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HRW – Human Rights Watch

Pakistan Should Heed Alarm Bells Over ‘Bride’ Trafficking

Pakistan’s government should be alarmed by recent reports of trafficking of women and girls to China. These allegations are disturbingly similar to the pattern of trafficking of “brides” to China from at least five other Asian countries.

Earlier this month, a Pakistani television station gained entry to what it said was a matchmaking center in Lahore where six women and girls, two only 13-years-old, were held awaiting transit to China as brides. It reported that the families of these women and girls received payments of 400,000 Pakistani rupees (US\$2,800) and were promised 40,000 rupees a month (\$280) in future payments, plus a Chinese visa for a male family member. *Nikkei Asian Review* reported that the practice of Chinese men purchasing Pakistani brides (<https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/Chinese-illegal-marriage-operators-exploit-young-Pakistani-women>) has been happening for several years.

In China, the percentage of women has fallen steadily since 1987. Researchers estimate that China now has 30 to 40 million “missing women,” an imbalance caused by a preference for boys and exacerbated by the “one-child policy” in place from 1979 to 2015, and ongoing restrictions on women’s reproductive rights. This gender gap has made it difficult for many Chinese men to find wives and fueled a demand for trafficked women from abroad.

The Myanmar and Chinese governments have failed to stem the trafficking of ethnic Kachin women and girls as “brides” to families in China.

Human Rights Watch documented bride trafficking in Myanmar (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/03/21/give-us-baby-and-well-let-you-go/trafficking-kachin-brides-myanmar-china>), where each year hundreds of women and girls are deceived through false promises of employment into travelling to China, only to be sold to Chinese families as brides and held in sexual slavery, often for years. Those who escape often have to leave their children behind. Journalists have documented similar forms of bride trafficking from Cambodia (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-women-trafficking/cambodia-urged-to-boost-funding-for-bride-trafficking-pacts-idUSKCN1RD1UN>), Laos (<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/558060/new-roads-old-war-fan-sale-of-southeast-asian-brides-in-china/>), North Korea

(<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2110256/trafficked-north-korea-bride-one-woman-reveals-her>) , and Vietnam
(<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/society/article/2131918/chinese-police-arrest-human-traffickers-selling-vietnamese-brides>) .

China has close ties with Pakistan, including through China’s Belt and Road Initiative (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/21/china-belt-and-road-projects-should-respect-rights>) . On April 13, the Chinese embassy in Pakistan issued a statement (<http://pk.chineseembassy.org/eng/zbqx/t1654173.htm>) : “We notice that recently some unlawful matchmaking centers made illegal profits from brokering cross-national marriages...China is cooperating with Pakistani law enforcement agencies to crack down on illegal matchmaking centers.” The Pakistan government has also acknowledged (<https://www.siasat.pk/forums/threads/chinese-men-lure-pakistani-girls-with-marriage-to-traffic-them.687202/>) that bride trafficking is occurring and pledged to work with China to combat the trade. Both Pakistan and China should take seriously increasing evidence that Pakistani women and girls are at risk of sexual slavery in China and take effective measures to end bride trafficking.

ecoi.net summary:

Article on bride trafficking to China



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Austrian Red Cross

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research
and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583

F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

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