Sikh place of worship) property was transferred without due process to the Defense Housing Association.

A very worrying trend has been the increased vulnerability of followers of Sufism, a moderate strain of Islam practised by many Pakistanis. The prominent Data Darbar shrine, the burial site of a famous Sufi saint in Lahore, was attacked by three suicide bombers on 1 July, which resulted in 42 deaths and nearly 200 wounded.

An incident that reveals the seriousness of the situation facing minorities was the sentencing to death of Aasia Bibi. Bibi, a Christian, and mother of five, was attacked by others and prevented from drawing water from a communal well on the grounds that she was 'impure'. In the course of the altercation, she reportedly accused the others of following religious laws that were antiquated. Based on hearsay evidence that she had blasphemed the Prophet Muhammad, which she denies, Bibi was subsequently sentenced to death under Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws. Although no one has actually been executed under their provisions, according to the BBC, some 30 accused have been killed by lynch mobs. There were moves in parliament to repeal or at least amend the provisions. When President Asif Zardari sought to pardon Bibi, the Sheikhupura District Court passed an order on 29 November preventing this, indicating that it would violate religious laws. On 31 December, a 24-hour strike was held in the country's major cities to protest against any changes to the legislation. The Governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, visited Bibi in order to show his support and called for the abolition of laws that treat individuals in this manner. His statements ultimately proved fatal, as in January 2011 he was killed by his bodyguard, who was subsequently celebrated as a hero by certain segments of Pakistani society.

Developments in Balochistan demonstrate the complex nature of the kinds of pressures minorities face in Pakistan. Baloch activists have been pressing for greater regional control, not least due to the fact that the region suffers from severe under-development at the same time as the country in general gains from having access to the rich natural gas reserves that are found in the province. While the Pakistani parliament passed reforms in 2010 aimed at increasing local autonomy and addressing grievances of the Baloch minority, the civilian authorities struggled to implement these changes in a highly polarized environment. Some more extreme groups view the presence of other minorities as a threat to their aspirations. As a result, there have been numerous attacks against religious establishments and harassment of other minority communities. The attacks

against educational establishments have been particularly disruptive of the social fabric in the province, as highlighted in an HRW report entitled *Their Future is at Stake*, which reports that attacks have particularly targeted girls' schools and schools where boys and girls are taught together. It also appears that some extremist groups in Balochistan may be coercing women into following strict Islamic dress codes, infringing the rights of religious minority women, as well as those of Muslim women who choose not to cover their faces. A statement from the extremist Baloch Ghaeratmand Group included in a news report by the ACHR stated that acid would be thrown at the faces of any women or girls appearing in public with their faces uncovered. In addition, the HRW report mentioned above details examples of extreme acts of gender-based violence against women that have been sanctioned by local legislators on the basis of 'tribal custom', denying women's and girls' access to justice and protection from the state.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani security forces appeared to continue with its practice of forced disappearances, as the bodies of suspected Baloch militants who had disappeared were regularly uncovered.

The violence has taken on a sectarian tone as tensions have mounted between the Shi'a and Sunni communities in Balochistan and other parts of Pakistan. According to one estimate, nearly 400 people died in 2010 in such sectarian clashes across the country.

Some areas of Pakistan's north-west, especially those bordering Afghanistan, remain under the influence of the Taliban, and the general lawlessness in these parts has led to attacks against tribal communities. There were two such notable attacks in 2010. The first, in April, resulting in 42 deaths, took place in the Kacha Pukha camp near Kohat for internally displaced who had fled fighting in Orakzai Agency. The dead belonged to the Mani Khel and Baramad Khel tribes. The second occurred on 25 December when a suicide bomber killed over 40 and injured over 100 members of the Salarzai tribe in the Bajaur Agency. The attack occurred at a World Food Programme (WFP) distribution point. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack. These Pashtun tribes have sought to organize their own militias (*lashkars*) for their self-protection which have evoked further wrath from extremists.

In the midst of this, the government has paid lip service to the need to protect minorities. The authorities have sought to regulate *madrassas*, especially those preaching extremism. However, the number and severity of high-profile cases of violations of minority rights have increased, with security forces and government agencies apparently unwilling and unable to act against the discrimination and exclusion facing minorities. The Ministry of Minority Affairs has been mandated to increase protection for minorities, but a severe lack of resources means that such efforts inevitably flounder. In addition, the failure to recognize civil or common law marriages disproportionately affects Sikhs and Hindus, especially Dalits, with women from these communities subsequently faced with insurmountable obstacles in accessing property rights, health or administrative services.

Copyright notice: © Minority Rights Group International. All rights reserved.