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Pakistan

International Religious Freedom Report 2004

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The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and states that adequate provisions are to be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, in practice the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. The country is an Islamic republic; Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of the national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims, although its founders did not envisage it as an Islamic state. Religious freedom is "subject to law, public order, and morality;" accordingly, actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophet are not protected. In addition the Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes some elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and religious minorities.

There were no significant changes in the Government's treatment of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. The Government fails in many respects to protect the rights of religious minorities. This is due both to public policy and to the Government's unwillingness to take action against societal forces hostile to those who practice a different faith. The accretion of discriminatory religious legislation has fostered an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which contributes to acts of violence directed against non-Muslims and members of minority Muslim groups. There were instances in which the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence directed at minority religious groups. The lack of an adequate government response contributed to an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities. However, the Government promotes religious tolerance, does not encourage sectarian violence, and, at the highest levels, specifically condemned sectarian extremism during the period covered by this report. It has banned all significant sectarian extremist groups and arrested hundreds of members of these groups suspected of violent attacks. Parties and groups with religious affiliations have been known to target minority groups.

The Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of religious parties that includes both Sunni and Shi'a groups, leads the opposition in the federal Parliament, holds a majority in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) Provincial Assembly, and is part of the ruling coalition in Baluchistan. The MMA has called for strict adherence to Shari'a law. Minority groups claim the MMA's outspoken calls for Islamic laws and morals have made the social climate more hostile to persons of minority Muslim sects and other religions.

Specific government policies that discriminate against religious minorities include the use of the "Hudood" Ordinances, which apply different standards of evidence to Muslims and non-Muslims and to men and women for alleged violations of Islamic law; list specific legal prohibitions against Ahmadis practicing their religion; and incorporate blasphemy laws that have been used to target reformist Muslims, Ahmadis, Christians, and Hindus. Both the Hudood Ordinances and the blasphemy laws have been abused, in that they are often used against persons to settle personal scores. Approximately 1,600 to 2,100 persons were imprisoned under the Hudood Ordinances as of the end of the reporting period.

More than 100 persons were detained for blasphemy offenses as of the end of the reporting period. 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. According to the Center for Legal Aid, Assistance, and Settlement (CLAAS), 14 new blasphemy cases were registered during the period covered by this report. Several high profile blasphemy cases remained unresolved because the courts repeatedly postponed hearings, and the Government did not press the courts to proceed. However, during the period covered by this report, the Lahore High Court

overturned a few lower court convictions and acquitted several blasphemy defendants.

Relations between different religious groups frequently were tense, acts of sectarian and religious violence continued, and over 100 deaths were attributed to sectarian violence during the period covered by this report. The worst religious violence was directed against the country's Shi'a minority, which continued to be disproportionately the victims of individual and mass killings.

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 this report, embassy officers closely monitored the status of religious freedom and acted when appropriate. In addition senior embassy officials expressed concern about the Shahbaz Bhatti and Younis Sheikh cases with senior government officials. Embassy officials encouraged government officials to pursue aggressive investigations of incidents involving the bombing of places of worship. The U.S. Government also discussed specific cases involving the abuse of religious minorities with the Government. Additionally, the Embassy assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up on specific cases involving religious minorities.

Section I. Religious Demography

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

Religious minority groups believe that they are underrepresented in government census counts and claim that they represent 10 percent of the population, rather than the census figure of 4 to 5 percent. Official and private estimates of their numbers can differ significantly. The most recent official census estimates place the number of Hindus at 2.44 million, Christians at 2.09 million, and the Ahmadi population at 286,000. The figure for the Ahmadis is inherently inaccurate because they have been boycotting census and registration for electoral rolls since 1974 when they were declared non-Muslims. The Hindu and Christian communities each claim memberships of approximately 4 million. Estimates for the remaining communities are less contested and place the total number of Parsis (Zoroastrians), Buddhists, and Sikhs as high as 20,000 each; and Baha'is at 30,000. The "other" category includes tribes whose members practice traditional indigenous religions, those who normally do not declare themselves to be adherents of a specific religion, and those who do not practice any religion but remain silent about that fact. Social pressure is such that few persons would admit to being unaffiliated with any religion.

Punjab is the largest province in the country; with 82.5 million persons, it contains 55 percent of the country's population. While Sunni Muslims are the vast majority in Punjab, more than 90 percent of the country's Christians also reside there, making them the largest religious minority in the province. Approximately 60 percent of Punjab's Christians live in rural villages. The largest group of Christians belongs to the Church of Pakistan, an umbrella Protestant group that is a member of the Anglican Communion; the second largest group belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The rest are from different evangelical and church organizations.

Hindus constitute approximately 8 percent of the population of Sindh province. A few tribes in Sindh and Balochistan practice traditional indigenous religions, and there is also a small population of Parsis (approximately 7,000 persons). The Ismailis are concentrated in Karachi (in Sindh Province) and the Northern Areas, locally referred to as Gilgit and Baltistan. According to experts, the Shi'a population is estimated to be 23 percent of the total Karachi population while they are approximately 10 percent of the country's total population. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi, although some live in Islamabad and Peshawar (in the NWFP). Christians constitute approximately 2 percent of Karachi's population. The Roman Catholic diocese of Karachi estimates that 120,000 Catholics live in Karachi, 40,000 in the rest of Sindh, and 5,000 in Quetta, Baluchistan. Evangelical Christians have converted a few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh. An estimated 100,000 Hindus live in Karachi. According to local Christian sources, between 70,000 and 100,000 Christians and a few

thousand Hindus live in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP).

Ahmadis, who consider themselves Muslims but do not accept that Muhammad was the last prophet, are concentrated in Punjab and Sindh. The spiritual center of the Ahmadi community is in Punjab in the large, predominantly Ahmadi town of Rabwah. In 1998, during Shahbaz Sharif's government, Rabwah was renamed when the Punjab Assembly unanimously adopted the resolution to change the name to Chenab Nagar; this change was against the wishes of the Ahmadi community.

Zikris are a minority group of approximately 200,000 concentrated in the Gwadar District of Balochistan. While Zikris consider themselves Muslims, Sunni religious leaders reject this claim because the Zikris have religious ceremonies that differ significantly from those practiced by other Muslim groups, including a ceremony that is conducted in Turbat, Baluchistan which is similar to the Hajj. While Mullahs have called for Zikris to be declared non-Muslims, no steps have been taken to do so, and Zikris are generally free to practice their religion. Violence against Zikris is reportedly rare; however, societal discrimination and harassment is more common.

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

Many varieties of Hinduism are practiced, depending upon location and caste. Hindu shrines and temples are scattered throughout the country, although most of them are now used as residences. Approximately 1,500 Hindu temples and shrines exist in Sindh and approximately 500 in Baluchistan. Most of these are tiny, wayside shrines. 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 Poor (also known as Daira Baba Nanak Sahib) in Sialkot District (where Guru Nanak is buried).

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

Foreign missionaries operate in the country. The largest Christian mission group operating in Sindh and Baluchistan engages in Bible translation for the Church of Pakistan, a united church of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans that is affiliated with the Anglican Communion. An Anglican missionary group fields several missionaries to assist the Church of Pakistan in administrative and educational work. Roman Catholic missionaries, mostly Franciscan, work with persons with disabilities.

Section II. Status of Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, in practice the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion, particularly on Ahmadi. The Constitution provides that there shall be no taxation for propagation of a religion that is not one's own, no obligation to receive instruction in a religion that is not one's own, and no denial of admission to

public schools on the basis of religion. However, according to the Constitution, the country is an Islamic republic, and Islam is the state religion. Islam is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country's founders created it to be a homeland for Muslims, although they did not envisage it as a purely Islamic state. Under the Constitution, both the President and the Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials are required to swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology." Freedom of speech is provided for; however, this right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" that can be imposed "in the interest of the glory of Islam." Actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its prophets are punishable by death.

Under the Second Constitutional Amendment Act of 1974, the Ahmadi community is defined as non-Muslim because Ahmadis do not believe that Mohammed was the last prophet of Islam; however, all Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims.

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

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

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

Permission to buy land comes from one municipal bureaucracy, and permission to build a house of worship comes from another. For all religious groups, the process often can be subject to bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes, as it is for other similar nonreligious transactions as well.

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

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

From June 3 to 13, the Government imposed a curfew in the northern area of Gilgit after the Shi'a majority protested to demand that the Government provide Shi'a-specific textbooks for classes in Islamic studies. At the end of the period covered by this report, the Government believed the controversy had been resolved through negotiated compromises with some Shi'a scholars.

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

community. Many Ahmadis and Christians reported discrimination in applying to government educational institutions due to their religious affiliation. Christians and Ahmadis reportedly have been denied access to medical schools, and societal discrimination against Ahmadis persists at many universities. For example, at the Agricultural University in Faisalabad, students of other religions reportedly refuse to eat with Ahmadis.

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

The National Assembly was recently informed by the Minister of Education, Zobaida Jalal, that 5,782 out of a total of 11,822 madrassas have registered. The total number of madrassas; however, is unknown and may range as high as 80,000. The majority are small and informal. Many madrassas refused to cooperate, and the religious political parties rallied crowds in opposition to the reform. The Government suspended the registration program in 2003, but on May 17, the Minister for Education asked the Government to renew the registration program, but not directly through the Ministry of Education. As of the end of the period covered by this report, no madrassas have been closed or otherwise penalized for failure to comply with the ordinance.

In June 2003, the Provincial Assembly of NWFP, dominated by the MMA, unanimously approved the NWFP Shari'a Act 2003, ruling that all future legislation should be in accordance with Shari'a law, existing legislation should be reviewed in light of Shari'a, and education and financial sectors should be brought in line with Islamic teaching. This was the first time in the country's history that a Shari'a Act had been passed by a provincial legislature; however, the act is almost identical to the 1991 Shari'a Act passed at the federal level, which was already binding on the entire country. During the period covered by this report, no existing legislation was forwarded to the provincial legislature for review based on the Shari'a act.

In May 2003, a directive by the provincial NWFP Government ordered civil servants to pray five times a day; however, the directive has not been enforced, and no action has been taken against civil servants who do not pray. The prayer directive followed curbs on the sale of "vulgar" music and videos, destruction of posters featuring women and advertising Western products, and the imposition of a complete ban on alcohol. There have been sporadic incidents of police detaining shopkeepers for selling music CDs and videos, as part of the NWFP Government's "anti-obscurity" drive; most were released after a night in detention and the payment of fines.

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

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

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

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government does not ban formally the public practice of the Ahmadi faith, but the practice is restricted severely by law. A 1974 constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be non-Muslims because they do not accept Mohammed as the last prophet of Islam. However, Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and observe Islamic practices. In 1984 the Government added Section 298(c) into the Penal Code, prohibiting Ahmadis from calling themselves 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. This section of the Penal Code, commonly referred to as the "anti-Ahmadi law," has caused problems for Ahmadis, particularly the provision that forbids them from "directly or indirectly" posing as Muslims. This vague wording has enabled mainstream Muslim religious leaders to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting form and for naming their children Mohammed. The constitutionality of Section 298(c) was upheld in a split-decision Supreme Court case in 1996. The punishment for violation of this section is imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine. This provision has been used by the government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to target and harass Ahmadis. Ahmadis also are prohibited from holding any public conferences or gatherings, and since 1983 they have been denied permission to hold their annual Ahmadi conference. Ahmadis are banned from preaching or adopting social practices that make them appear to be Muslims. Their publications also are banned from public sale; however, they 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. Several Ahmadi mosques reportedly have been closed; others reportedly have been desecrated or had their construction stopped. For example, the police stopped construction of an Ahmadi mosque in a village in Sargodha in January. An Ahmadi mosque was seized at Ahmadnagar in October 2003, and a mosque in Sayedwala was attacked and destroyed in 2001 by a large group of persons led by the village mullahs. The Government has not given the Ahmadis permission to rebuild it. Ahmadis also are prohibited from being buried in Muslim cemeteries. According to press reports, the authorities continued to conduct surveillance on the Ahmadis and their institutions.

The Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs issues registration documents to pilgrims for their pilgrimage to Mecca. In July 2003, it added a new section to the documents in which the applicant has to certify on a printed oath that the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, was a "cunning person and an imposter."

The "blasphemy laws" are contained in Sections 295, 296, 297, and 298 of the Penal Code and address offenses relating to religion. Section 295(a), a colonial-era provision, originally stipulated a maximum 2-year sentence for insulting the religion of any class of citizens. In 1991 this sentence was increased to 10 years. In 1982 Section 295(b) was added, which stipulated a sentence of life imprisonment for "whoever willfully defiles, damages, or desecrates a copy of the holy Koran."

In 1986 another amendment, Section 295(c), established the death penalty or life imprisonment for directly or indirectly defiling "the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed." In 1991 a court ruled invalid the option of life imprisonment for this offense. Section 296 outlaws voluntary disturbances of religious assemblies, and Section 297 outlaws trespassing on burial grounds. Section 298(a), another colonial-era provision, forbids the use of derogatory remarks about holy personages. Personal rivals and the authorities have used these blasphemy laws, especially Section 295(c), to threaten, punish, or intimidate Ahmadis, Christians, and Muslims. No person has been executed by the Government under any of these provisions; however, some persons have been sentenced to death, or have died while in official custody.

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.

The blasphemy laws also reportedly have been used to "settle scores" unrelated to religious activity, such as intrafamily or property disputes. Information related to blasphemy cases is difficult to obtain because records often are not maintained properly in prisons and courts; however, according to CLAAS, 14 new blasphemy cases were registered during the period covered by this report; 12 of the accused are Muslims, and 2 are Christians. According to CLAAS, there are almost 100 cases pending against Muslims and 11 against Christians. The National Commission on Justice and Peace (NCJP) reports there were 16 new cases during the period covered by this report, and the total number of ongoing cases was not less than 46. The discrepancy in statistics provided by CLAAS and NCJP is due to the difficulty in monitoring new cases.

On August 7, 2003, the Lahore High Court upheld the life sentences of two Christian men who allegedly set fire to the Koran while being detained in 1999 for suspicion of drug use. The case was pending before the Supreme Court at the end of the period covered by this report.

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

When blasphemy and other religious cases are brought to court, extremists often pack the courtroom and make public threats against an acquittal. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid a confrontation with or violence from extremists, often continue trials indefinitely. As a result, those accused of blasphemy often face lengthy periods in jail and are burdened with increased legal costs and repeated court appearances.

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; however, the Government restricts the right to freedom of speech with regard to religion. Speaking in opposition to Islam and publishing any criticism of Islam or its prophets are prohibited. The penal code mandates the death sentence for anyone defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed, life imprisonment for desecrating the Koran, and up to 10 years' imprisonment for insulting another's religious beliefs with intent to outrage religious feelings. Ahmadis frequently are prosecuted under this law, but Muslims rarely are prosecuted for this offense. For example, Ameer Hamza, a leader of the banned terrorist group Lashkar-e-Tayyibba, wrote a highly derogatory book about Hinduism in 1999 called "Hindu Ki Haqeeqat" ("Reality of (a) Hindu"); he was not prosecuted.

In January 2001, Government authorities closed a leading provincial newspaper, "The Frontier Post," and arrested five of its employees following the publication of a letter to the editor that contained comments that were critical of the Prophet of Islam. Law enforcement officials failed to prevent a mob from setting fire to the newspaper's printing presses in January 2001, which stopped publication for 3 months. The arrested employees were later released, with the exception of Munawar Mohsin, the copy editor who had accepted the letter for publication and was responsible for putting it into the newspaper's "letters" section. Mohsin was convicted of blasphemy on July 8, 2003, and sentenced to life imprisonment and a fine of approximately \$880 (51,246.48 Pakistani rupees). At the end of the period covered by this report, Mohsin was still detained as his appeal was pending with the Peshawar High Court.

Ahmadis charge that they suffer from restrictions on their press. On July 19, 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.

Foreign books and magazines, except for publications from India and Israel, may be imported freely, but they are subject to censorship for objectionable religious content. Christian scriptures and books are readily available, but Christians have reported concerns about pressure leading to self-censorship. The Government restricts the distribution and display of certain religious images, such as the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ. Recently, however, some newspapers started placing small advertisements inviting individuals to learn about the Bible and the Torah.

In January 2002, the Government eliminated the country's system of separate religious-based electorates, which had been a longstanding point of contention between religious minorities and human rights groups on one side and the Government on the other. With the elimination of the separate electorate system, political representation is to be based on geographic constituencies that represent all residents, regardless of religious affiliation. Minority group leaders believe this change may help to make public officials take notice of the concerns and rights of minority groups. Because of their often geographically concentrated populations, religious minorities could have significant influence as swing voting blocks in some constituencies. Few non-Muslims are active in the country's mainstream political parties due to limitations on their ability to run for elected office under the previous separate electorate system. There are over 100 district nazims (mayors) and approximately 350 tehsil nazims in the country; all are Muslims.

While most minority leaders welcomed the return of joint electorates, some complained that the elimination of reserved seats made the election of any minority members unlikely. In response to this complaint, the Government announced in August 2002 that reserved parliamentary seats for religious minorities would be restored. Non-Muslims are now able to vote both for a local candidate in their geographic constituencies and for a representative of their religious group.

In May 2002, under increasing pressure from fundamentalist leaders, the Government reinstated a column on the voter registration form that required Muslims to take an oath accepting the finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed. After joint electorates were restored in January 2002, this oath initially was removed from voter registration forms, but religious leaders protested because voter lists no longer identified Ahmadis. In June 2002, the Election Commission also announced that it would accept objections from members of the public to Ahmadis who registered to vote as Muslims. Voters with objections filed against them are required either to sign an oath swearing to the finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed or to be registered as non-Muslims on the voter list. In protest the Ahmadi community notified the President in September 2002 that it would boycott the October 2002 elections. No Ahmadis are known to have voted, but the Government's policy has not changed.

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

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

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country, and proselytizing is permitted (except by Ahmadis) 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 missionary visas, which have a validity of 2 to 5 years and allow only one entry into the country per year. Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries are available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems are frequent.

The authorities sometimes prevent leaders of politico-religious parties from traveling to certain areas if they believe that the presence of such leaders would increase sectarian tensions or cause public violence. On June 26, Maulana Fazlur Rahman, and Qazi Hussain Ahmed, two prominent leaders of the MMA, were sent back after trying to travel to Karachi for a "peace

march."

Civil marriages do not exist; marriages are performed and registered according to one's religion. Upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Hindu or Christian men remain legal; however, upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Hindu or Christian women, or of other non-Muslims that were performed under the rites of the previous religion, are considered dissolved. 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.

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

Members of minority religions volunteer for military service in small numbers, and there are no official obstacles to their advancement. However, in practice non-Muslims rarely, if ever, rise above the rank of colonel and are not assigned to politically sensitive positions. Ahmadis report severe discrimination in the civil service. They 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.

The Government nationalized all church schools and colleges in Punjab and Sindh in 1972. The Government of Sindh gradually denationalized church schools (without providing compensation) from 1985 to 1995. The Government of Punjab devised a plan to denationalize schools and return them to their original owners in 1996. In Punjab several schools belonging to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. (PCUSA) and other denominations were denationalized and returned to the former owners starting in 1998. In November 2001, the Government of Punjab notified PCUSA of the denationalization of six schools. The Church gained possession of three of these schools, but a group of teachers filed a case in civil court challenging the denationalization and obtaining stay orders against the PCUSA. The Government has retained possession of the other three schools while the case is pending. In March 2003, the Punjab Government returned Forman Christian College, arguably the most prominent Christian-founded educational institution in the country, to PCUSA; however, its case resumed in court in July 2003 and the stay order was extended in August 2003. The fate of two other major nationalized institutions, Gordon College in Rawalpindi (PCUSA) and Muree College in Muree (Church of Pakistan), remained undecided as of the end of the period covered by this report.

On some university campuses, groups of students, primarily from radical religious organizations, clashed with and intimidated other students, instructors, and administrators over issues such as language, syllabus content, examination policies, grades, doctrine, and dress. Some faculty members at Punjab University in Lahore attempted to remove from the English curriculum words and ideas deemed inappropriate for Islamic society, but they were not successful. The attempts to make changes in the English literature syllabus taught at the Punjab University began in May 2003 when it was decided that the syllabi of 53 disciplines, including the sciences, would be updated. By August a review of books studied in English courses at the University in Lahore singled out several texts, including Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock," Ernest Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises," and Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" for containing offensive sexual connotations which were deemed vulgar.

In November 2003, a group of students, arguing that the display of what they regarded as obscene material and listening to music were against the teachings of Islam, extensively damaged the Department of Visual Studies of the University of Karachi and destroyed musical instruments, sculptures, and paintings.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, which is mandated to safeguard religious freedom, has on its masthead a Koranic verse: "Islam is the only religion acceptable to God." The Ministry claims it spends 30 percent of its annual budget to assist indigent minorities, 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. The Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), using official budget figures for

expenditures in 1998, calculated that the Government actually spent \$17 (850 Pakistani Rupees) on each Muslim but only \$3.20 (160 Pakistani Rupees) on each religious minority citizen per month.

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

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

The Hudood Ordinances criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and various gambling, alcohol, and property offenses. The Hudood Ordinances, which aim to make the Penal Code more Islamic, provide harsh punishments for violations of Shari'a, including death by stoning for unlawful sexual relations and amputation for other crimes. The ordinances are applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some Hudood Ordinance cases are subject to Hadd, or extreme punishment; others are subject to Tazir, or lesser, punishment. Although both types of cases are tried in ordinary criminal courts, special rules of evidence, which discriminate against non-Muslims and women, apply in Hadd cases. For example, a non-Muslim may testify only if the victim also is non-Muslim. Likewise, the testimony of women, Muslim or non-Muslim, is not admissible in cases involving Hadd punishments. Therefore, if a Muslim man rapes a Muslim woman in the presence of women or non-Muslim men, he cannot be convicted under the Hudood Ordinances for Hadd offenses, but could be given lesser punishments (Tazir) at the discretion of the judge. The Hadd punishments require a high standard of evidence. In the 25 years since the Hudood Ordinances were adopted, not a single Hadd punishment has been carried out. However, on the basis of lesser evidence, ordinary punishments, such as jail terms, whipping, and fines were imposed.

For both Muslims and non-Muslims, all consensual extramarital sexual relations are considered a violation of the Hudood Ordinance. If a woman cannot prove the absence of consent in a rape case, there is a risk that she may be charged with a violation of the Hudood Ordinance for fornication or adultery. The maximum punishment for this offense is public flogging or stoning; however, there are no recorded instances of either type of punishment since the 1980s. According to a police official, in a majority of rape cases, the victims are pressured to drop rape charges because of the threat of Hudood charges being brought against them.

On January 22, the National Commission on Status of Women (NCSW) criticized the Hudood Ordinances and recommended their repeal in a formal report. The commission also stated that the laws on adultery and rape have been subject to widespread misuse, and that 95 percent of the women accused of adultery are found innocent in either the court of first instance or on appeal. However, the commission pointed out that, by that time, the woman may have spent months in jail, suffered sexual abuse at the hands of the police, and seen her reputation destroyed. The commission found that the main victims of the Hudood Ordinances were poor women who were unable to defend themselves against slanderous charges. According to the

commission, husbands and other male family members sometimes used the laws to punish their wives and female family members for reasons that have nothing to do with perceived sexual impropriety. Some human rights groups also add that members of less influential classes, including men, are disadvantaged by this law. At least one-third of the women in the jails in Lahore, Peshawar, and Mardan in 1998 were awaiting trial for adultery under the Hudood Ordinances. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) stated that this ratio remained unchanged during 2001; no new estimates were available for the period covered by this report. HRCP's review of human rights for 2003 reported that according to the final report of the special committee on the Hudood Ordinance constituted by the NCSW, 88 percent of women prisoners in the country were in jail as a result of ambiguities in the Hudood Ordinance.

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

Abuses of Religious Freedom

Police torture and other forms of mistreatment of persons in custody are common. In August 2003, Samuel Masih, a 27-year-old Christian, was charged under the blasphemy laws for allegedly throwing trash on the outer wall of a mosque in Lahore. After a severe bout of tuberculosis in jail, he was moved to a hospital on May 21 under police custody. The next day, a constable assigned to guard him hit him on the head with a brick cutter, telling authorities later that he hoped "to earn a place in heaven" by killing a blasphemer. Masih died of his wounds on May 28; the constable has been charged with murder.

Rehmat Masih died at Lahore Services Hospital in April 2003, after reportedly being tortured by police. Rehmat Masih and a fellow Christian, Iqbal Masih, both sanitary workers at the civil secretariat, were taken into custody by the Sanda police on March 2, 2003. They were charged with stealing law books, while more than 10 Muslim clerks, secretaries, and other office staff, who had direct access to the books, were not accused. Rehmat did not accept the theft charges. A senior official, who reportedly wanted to protect the real culprit, pressured police to torture Rehmat Masih. The two suspects were held illegally for police interrogation for 20 days, after which Rehmat Masih was sent to the Lahore District Jail. Reportedly, police again tortured him. When his condition deteriorated, he was admitted to the hospital, where he died. After his death, protesters demanded that the Government issue murder charges against the police. One protester, Rehmat Masih's nephew, was struck on the head by a police baton and subsequently died. In April 2003, the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance registered a complaint against the police and the senior official. As of the end of the period covered by this report, no action had been taken, but according to CLASS, Rehmat Masih's wife was given 100,000 rupees (approximately \$2,000) as compensation. In 2002 reportedly five persons were killed after being charged with blasphemy; however, these individuals never came to trial. Reportedly, they were Zahid Shah (from Chak Jhumra), Zhim Hameed Khan (Bawalpur), Yousaf Ali (Lahore), Asghar Ali (Nosherah Wirkan), and Saeed Bhatti (Lahore).

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

Prison conditions, except for the "class A" facilities provided to wealthy and politically high profile prisoners, are extremely poor and constitute a threat to the life and health of prisoners. According to the NCJP and CLAAS, non-Muslim prisoners generally are accorded poorer facilities than Muslim inmates.

There are reports that more than 100 persons were being held on blasphemy charges. The Ahmadi leadership claims 14 Ahmadis are currently detained under blasphemy and/or anti-Ahmadi laws.

According to the NCJP, religious minorities constitute a proportionally greater percentage of the prison population. Government officials state that although religious minorities account for approximately 5 percent of the country's population, 25 percent of the cases filed under the blasphemy laws are aimed at religious minorities. According to the NCJP, from 1987 to 2004, there were 580 persons accused of blasphemy: 290 Muslims; 203 Ahmadis; 79 Christians; and 8 Hindus. During the period covered by this report, 43 persons had blasphemy cases filed against them with the police; 14 of these cases have resulted in formal charges: 10 cases against Muslims; 2 against Christians; and 2 against Ahmadis. At the end of the period covered by this report, approximately 100 court cases were pending against Muslims and 11 against Christians. According to CLAAS, from 2000 until the end of the period covered by this report, 45 cases were registered against Christians and 147 against Muslims.

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

Anwar Masih, a Christian, was arrested in November 2003 under section 295(a) of the blasphemy laws, which makes it illegal to insult the religion of another citizen. A Christian convert to Islam, Mohammed Naseer Ahmad, accused Masih of defiling the name of the Prophet Muhammad and using derogatory language about Islam. Ahmad reportedly was angered when Masih refused to convert to Islam at Ahmad's request. Masih was released on bail on June 4 and is in sanctuary within the country.

Yusuf Ali, a Sufi Muslim who had been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death in 2000, was shot and killed in the Lahore Central Jail by another inmate in 2002. The prisoner who killed Ali, Tariq Butt, was a member of the banned Muslim extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. At the end of the period covered by this report, Butt was confined in Lahore's Central Jail, and the case against him still was pending. Some prison officials were arrested in connection with the incident, including an Assistant Superintendent, who reportedly accepted responsibility for the incident and resigned. Punitive actions were taken against three prison officials after a departmental inquiry in 2002: the Superintendent's salary for a year was forfeited; the Deputy Superintendent's rank was lowered by one level; and the Assistant Superintendent was suspended indefinitely.

Blasphemy laws and the anti-Ahmadi law (Sections 298(b) and 298 (c) of Ordinance XX of 1984) often target members of the Ahmadi community. According to Ahmadi sources, 89 Ahmadis were charged formally in criminal cases on a "religious basis" (including blasphemy) in 2002, compared with 70 cases in 2001 and 166 cases in 2000. In 2003 approximately 80 Ahmadis were arrested, and according to Ahmadi sources, 6 Ahmadis similarly were charged since January.

In July 2003, Nasreen Tah and her brother Ehsanullah were charged with blasphemy for allegedly burning some pages of the Koran; Nasreen was released on bail, but her brother was not. A blasphemy case was registered against Ghulam Hussain of Rajanput in June 2003 for defiling the honor of the Koran and speaking out against the Prophet Muhammad; the Ahmadi community claims the case is fabricated and personally motivated. In March 2002, a foreign Ahmadi of Pakistani origin was arrested, tried, and acquitted of publishing blasphemous pamphlets. In April 2001, four Ahmadis, including Abdul Majeed, president of the local Ahmadi community, were charged with blasphemy for constructing minarets and the Mihrab (prayer

niche inside the mosque in the wall facing Mecca) of an Ahmadi mosque. The defendants in all four cases were acquitted by the court in January 2003.

In 2003 Mohammad Nawaz, an Ahmadi leader in Okara District, Punjab, was sentenced to 25 years in jail on charges stemming from a 1999 blasphemy case. The case was appealed to the Lahore High Court; however, at the end of the period covered by this report, Nawaz was detained in the Multan City jail while his appeal was pending.

The blasphemy laws also have been used to harass Christians and other religious minorities, often resulting in cases that persist for years. Religious extremists, who are often part of an organized group, also have killed persons accused under the provisions but acquitted. In April 2003, the District and Sessions Court in Faisalabad sentenced Ranjha Masih to life in prison, allegedly for damaging a Muslim signboard during a bishop's funeral in 1998. Masih has been detained without bail since his arrest in 1998. The judge postponed the verdict several times. As of the end of the period covered by this report, Masih's appeal still was pending in the Lahore High Court.

In April 2001 police registered a blasphemy case against Pervez Masih, a Christian who ran a private school in Sialkot district, Punjab. According to press reports, Masih was charged because he had answered a student's questions about the Prophet Muhammad's life. However, according to CLAAS, the Sunni Muslim owner of another private school charged Masih with blasphemy because he was jealous of Masih's success in attracting both Muslim and non-Muslim students. Masih remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report, and the case against him still was pending at the District and Sessions Court in Daska, Sialkot district.

Police also arrested Muslims under the blasphemy laws; government officials maintain that approximately three-quarters of the total number of blasphemy cases actually brought to trial involved Muslims. Often the cases are protracted, with a very lengthy appeal process. In 2002, a lower court sentenced Wajihul Hassan to death for allegedly having made derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed during phone calls to a lawyer. His case still was being appealed at the end of the period covered by this report, and he remained in detention. In 1998, a Shi'a Muslim, Ghulam Akbar, was convicted of blasphemy in Rahimyar Khan, Punjab, for allegedly making derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed in 1995, and he was sentenced to death. Akbar's death sentence was the first such sentence for a Muslim for a violation of the blasphemy law. Akbar is presently in Multan District Jail, and his appeal of the death sentence still was pending before the Bahawalpur Bench of the Lahore High Court. In 2001, a Sunni Muslim, Younis Sheikh, was sentenced to death for blasphemy in Rawalpindi, Punjab, reportedly for stating in front of his students at Capital Homeopathic College that the Prophet Mohammed's first marriage was not conducted according to Islamic law and custom, and Mohammed could not have been a Muslim before he had received his revelation from God because the Muslim religion logically had not existed until then. Sheikh was acquitted and released in November 2003. As a result of death threats from religious extremists, he sought and received asylum in a European country. In April 2003, Irshad Bibi, a Muslim woman who tried to mediate an argument between atonga (horse-drawn passenger wagon) driver and a shopkeeper in the town of Pasrur in Sialkot District, had her clothing torn by the shopkeeper. When she went to a police station to file a report against the shopkeeper, he and two accompanying maulvis (religious leaders) provoked her into an argument by insulting her. One of the maulvis then registered a police case against her for insulting his beard, which he considered to be an insult to the Prophet Mohammed. Bibi was arrested in April 2003, but she was acquitted of blasphemy charges on July 12, 2003.

There were also many charges against Ahmadis under section 298C. For example, in September 2003, Muhammad Arif was accused of preaching the Ahmadi religion to a local mullah. However, according to the Ahmadi community, Arif and the mullah had been disputing the mullah's failure to pay a bill. In November 2003, Daud Ahmad Muzaffar was charged under section 298C after he stopped at a madrasa to use the restroom. In December 2003, the president of the local Ahmadi community in Khanpur, Ismail, and his son, Tayyab, were arrested under section 298C after Ismail questioned the basis of the mullah's anti-Ahmadi sermons.

There were several incidents of sectarian violence during the period covered by this report. In July 2003, three men armed with rifles and grenades attacked a Shi'a congregation of some 2,000 worshippers in Quetta killing 53 persons and injuring 65. The attackers were later linked with Sunni extremist Lashkar-e-Jhangvi group. On February 28, a suicide bomber blew himself

up in a Shia mosque in Rawalpindi, injuring three worshipers. According to the police, the suicide bomber belonged to a radical Sunni group. On March 3, more than 50 persons were killed after gunmen fired on and hurled grenades at a Shia religious procession in Quetta. The procession returned fire, reportedly killing the three assailants. On May 7, 28 persons were killed and almost 100 injured by a suicide bomber at a Shia mosque in Karachi. On June 14, police arrested Gul Hasan for a separate incident. Hasan reportedly confessed to police his complicity in the Karachi mosque bombing. Hasan remains in detention while charges are pending. Human rights organizations claimed seven relatives of the suicide bomber Akbar Niazi Pathan were also arrested in the case. No further information was available on their status at the end of the period covered by this report.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were reports of forced religious conversions during the reporting period. Religious minorities state that members of their communities, especially minors, sometimes are pressured by private groups and individuals to convert to Islam.

During the period covered by this report, there were no specific reports of minor U.S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Human rights groups report that there have been incidents in which persons from minority groups, especially Hindus and Christians, have been abducted and forcibly converted. The Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) and the All Pakistan Minorities Alliance (APMA) reported the attempted forced conversion of two Christians during the period covered by this report.

On April 17, Javed Anjum stopped at a madrassa for some water. According to CLAAS, when the staff discovered he was Christian, they ordered him to embrace Islam. When he refused, they detained him at the madrassa for 5 days and beat him. On May 2, he died as a result of the beatings; an investigation is on-going (see Section III). Another incident reportedly occurred in November 2003, when Zeeshan Gill was abducted and taken to a madrassa. At the madrassa, he was converted forcibly to Islam. During the investigation, in front of the police and judges, Zeeshan stated that he had willingly converted; however, according to CLAAS, Zeeshan subsequently told his mother that he was forced to convert. During the period covered by this report, Zeeshan was in hiding and supported by an NGO that works on religious freedom issues.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported that in January 2003 a 6-year-old Sikh girl was kidnapped by members of the Afridi tribe, in a remote tribal area of the Northwest Frontier Province. The alleged kidnapper claimed that the girl was actually 12-years-old, that she had converted to Islam, and, therefore, could not be returned to live with her non-Muslim family. There had been no judicial action during the period covered by this report.

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. Many extremists, including Hafiz Sayeed, leader of the banned group, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, have been quoted extensively as calling for Hindus to be killed and for jihad against Westerners. On January 17, police arrested Shamin Ahmed, a member of the foreign terrorist organization Lashkar i Jhangvi. Ahmed is accused of participating in the January 15 grenade attack on the Bible Society office in the Holy Trinity Church in Karachi. The attack was designed to bring the police and other officials to the site, and 15 minutes after the initial attack another bomb in a nearby car exploded and injured 16 persons. Police investigations of the attack were continuing at the end of the period covered by this report. Members of Lashkar i Jhangvi also were implicated in the July 2003 suicide attack on Shi'a worshippers in Quetta in which 53 persons died and 65 were injured. Reportedly, three of the attackers died at the scene, and one was arrested but died shortly thereafter; however, information is inconsistent.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government took some steps to improve the situation of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. In November 2003, the Government banned, under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1997, three extremist groups that were reconstituted versions of organizations previously banned in 2002. Each of the newly banned groups promoted sectarian violence and intolerance. The groups banned were Millat-e-Islami (the former Sipah Sahaba), a Sunni extremist group whose leader had been ambushed and killed in Islamabad in October 2003; Islami Tehreek Pakistan (the former Tehreek-e-Jafariya), a Shi'a extremist group whose leader was arrested for involvement in the killing of the leader of Millat-e-Islami; and Khuddamul Islam (the former Jaish-e-Muhammad), a Sunni extremist group that also promoted jihad in Kashmir and Afghanistan. The bans on these groups were accompanied by the detention of their top leaders, the closing of their offices across the country, and the freezing of their assets held in all Pakistani banks, both domestic and foreign based. Nearly all of those detained following the initial bans were later released. However, members of the groups were placed on "Schedule Four" of the Anti-Terrorism Act, which, among other limitations, allows the government to restrict their movements in the country and to monitor their activities.

A 3-year Human Rights Mass Awareness and Education Project, begun by the Government in 2001 with funding from the Asian Development Bank, was ongoing during the period covered by this report. Several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were engaged actively in the process. The Government also continued to promote human rights awareness in its training of police officers.

In August 2003, President Pervez Musharraf announced a reform package designed to improve educational quality at the country's thousands of madrassas. In August the Finance Minister announced \$100 million (approximately 5.8 billion rupees) in funding for the plan. The 3-year reform plan is meant to expand job possibilities for madrasa graduates, many of whom are currently prepared for employment only with religious institutions. The reform plan will provide funding to encourage the teaching of English, mathematics, economics, and computer technology. Many unregistered madrassas currently provide education only in the Koran, Arabic, and Urdu.

On March 22, legislation to repeal the Hudood Ordinances was introduced in the National Assembly by an opposition politician. On May 15, President Musharraf called for a review of the Hudood Ordinances and the blasphemy laws and announced the creation of a National Commission for Human Rights that would review and report on all forms of human rights abuses, including the rights of religious minorities. However, no action had been taken at the end of the period covered by this report.

In November 2003, the Government removed Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian minority rights activist, from its Exit Control List. Bhatti had been placed on the list, which restricted his right to travel abroad, earlier in the year. In a high profile case, Younis Sheikh was acquitted of blasphemy on November 21, 2003.

Section III. Societal Attitudes

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

According to human rights groups, while rape is often used against women in general to humiliate and "dishonor" them, minority women such as Hindus and Christians are especially vulnerable. On May 29, a 7-year old Christian girl was raped in Lahore. On April 6, the 2-year old daughter of a Christian laborer at a dairy farm was raped. Another case occurred in December 2003, when 14-year-old Shamim Kausor reportedly was raped by a rickshaw driver and his two friends, who allegedly stated that by raping a Christian girl, they would inherit paradise. In August 2003, a Hindu girl allegedly was raped by a local landlord of the area near Khapra. When the father of the accused swore on the Koran that his son was not present on the date of the incident, the accused was acquitted, and the local police refused to register the

case.

Incidents of sectarian violence occurred with considerable frequency. On May 31, there was a bomb blast at the Ali Raza Imambargah which killed at least 22 and wounded 38. Earlier, on May 7, 28 persons were killed and approximately 200 injured by a suicide bomber at the Hyderi Imambargah in Karachi. Gul Hasan, a member of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, had worked with Mohammad Akhtar Niazi (the suicide bomber) and is under arrest. On March 3, more than 50 persons were killed after gunmen opened fire on and threw grenades at a Shi'a religious procession in Quetta. Armed guards reportedly killed the three assailants. On the same day, 2 persons were killed and 40 injured in a clash between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims in Phalia during the same procession. Maulana Syed Aijaz Naqvi, the Senior Vice President of the Punjab Tehrik-e-Jafaria, reportedly had been under house arrest since 3 days earlier in order to prevent him from joining the Shi'a processions. Reportedly, a mob of approximately 1,000 people attacked the Maulana's home and set fire to it. While the Maulana was trying to escape, he reportedly was shot by members of Sipah-e-Sahaba who then dragged his body through the town with a motorcycle for 5 hours. Four security guards of Allama Naqvi and several other persons were injured in the stampede that followed. On February 28, a suicide bomber attacked a Shi'a mosque in Rawalpindi, killing himself and injuring three worshipers. According to police, the suicide bomber belonged to a radical Sunni group.

In November 2003, two men opened fire on a bus carrying Shiite employees of Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission to a Shia mosque for Friday prayers. Five persons were killed and seven were injured.

In July 2003, three men armed with rifles and grenades attacked the Friday Shi'a congregation some 2,000 worshippers at a Shi'a house of worship in Quetta killing 53 persons and injuring 65. Police later claimed that the attackers were associated with the Sunni extremist Lashkar-e-Jhangvi group. Investigations into these incidents were ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report. This same group claimed responsibility for the killing of 12 Shi'a police cadets in June 2003. Reportedly, the attackers drove past the men, who were sitting in the back of a police truck, and shot them.

In June 2003, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi men Ataullah and Mohammed Azam were prosecuted for killing Raza Peerani in Soldier Bazaar. Two motorcyclists opened fire on the doctor as he got into his car after leaving his clinic. Over the last several years, there have been many cases where Shi'a professionals, including doctors, lawyers, and policemen, have been attacked. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan issued a report on "Sectarian Violence in Karachi from 1994-2002" in which it documented the killing of 37 doctors (9 Sunnis and 28 Shi's) in Karachi between 1994 and 2002. During this period, they documented a total of 293 sectarian killings (91 Sunni and 202 Shi'a).

In 2001, Syed Athar Hussain Rizvi, the Pesh Imam (prayer leader) of Asgharia Imambargah in Bhitai Colony, was killed within the limits of the Korangi Industrial Area. In 2001, Syed Hasan Abidi, a factory owner, also was killed within the Korangi Industrial Area. The Lashkar-e-Jhangvi men, Ataullah and Mohammed Azam, were charged with both of these killings. The victims in both cases were Shia, while the attackers were Sunni. Their trial was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report, but after hearing final arguments, the judge was expected to pronounce a verdict later in the year.

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 they do not intervene to prevent violence. In 2001, a mob destroyed an Ahmadi mosque in Sheikhpura; authorities did not stop the violence, and later they arrested 28 Ahmadis for civil disorder. The Ahmadis were released quickly, but there have been no steps to prosecute the offenders or compensate Ahmadis for the loss of the mosque.

Ahmadis are willing to rebuild the mosque with private funds; however, the Government has not given them permission to do so. There were also reports that when Ahmadis displayed the kalima (the Muslim declaration of faith) in their homes or mosques, they were torn down or defaced. In August 2003, Ahmadis in Karachi were told that they had to mark out the kalima from their mosque. After the Ahmadis refused, the authorities painted over the kalima.

In February 2003, Mian Iqbal Ahmed, a lawyer and District President of the local Ahmadi community, was killed at his home in Rajanpur by unknown gunmen. In 2002, Maqsd Ahmed was killed in Faisalabad. Rashid Ahmed, a medical doctor, was killed at his clinic in Rahim Yar Khan in 2002. Abdul Waheed was killed in 2002, in Faisalabad. Two persons were accused, apprehended, and tried. One was acquitted while the other was found guilty and sentenced to death. His appeal is pending in the High Court. All of these killings appeared to have been motivated by anti-Ahmadi sentiment. At the close of the period covered by this report, there was no further information on these cases.

In August 2003, Munawwar Ahmad, former chief of the district organization of Ahmadi elders, was shot and wounded by attackers when he answered his door. Police opened an investigation; however, there were no developments during the period covered by this report.

Sectarian violence against Christians continued during the period covered by this report. On May 2, Javed Anjum, a 19-year-old Christian, died in a hospital in Faisalabad. Anjum had drunk water from a tap at a local madrassa and was held by the teachers and students for 5 days; during this time, allegedly he was beaten. Subsequently, he was transferred to police and charged with theft. Because of his injuries, police later transferred him to a hospital in Faisalabad where he died. No arrests had been made at the end of the period covered by this report.

On April 2, a pastor of a church in Manawala was shot and killed when two attackers entered his residence as the family was watching a movie entitled "Jesus." On January 15, the Bible Society of Pakistan in Karachi was attacked and between 12 and 40 people were injured. Reportedly, the police received a phone warning prior to the car bomb explosion. On January 5, a pastor of the Church of God in Khanewal, Pastor Mukhtar Masih, was murdered by unknown assailants near the Khanewal Rail Station. At the end of the period covered by this report, no one had claimed responsibility, and no one had been arrested.

On January 25, unknown gunmen opened fire on a church in Patoki; no arrests have been made. On July 5, 2003, a Roman Catholic priest, Father George Ibrahim, was killed by unknown persons in an attack on a church in Okara District, Punjab. According to various NGOs, Father Ibrahim was killed because of his involvement in the denationalization of the school and its return to parish management. Unconfirmed reporting claims that four Christians were arrested for the killing and tortured while in police custody; however, reportedly they were released on bail when the High Court intervened. The investigation was ongoing at the end of the period covered by this report.

In December 2002, 3 Christian girls were killed and 16 persons injured when 2 militants attacked a church with grenades in the Chianwali village in Sialkot District, Punjab. Three police officers were suspended for negligence related to the Christmas attack. The suspects were released on bail on October 2, 2003, by order of the Lahore High Court. As of the end of the period covered by this report, the complainants in the case were under pressure by Muslim militants, the police, and frightened relatives to drop their charges. Three quarters of the Christian residents have left the village. Attacks against Western targets also reportedly increased Christians' sense of insecurity. The Government strongly condemned the attacks against Christians.

Ahmadis suffer from societal harassment and discrimination. Even the rumor that someone may be an Ahmadi or have Ahmadi relatives can stifle opportunities for employment or promotion. Most Ahmadis are home-schooled or go to private, Ahmadi-run schools. Ahmadi students in public schools often are subject to abuse by their non-Ahmadi classmates. The quality of teachers assigned to predominately Ahmadi schools by the government reportedly is poor. In 2002, in response to a question from Islamic clerics, President Musharraf (who has been accused of favoring Ahmadis) declared that he believed Ahmadis are "non-Muslims."

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

that are predominately Muslim.

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

There is no Jewish community, but anti-Semitic sentiment appears to be widespread, and anti-Semitic press articles are common, particularly in the Urdu press.

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

Persons who have been accused under the blasphemy laws (see Section II), including those acquitted of the charges against them, often face societal discrimination. In 2002, Zahid Shah, a Muslim who had been accused and acquitted of blasphemy charges, was stoned to death in Punjab by a mob of approximately 300 villagers enforcing the fatwa of a cleric. Within a week, police had arrested 29 persons in connection with the stoning; however, those arrested were later released, and no convictions had been reported in this case as of the end of the period covered by this report. On July 6, 2002, Pervez Masih, a Christian high school principal who was arrested in 2001 based on allegations by Muslim schoolboys he tutored, was attacked by fellow prison inmate, Ashtar Bashir.

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

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

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

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.

Embassy officers closely monitored the status of religious freedom and acted when appropriate. In addition senior Embassy officials expressed concern about the Shahbaz Bhatti and Younis Sheikh cases with senior government officials. Embassy officials encouraged government officials to pursue aggressive investigations of incidents involving the bombing of churches. The Embassy also assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up specific cases involving religious minorities.

The Embassy sponsored several academics to travel to the United States with the International Visitors Program and participate in programs that focus on religious freedom and pluralism. The United States also began to implement a \$100 million (approximately 5 billion rupees) educational reform program designed to affect both public and private institutions, including madrassas, positively.

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