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2011 Report on International Religious Freedom - Pakistan

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
July 30, 2012

[Covers calendar year from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2011]

Executive Summary

The constitution and other laws and policies restrict religious freedom and, in practice, the government enforced these restrictions. The government demonstrated a trend toward deterioration in respect for and protection of the right to religious freedom. The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion, and it requires that laws be consistent with Islam. The constitution states that "subject to law, public order, and morality, every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion." Some government practices, however, limited freedom of religion, particularly for religious minorities. Freedom of speech is constitutionally "subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam." Abuses under the blasphemy law and other discriminatory laws continued; the government did not take adequate measures to prevent these incidents or reform the laws to prevent abuse. Since the government rarely investigated or prosecuted the perpetrators of increased extremist attacks on religious minorities and members of the Muslim majority promoting tolerance, the climate of impunity continued. There were instances in which law enforcement personnel reportedly abused religious minorities in custody. The government took some steps to improve religious freedom and promote tolerance, such as the creation of a Ministry of National Harmony after devolution of the Ministry of Minorities and the appointment of a special advisor for minority affairs following the assassination of Minister of Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti.

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Societal intolerance and violence against minorities and Muslims promoting tolerance increased. There were increased reports of human rights and religious freedom activists and members of minorities hesitating to speak in favor of religious tolerance due to a climate of intolerance and fear, especially after the killings of Governor of Punjab Salman Taseer and Minister Bhatti as a result of their opposition to the blasphemy laws. A rise in acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities by extremists exacerbated existing sectarian tensions. Extremists in some parts of the country demanded that all citizens follow their authoritarian interpretation of Islam and threatened brutal consequences if they did not abide by it. Extremists also targeted Muslims advocating for tolerance and pluralism, including followers of Sufism and other forms of Islam. Several attacks were directed at Ahmadi, Hindu, Sufi, and Shia gatherings and religious sites, resulting in numerous deaths and extensive damage.

Extremists protested against public debate about potential amendments to the blasphemy laws or against alleged acts of blasphemy.

During the year, the U.S. government closely monitored the treatment of religious minorities. The U.S. embassy encouraged the government to address concerns of religious freedom and advocated for the repeal of the blasphemy laws in meetings with government officials. Embassy and other U.S. government officials met with senior Pakistani officials to discuss religious freedom and minority issues. The embassy held events honoring minority leaders and others working on religious freedom. Among interfaith events sponsored by the embassy was a November interfaith dialogue that included Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Sikh leaders.

Section I. Religious Demography

Ninety-five percent of the population is Muslim (75 percent Sunni and 25 percent Shia). Groups composing 5 percent of the population or less include Hindus, Christians, Parsis/Zoroastrians, Baha'is, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others. Ahmadis, who are legally prohibited from identifying themselves as Muslims, generally choose not to identify themselves as non-Muslims. Other religious groups include Kalasha, Kihals, and Jains. Less than 0.5 percent of the population, as recorded in the 1998 census, was silent on religious affiliation or claimed not to adhere to a particular religious group. Social pressure was such that few persons claimed no religious affiliation. No data were available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals; however, religious beliefs play an important part in daily life.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution and other laws and policies restrict religious freedom. The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion. Although it also declares that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religious beliefs freely, other provisions of the constitution and laws impose limits on this right.

A 1974 constitutional amendment declared that Ahmadis are non-Muslims. Sections 298 (b) and 298(c) of the penal code, commonly referred to as the "anti-Ahmadi laws," prohibit Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslims, referring to their religious beliefs as Islam, preaching or propagating their religious beliefs, inviting others to accept Ahmadi teachings, or insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. The punishment for violation of these provisions is imprisonment for up to three years and a fine. Religious parties oppose any amendments to the constitution affecting its Islamic clauses, especially the ones relating to Ahmadis. Freedom of speech is subject to "reasonable restrictions in the interest of the glory of Islam," as stipulated in sections 295(a), (b), and (c) of the penal code. The consequences for contravening the country's blasphemy laws are death for "defiling Prophet Muhammad"; life imprisonment for "defiling, damaging, or desecrating the Qur'an"; and 10 years' imprisonment for "insulting another's religious feelings." Under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), any action, including speech, intended to incite religious hatred is punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment. In cases in which a minority group claimed its religious feelings were insulted, the blasphemy laws are rarely enforced, and cases are rarely brought to the legal system. A 2005 law requires that a senior police official investigate any blasphemy charge before a complaint is filed.

The penal code incorporates a number of Islamic legal provisions. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions that reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The Federal Shariat Court and the Sharia bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal courts under the Hudood Ordinance, including those for rape, extramarital sex, alcohol, and gambling. Judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslim. The Supreme Court may bypass the Sharia bench and assume jurisdiction in such appellate cases in its own right and prohibit the Federal Shariat Court from reviewing decisions of the provincial high courts. The Federal Shariat Court may overturn legislation it judges inconsistent with Islamic tenets, but such cases can be appealed to the Sharia bench of the Supreme Court and ultimately may be heard by the full Supreme Court. The Federal Shariat Court applies to Muslims and non-Muslims, such

as in cases relating to Hudood laws. Non-Muslims are allowed to consult the Federal Shariat Court in matters that affect them or violate their rights.

The country's interpretation of Islamic law allows offenders to offer monetary restitution to victims and allows victims to carry out physical retribution rather than seeking punishment through the court system. The qisaas and diyat law calls for either providing qisaas (retribution for murder and other violent crimes) or diyat (compensation money to the victim of the crime).

The government designates religious affiliation on passports and requests religious information in national identity card applications. A citizen must have a national identity card to vote. Those wishing to be listed as Muslims must swear their belief that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet, and denounce the Ahmadiyya movement's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslim. This provision prevents Ahmadis from obtaining legal documents and puts pressure on members of the community to deny their beliefs in order to enjoy citizenship rights, including the right to vote. Many Ahmadis are thus effectively excluded from taking part in elections.

The constitution provides for "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle the government does not restrict organized religious groups from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy. There is no official restriction on the construction of Ahmadiyya places of worship; however, Ahmadis are forbidden to call them mosques. The government also has shut down Ahmadi gatherings if neighbors report hearing the recitation of Qur'anic verses.

The government provides funding for construction and maintenance of mosques and for Islamic clergy. The provincial and federal governments have legal responsibility for certain minority religious properties that were abandoned during the 1947 partition of the country. The government collects a 2.5 percent zakat (tax) on all Sunni Muslims and distributes the funds to Sunni mosques, madrassahs, and charities. The government does not impose similar requirements on other religious groups.

Government policies do not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority religious groups.

The 2008 establishment of the Ministry for Minorities removed responsibility for protection of religious minorities from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In June the government dissolved the Federal Ministry for Minorities as part of the national devolution plan under the 18th Amendment to the constitution. Responsibilities are now under the purview of the provinces. In August the government created the Ministry of National Harmony, a stand-alone, cabinet-level body responsible for the oversight of policy and legislation regarding interfaith harmony, international agreements relating to religious freedom and interfaith harmony, and commitments with respect to all religious communities. The budget of the ministry covers assistance to indigent minorities, the repair of minority places of worship, the establishment of minority-run small development projects, and the celebration of minority religious festivals.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is primarily responsible for organizing participation in the Hajj and other Islamic religious pilgrimages. The federal government, however, also consults the ministry on matters such as blasphemy and educational reforms.

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

Islamiyyat (Islamic studies) is compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. Although students of other religious groups are not legally required to study Islam, they generally are not offered parallel studies in their own religious beliefs and are required to take the Islamic studies class. In some schools, non-Muslim students may study akhlaqiyyat, or ethics. Parents may send children to religious schools, at the family's expense, and private schools are generally free to teach or not to teach religious studies as they choose.

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

Private schools run by Islamic clerics, or madrassahs, vary greatly in their curriculum and character. They may offer after-school non-degree Islamic religious instruction, a full degree course in Islamic religious studies based on degree parameters set by one of the country's five madrassah boards, a full degree course in regular studies based either on the government's matriculation standards or the British A level curriculum, certificate courses in vocational training, or some combination thereof. Madrassahs may have students on a part-time, full-time day, full boarding basis, or some combination thereof. In some rural communities, madrassahs are the only form of education available.

Madrassahs are prohibited from teaching sectarian or religious hatred or encouraging sectarian or religious violence. However, in recent years a small yet influential number of madrassahs have taught extremist doctrine in support of terrorism in violation of the law. In an attempt to curb the spread of extremism, the 2002 Madrassah Registration Ordinance requires all madrassahs to register with one of the five independent boards (wafaqs) or directly with the government, cease accepting foreign financing, and accept foreign students only with the consent of their governments. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as of December 31, 2010, 19,421 madrassahs had been registered. Of these, 770 madrassahs were registered in 2009 alone; however, many civil society organizations and education experts disputed the number of madrassahs operating across the country. According to the Ittehad Tanzeem ul Madaris Pakistan (IMTP), a council consisting of the heads of the five major wafaqs, there are approximately 25,000-30,000 registered madrassahs. Of these, the Deobandis claim to have 13,000-14,000 madrassahs, the Bareilvis claim around 9,000, and Shias 3,000-4,000 madrassahs. On October 7, 2010, the Ministry of the Interior signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the IMTP. The agreement requires the madrassahs to teach secular subjects, to refrain from teaching or publishing literature promoting militancy or extremism, and to establish an independent board to monitor madrassah education. In return, the government would recognize madrassah graduation certificates. The agreement was to be followed by legislation at the federal level. Following the devolution of the Federal Ministry of Education to the provinces in May, the legislation stalled and the provinces were tasked with preparing recommendations for reforming the madrassah system.

The Balochistan Assembly requires all madrassahs to be registered in the province and submit annual reports of their educational activities to the registrar of societies, but no information was available by year's end.

In an effort to end Taliban violence in the Swat Valley, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP, formerly the Northwest Frontier Province) government concluded a peace deal in February 2009 with the extremist organization Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM). The agreement included a commitment to implement the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation (NAR), establishing Sharia in the Malakand Division of KP. The NAR establishes time limits for deciding civil and criminal cases, recreates qazis (religious judges) chosen by the state, and establishes a local appeals court whose judges are selected by the Peshawar High Court.

NAR implementation has been delayed due to military operations against militants, however. In January KP Chief Minister Ameer Haider Hoti inaugurated Darul Qaza (an appellate or revision court) in Swat as a step towards full implementation of the NAR. According to Hoti, 27,000 civil and 39,811 criminal cases were decided in 2009-10 under this law.

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

The government does not prohibit, restrict, or punish parents for raising children in accordance with religious teachings and practices of their choice and does not prohibit religious instruction in the home.

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

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

In accordance with the Anti-Terrorism Act, the government bans the activities of and membership in several groups it judges to be religious extremist or terrorist. The act allows the government to use special streamlined courts to try cases involving violent crimes, terrorist activities, acts or speech designed to foment religious hatred (including blasphemy cases), and crimes against the state; however, many banned groups remained active.

The government does not recognize either civil or common law marriage. Marriages generally are performed and registered according to one's religious group; however, there is no legal mechanism for the government to register marriages of Hindus and Sikhs. The marriages of non-Muslim men remain legal upon conversion to Islam. If a non-Muslim female converts to Islam and her marriage was performed according to her previous religious beliefs, the marriage is considered dissolved. Children born to Hindu or Christian women who convert to Islam after marriage are considered illegitimate. The only way to legitimize the marriage and render the children legitimate and eligible for inheritance is for the husband to convert to Islam. The children of a Muslim man and a Muslim woman who both convert to another religious group are considered illegitimate, and the government can take custody of the children.

There are reserved seats for religious minority members in both the national and provincial assemblies. The seats are allocated to political parties on a proportional basis determined by their overall representation in the assembly. The 342-seat national assembly has 13 members of minority religious groups, 10 of whom held reserved seats for minorities and three of whom held reserved seats for women. As part of the 18th Amendment, the 104-seat senate has four reserved seats for religious minorities, one from each province. Reserved seats for religious minorities also existed in the provincial assemblies: three in KP, eight in Punjab, nine in Sindh, and three in Balochistan. Minorities were represented in the local government system with a minimum of one seat per zila, tehsil (a zila is equivalent to a district and a tehsil is an administrative unit within a zila), and union council, as stipulated under the provincial Local Government Ordinances. In Balochistan Province, religious minority representation is based on population, with a minimum of two seats per zila.

The government observed all Islamic holy days as national holidays.

Government Practices

There were reports of abuses of religious freedom, including religious prisoners and detainees. The government generally enforced existing legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom, particularly on Ahmadis. Government policies did not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority religious groups, and due to discriminatory legislation, minorities often were afraid to freely profess their religious beliefs.

Abuses under the blasphemy and other discriminatory laws, such as "the anti-Ahmadi laws," continued. The government did not take adequate measures to prevent these

incidents or undertake reform measures to prevent the abuse of the laws. The killing of those accused of blasphemy or those publicly criticizing the blasphemy laws and calling for their reform continued throughout the year.

Leading human rights organizations, both domestic and international, stated that blasphemy laws and the government's failure or delay in addressing religious hostility by societal actors fostered intolerance, acts of violence and intimidation, and a sense of impunity. According to a Human Rights First report, "blasphemy laws have sparked outbreaks of violence against innocent individuals in violation of their rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, as well as lawyers, judges, and others defending the rights of those accused under the laws." The most recent Human Rights Watch annual report stated that "Pakistan's elected government notably failed to provide protection to those threatened by extremists, or to hold extremists accountable." The Jinnah Institute noted that "there have been several cases of individuals or mobs taking the law into their own hands and murdering not just those accused of blaspheming, but even those who defended the accused, including public officers and legislators." The report also alleged police complicity and a failure to maintain law and order.

Human rights organizations alleged that the January 4 killing of then Punjab Governor Salman Taseer and the March 2 killing of then Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti, both of whom spoke against blasphemy laws, stemmed from a climate of impunity and a failure of the government to provide adequate protection for officials known to be targets of extremists. After the assassination of Minister Bhatti, an aide to President Asif Ali Zardari stated in a local newspaper: "This is a concerted campaign to slaughter every liberal, progressive and humanist voice in Pakistan. The time has come for the federal government and provincial governments to speak out and to take a strong stand against these murderers to save the very essence of Pakistan."

The killing of Ahmadis for their religious beliefs continued during the year. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have alleged that the anti-Ahmadi sections of the penal code and other government policies fostered intolerance against this community and, together with the lack of police action, created a culture of impunity. According to a spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community, since the promulgation of anti-Ahmadi laws in 1984, 207 Ahmadis have been killed on religious grounds. During the year, according to Ahmadiyya leaders, five Ahmadis were murdered in targeted killings because of their faith. Authorities did not arrest anyone for the murders by year's end.

On May 28, 2010, unknown terrorists attacked two separate Ahmadi congregations in Lahore during Friday prayers. The attackers used explosive devices, grenades, and automatic weapons. More than 86 persons were killed and 124 persons were injured. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, President Zardari, and Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani criticized the attack and ordered an immediate inquiry. The Punjab government established an inquiry commission, but the Ahmadiyya community had not been contacted by any commission representatives by year's end. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) issued a statement on May 28 condemning the attack and criticizing the government for failing to increase security at Ahmadi places of worship in light of terrorist threats against the Ahmadiyya community. The HRCP called on the government to provide security for the Ahmadiyya community. Punjab authorities did not provide updates regarding the status of the investigation by year's end.

Religious minorities generally faced serious difficulties in getting police assistance, especially in rural areas. There were also reports of abuses against minorities committed by the police and security forces. For example, according to Compass Direct News, on January 9, police officers raped, killed, and threw into a sewer the body of Waqas Gill, a Christian, in Akhter Colony, Karachi. Local Christians protested an alleged police cover-up by placing the corpse in the middle of a street and chanting slogans against officers of Mehmoodabad police station.

Police reportedly tortured and mistreated persons in custody on religious charges and were accused of at least one extrajudicial killing in a blasphemy case during the year. On March 15, Qamar David, a Christian serving a life sentence in two blasphemy cases, died in police custody in Karachi. His family accused police officials of torturing him to death, but jailers said it was a heart attack. During his time in custody David complained of

threats by other inmates and prison guards. According to the National Commission on Justice and Peace, an investigation of the case was not completed by year's end.

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 minorities from bonded labor in the brick-making and agricultural sectors, and that Christians and Hindus were disproportionately victims of this illegal practice.

Laws prohibiting blasphemy continued to be used against Christians, Ahmadis, and members of other religious groups, including Muslims. Some individuals brought charges under these laws to settle personal scores or to intimidate vulnerable individuals, including Muslims, members of religious minorities, and sectarian opponents. Lower courts often did not require adequate evidence in blasphemy cases, which led to some accused and convicted persons spending years in jail before higher courts eventually overturned their convictions and ordered them freed. Original trial courts usually denied bail in blasphemy cases, claiming that because defendants could face the death penalty, they were likely to flee; however, the state has never executed anyone under the blasphemy laws. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid confrontation with or violence from extremists, often continued trials indefinitely. Lower courts conducted proceedings in an atmosphere of intimidation by extremists and refused bail due to fear of reprisal from extremist elements. A 2005 law required that a senior police official investigate any blasphemy charge before a complaint was filed. This law was not uniformly enforced.

According to data provided by the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), during the year a total of 49 cases were registered under the blasphemy laws. Of these, eight were against Christians, two were against Ahmadis, and 39 were against Muslims. A total of 1,117 persons were charged under the blasphemy laws between 1987 and 2011.

According to the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), a Muslim group attacked a Hindu community in Mir Wah Gorchani, Mirpurkhas, Sindh on August 23, after a Muslim cleric announced through the loudspeakers that Hindus had put up a blasphemous wall chalking. A Muslim man was killed in the attack. At the demand of the village's Muslim leaders, seven Hindus were arrested on charges of blasphemy, while other Hindus abandoned the area.

On January 8, *The Daily Times* reported that police registered a blasphemy case against a mentally handicapped Muslim man, Muhammad Amjad, in Kot Addu, Punjab, at the request of a local mosque's cleric, allegedly due to a family rivalry. The complainant also accused Amjad's father, Muhammad Nazir, and a relative, Muhammad Iqbal, of conspiring to desecrate the Qur'an. According to the National Commission on Justice and Peace, the three men were arrested. At year's end, the case was pending at a local court in Muzaffargarh.

On November 8, 2010, a district court in Nankana Sahib, Punjab, sentenced a Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, to death for blasphemy, the first such sentence for blasphemy handed down against a woman. Bibi was accused of committing blasphemy in June 2009 when she reportedly was fetching water while working in the fields. The verdict in the case touched off a massive debate within the country about the blasphemy laws, with extremists calling for her execution and more moderate voices calling for her pardon or an appeal of the guilty verdict. At year's end Bibi was waiting for her appeal to be heard at the Lahore High Court; she remained in custody.

In March 2010, according to Assist News Service, Munir Masih and Ruqqiya Bibi, a Christian couple, were sentenced to 25 years each in prison for defiling the Qur'an after touching it with unwashed hands. On November 27, the Lahore High Court released Masih on bail. Bibi's bail application was pending at year's end.

Non-Muslim prisoners generally were accorded poorer facilities than Muslim inmates. According to an October study by the NGO Life for All, prisoners accused of violating the blasphemy laws often were treated differently than those accused of other crimes. Many of them were kept in solitary confinement due to threats from other inmates and, in some instances, prison guards.

In March 2010, according to Compass Direct News, police filed false charges of alcohol possession under the Hudood Ordinance against 47 Christians, including two children and eight women, in an attempt to intimidate and extort money from them. The district and session court granted bail to all the accused, but the case was still pending at year's end.

Ahmadiyya leaders stated that for religious reasons, the government used sections of the penal code against their members. They alleged that the government used anti-Ahmadi laws to target and harass Ahmadis, frequently accusing converts to the Ahmadiyya community of blasphemy, violations of anti-Ahmadi laws, or other crimes. The vague wording of the provision that forbids Ahmadis from directly or indirectly identifying themselves as Muslims enabled officials to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting and for naming their children Muhammad. According to Ahmadiyya leaders, during the year 36 Ahmadis were implicated in eight different cases. By year's end, two Ahmadis were in prison, one for allegedly defiling the Qur'an, and the other for alleged murder. The Ahmadiyya community claimed that most of the arrests were groundless and based on the detainees' religious beliefs.

Religious minorities claimed that government actions addressing forced and coerced conversions of religious minorities to Islam by societal actors were inadequate. According to the HRC and the Pakistan Hindu Council, as many as 20 to 25 women and girls from the Hindu community were abducted every month and forced to convert to Islam.

According to Assist News Service, Farah Hatim, a Christian, was abducted on May 8 by Zeehan Ilyas and his two brothers and forced to convert to Islam and marry her kidnapper in Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab. Her family registered a case against Ilyas and his brothers for kidnapping and forced conversion. On July 20, the Lahore High Court's Bahawalpur bench ruled that Hatim had to stay with her husband.

The constitution provides for the right to establish places of worship and train clergy, but in practice religious minorities, especially Ahmadis, suffered from restrictions of this right. District-level authorities consistently refused to grant permission to construct non-Muslim places of worship, especially for the Ahmadiyya and Baha'i communities, citing the need to maintain public order. There were instances when informally organized groups seized minority places of worship using threats, intimidation, and other unlawful means to force the religious authorities in charge to abandon their properties or force a sale by government authorities. Minority religious groups accused the government of inaction in cases where extremist groups attacked places of worship belonging to them. Ahmadis reported that their mosques and community lands were routinely confiscated by local governments and given to the majority Muslim community. Ahmadis also reported incidents in which authorities tried to block construction or renovation of their places of worship. As Ahmadis were not allowed to recite or relate to the kalima (Islamic testimony of faith), authorities forcibly removed the kalima from Ahmadi places of worship in some instances. District governments often refused to grant Ahmadis permission to hold events publicly; they instead held meetings in members' homes.

Minority communities stated that the government did not spend adequate funds on the protection and upkeep of minority religious properties that were abandoned during the 1947 partition of British India prior to independence. They also claimed that the government was complicit in seizures of their property by Muslims, and that the policy of dismantling illegal slum settlements disproportionately targeted minority communities.

Representatives of the Sikh communities in Punjab and Sindh reported the illegal sale of gurdwara (Sikh temple) lands by the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB). In April 2010, it was disclosed that the ETPB transferred approximately 72 acres of gurdwara land in Lahore to the Defence Housing Authority. Despite protests by the Sikh community, the ETPB continued its plan to sell gurdwara land, which is not allowed under the 1925 Sikh Act. Similarly, Christian leaders in Sindh opposed a proposed sale of Saint Andrews Church in Karachi, which recently marked its 150th anniversary.

Officials sometimes used bureaucratic demands and requested or took bribes to delay minority religious groups attempting to build houses of worship or obtain land. On the other hand, Sunni Muslim groups sometimes built mosques and shrines without government permission, at times in violation of zoning ordinances and on government-owned lands, without repercussions.

Although criminal law allowed offenders to offer monetary restitution to victims, religious minorities stated that the amounts of monetary restitution allowed under the qisaas and diyat law were far higher for religious minority offenders and far lower for religious minority victims.

Religious belief or specific adherence to a religious group was not required for membership in the ruling party or the moderate opposition parties. All political parties, including religious parties, had a separate minority wing, and some of the religious parties provided seats to religious minorities in provincial assemblies after the 2008 general elections. The government did not restrict the formation of political parties based on a particular religious group, religious belief, or interpretation of religious doctrine. The government monitored the activities of various Islamist parties and affiliated clergy due to alleged links to terrorist and extremist organizations.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of assembly, Ahmadis have been prohibited from holding conferences or gatherings since 1983. They are also banned from preaching. The government has banned Ahmadiyya publications from public sale, but the umbrella Ahmadiyya organization published religious literature that circulated only within Ahmadi communities.

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

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

Discrimination against Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis in admission to higher education institutions persisted. Sikh leaders reported they faced restrictions in securing admissions into colleges and universities, as they were required to obtain a certificate of permission from the ETPB, which they said was a lengthy process that discouraged Sikhs from pursuing higher education. There were no reports of discrimination against Christians when they applied for entry to universities and medical schools.

Most religious minority groups generally complained of discrimination in hiring. While there is a 5 percent quota for hiring religious minorities at the federal and provincial levels, it had not been fully implemented by year's end. Shia leaders did not report that they were subjected to discrimination in hiring for the civil service or admission 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 contended that a "glass ceiling" prevented their promotion to senior positions, and certain government departments refused to hire or retain qualified Ahmadis. The government discriminated against some groups, such as Ahl-e-Hadith, a Sunni Muslim reformist movement consisting of 4 percent of the country's Muslims, in hiring clergy for government mosques and the military and faculty members for Islamic studies positions in government colleges.

Members of minority religious groups volunteered for military service in small numbers, and there were no official obstacles to their advancement; however, in practice non-Muslims rarely rose above the rank of colonel and were not assigned to politically

sensitive positions. A chaplaincy corps provided services for Muslim soldiers, but no similar services were available for religious minorities.

The public school curriculum included derogatory remarks in textbooks about minority religious groups, particularly Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews, and the teaching of religious intolerance was widespread. The government continued to revise the curriculum to eliminate such teachings and remove Islamic content from secular subjects. One local NGO reported that the education minister in KP Province, with federal input, was developing new textbooks that remove inflammatory material.

The registration of Hindu and Sikh marriages by the government has been a long-standing demand of these communities. The Scheduled Caste Rights Movement and other minority rights organizations demanded legislation for minority marriage registration. The minorities' representatives asserted that in the absence of Hindu and Sikh marriage registration, women faced difficulties in getting a share of their parents' and husbands' property, accessing health services, voting, obtaining a passport, and buying or selling property. The parliament was considering legislation that would legalize Hindu marriages.

Abuses by Rebel or Foreign Forces or Terrorist Organizations

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

Attacks on houses of worship, religious gatherings, and religious leaders linked to sectarian, extremist, and terrorist groups resulted in hundreds of deaths during the year.

Attacks against Hazara Shias in Balochistan increased during the year. On October 4, 14 Shias were killed and six others injured when gunmen ambushed a local bus in Quetta. On September 20, 29 Shia pilgrims were killed and six others injured in Mastung, Balochistan, when a group of armed men attacked a passenger bus carrying Shia pilgrims from Quetta to Iran. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility for both attacks. Between May 5 and May 18, more than 20 Shias were killed in different incidents of targeted killings in the province.

Attacks on Sufi shrines continued during the year. In August the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a mosque in the Khyber tribal agency that killed more than 50 persons, stating that it was retaliation for local resistance against the militants.

On April 3, two suicide blasts outside the shrine of Syed Ahmad Sakhi Sarwar in D.G. Khan, Punjab, claimed 49 lives and left over 100 persons injured, among them women and children. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack.

The government implemented some measures to protect the population at large against militants and terrorist groups. For example, police apprehended TTP commanders who provided logistical support to militants in the tribal areas and arrested would-be suicide bombers in major cities of the country, confiscating arms, suicide vests, and attack planning materials.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The government took some steps to bolster religious freedom during the year.

The government at senior levels continued to call for interfaith dialogue and sectarian harmony to promote moderation, tolerance, and minority rights. On August 11, President Zardari, in honor of National Minorities Day, acknowledged the challenges that minorities faced and pledged his commitment to finding solutions.

The government devolved the Ministry of Minorities in June to the provinces, along with several other ministries, as part of the devolution exercise mandated by the 18th Amendment. After minority groups and parliamentarians expressed concern about the elimination of a central body to safeguard their rights, in August the government created

a new ministry at the federal level, the Ministry of National Harmony, to protect the rights of minorities, including religious minorities. The ministry organized events aimed at promoting peace and religious tolerance.

However, religious minorities claimed that the ministry was underfunded and that localities and villages that were home to minority citizens went without basic civic amenities. On May 1, the *Express Tribune* reported that police in Gujranwala averted an attack on a Christian community in a blasphemy-related case. On April 15, police took Father Mushtaq Gill Masih and his son Farrukh Gill Masih into protective custody following accusations of blasphemy that the police believed to be unfounded. When the accused were released, protesters marched towards the local Christian community. The head of the Gujranwala police, Ghulam Muhammad Doger, warned the protesters that he would not allow them to harass the Christian community and would take strict action against them. The newspaper claimed it was the first such incident in which the police did not bow to intense pressure from religious and political parties, despite the accusation of blasphemy.

Following the March 2 assassination of then federal minister for minorities Bhatti, on March 23, the government appointed his brother, Paul Bhatti, as National Adviser to the Prime Minister on Minority Affairs. The government strongly condemned Bhatti's killing, declaring it a conspiracy against democracy and religious harmony in the country.

On February 9, the government granted a plot free of charge to the Full Gospel Assembly Church for the construction of a new church and a community center in Islamabad. This would be the fourth church building in the federal capital. In January the KP provincial government inaugurated a new shamshan ghat (cremation ground) in Khaiarabad, Nowshera District, for the Sikh community.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Citizens continuously used blasphemy laws to harass religious minorities and vulnerable Muslims and to settle personal scores or business rivalries. Societal elements also used anti-Ahmadi provisions of the penal code to justify abuse and discrimination against Ahmadis.

Relations among religious communities remained tense. Violence against religious minorities and between Muslim sects continued. While a small number of persons were involved in violent attacks, discriminatory laws and lack of reform of these laws, the teaching of religious intolerance, and the lack of police protection of minorities and prosecution of perpetrators created a permissive environment for such attacks.

Persons accused of blasphemy and persons publicly criticizing the blasphemy laws and calling for their reform continued to be killed during the year, including two high-level government officials. On March 2, Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti was shot and killed in Islamabad. According to press reports, at least two unidentified attackers were involved. The gunmen left pamphlets, reportedly from the terrorist groups Tanzeem Al-Qaeda and TTP, accusing Bhatti of blasphemy. The assailants fled the scene and were not captured. The investigation was still underway at year's end.

On January 4, Punjab Governor Salman Taseer was killed by his bodyguard for publicly criticizing the blasphemy laws and calling for reforms. There were increased reports of human rights and religious freedom activists and members of minorities hesitating to speak in favor of religious tolerance due to a climate of intolerance and fear, especially following these assassinations.

On October 1, the Rawalpindi Anti-Terrorism Court sentenced Taseer's killer, Malik Mumtaz Qadri, to death. The judge who handed down Qadri's verdict received threats, had his offices ransacked, and fled the country. Qadri filed an appeal of the sentence on October 6. The appeal was pending in the Islamabad High Court at year's end.

Societal reaction to Taseer's killing was widespread and included public demonstrations and numerous references in social media in support of the accused killer. Some commentary in the print and electronic media was also supportive of the killing.

According to a report by the Jinnah Institute noting Taseer's criticism of the blasphemy laws, "in the days leading up to Taseer's assassination, when the debate had reached a boiling point, editorials in some newspapers called for his death. In the aftermath of Taseer's assassination, popular TV anchors suggested that his murder was justified and aired views from religious 'experts' and guests in favor of his murder." A January 5 article in the newspaper *Dawn* reported: "In a sign of mainstream media opposition, Pakistan's leading Urdu-language newspaper, *Jang*, ran a front-page story declaring that there should be no funeral for Salman Taseer and no condemnation of his death." Court appearances by the accused killer attracted large crowds of supporters and he was showered with rose petals.

On March 5, a local newspaper, *Dawn*, reported that Mohammad Imran, who was released for lack of evidence in a blasphemy case in February 2010, was shot and killed in Danda village, Punjab.

In April an antiterrorism court in Faisalabad found Maqsood Ahmad guilty of the July 2010 killing of Christian brothers Rashid and Sajad Emmanuel and sentenced him to death on four counts. The brothers had been accused of distributing blasphemous material, but the judge had found them not guilty.

Conversion to minority religious beliefs generally took place in secret to avoid societal backlash. Forced and coerced conversions of religious minorities to Islam occurred at the hands of societal actors.

Media, particularly the vernacular press, published derogatory reports of minorities, especially of Ahmadis.

There were numerous reports of attacks by societal actors on holy places and symbols of religious minorities.

According to Assist News Service, on March 28, 18 unidentified persons attacked St. Thomas Catholic Church in Wah Cantonment, Rawalpindi, Punjab. The attackers entered the church compound and hurled stones at the statue of Mary and at lights in the compound, while some attackers remained outside and pelted the church gate with stones.

On April 9, the *Express Tribune* reported that a Muslim youngster tore a copy of the Bible at the entrance of Saint Joseph's Church in Lahore and tried to burn it before being caught. His actions were in apparent retaliation for the burning of a Qur'an outside of the country in March. The police arrested him under the section of the Pakistan Penal Code for "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs."

Some attacks against minority groups were in protest of interfaith marriages or relationships.

On November 9, four Hindu doctors were shot and killed in Chak town of Shikarpur District, Sindh. According to reports, about 10 armed men attacked the house of Dr. Satia Pal in Chak town and started firing, killing Dr. Ajeet, Dr. Ashok, Dr. Satyapal, and Dr. Naresh. The attackers escaped from the scene. According to reports the attack was in reaction to an alleged relationship between a Hindu man and a Muslim woman. The investigation was pending at year's end.

Ahmadi individuals and institutions were victims of religious violence, much of it organized by religious extremists.

Tehrik-e-Khatme Nabuwwat, a Deobandi group that actively opposed Ahmadiyya beliefs and individuals, issued a 2011 calendar with hate propaganda characterizing Ahmadis as infidels, cursed, and apostates, and urged persons to cleanse their streets of Ahmadis. (Deobandis, who run 65 percent of the madrassahs in Pakistan, are an anti-Western Sunni Muslim sect that seeks to restore Islam to its pure form. They regard Shias as non-Muslims.) In June the Aalami Majlis Tahaffuz Khatme Nabuwwat and the All Pakistan Students Khatme Nabuwwat Federation, Faisalabad, issued a pamphlet that urged Muslims to kill Ahmadis, which would give the killers a status comparable to a martyr.

The pamphlet provided a list of approximately 50 prominent Ahmadis and places of business with their addresses. The pamphlet provided the names of the issuing organizations, their cell phone numbers, and e-mail address, but no action was taken against the instigators. According to Jammāt-e-Ahmadiyya, an Ahmadiya group, on September 4 Naseem Butt was shot and killed in Faisalabad by four persons who called him "wajibul qatal" (bound to be murdered). The Jammāt-e-Ahmadiyya claim the killing was a result of the pamphlet.

Ahmadi leaders accused the vernacular press of publishing anti-Ahmadi statements. In one instance, a March 7 newspaper published an opinion piece entitled, "Qadianis promote apostasy in Muzaffarabad and the government is a silent spectator." According to Jama'at-e-Ahmadiyya, during the year, 1,468 news reports specifically discriminating against Ahmadis were published in major Urdu dailies in Lahore.

Anti-Semitic articles were commonly found in the vernacular press, although there were no known Jewish communities in the country.

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

The Hindu communities in Sindh and Balochistan reported that they were increasingly the target of kidnappings for ransom. Hindus claimed they were forced to pay ransoms because police did little to recover kidnapping victims. In December 2010, the kidnapping of a Hindu spiritual leader triggered protest demonstrations across Balochistan. Maharaja Luckmi Chand Garji, 82, had been kidnapped along with four companions, near the Surab area of Kalat. He was released in March along with three companions while another individual remained in captivity.

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

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

Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia extremists continued, and several religious minority individuals and communities were the targets of religious violence across the country. Attacks on the Shia minority, particularly in Dera Ismail Khan, Quetta, Hangu, Kohat, Tank, DG Khan, Gilgit, and in Kurram and Orakzai Agencies continued.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. embassy and consulate officers maintained a dialogue with government, parliament, and civil society, including religious and minority community representatives, to encourage religious freedom and tolerance, and to discuss specific issues. These included blasphemy laws; curriculum reform in public education and madrassah education systems; treatment of the Ahmadiyya, Christian, Hindu, and other minority communities; and sectarian violence as well as ways to improve the regular protection of and outreach to minority groups. Embassy and consulate officials met regularly with ministers and other high-ranking officials to discuss government plans to promote religious freedom and interfaith harmony.

The U.S. embassy sponsored two interfaith events that were widely reported on in the media, one at Al-Qabeer Mosque in Faisalabad and the second at Faisal Mosque in Islamabad.

Embassy officials, including the ambassador and visiting State Department officials, attended and hosted meetings with government officials, as well as leaders from communities of all religious groups and NGOs working on religious freedom issues. Issues of interfaith dialogue, religious tolerance, and religious freedom were discussed in these meetings. Embassy officials also explored with these groups the development of programs and projects to promote religious tolerance.

Embassy officers investigated and monitored human rights cases involving religious minorities and continued their dialogue with the government, urging a swift and effective response to these incidents.

Embassy officials raised with parliamentarians the treatment of religious minorities and blasphemy laws.
