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The Constitution (which was suspended following the October 1999 coup) provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions are to be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. Pakistan is an Islamic republic; Islam is the state religion. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. 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 suspended 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 that practice a different faith. In January 2002, the Government announced plans to abolish the separate electorate system, under which non-Muslim voted in national elections for non-Muslim candidates. Minority leaders and human rights groups had requested the elimination of the separate electorate system for years, on the grounds that it disadvantaged religious minorities. President Pervez Musharraf announced the reinstatement of joint electorates, ending a 15-year practice of preventing religious minorities from voting for local representatives in the provincial and national assemblies. However, on June 26, 2002, the Government proposed constitutional amendments that seek to restore the discretionary powers of the President and the Governors. With this new amendment, the President may dissolve the National Assembly, and the proposal also seeks to eliminate 10 reserved National Assembly special seats for Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, other non-Muslims, and Ahmadis.

Acts of sectarian and religious violence continued during the period covered by this report. A number of massacres in churches and mosques brought into question the Government's ability to prevent sectarian and religious violence. The worst religious violence was directed against the country's Shi'a minority, who continued to be disproportionate victims of individual and mass killings.

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; specific legal prohibitions against Ahmadis practicing their religion; and blasphemy laws that most often are used against Muslims and Ahmadis. The number of cases filed under the "blasphemy laws" continued to be significant during the period covered by this report. A Christian nongovernmental organization (NGO) reported that 58 cases were registered during 2000 and 2001, compared to 53 cases during 1999-2000.

Relations between different religious groups frequently are tense, and there were a number of deaths attributed to sectarian violence during the period covered by this report.

Discriminatory religious legislation adds to an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which contributes to acts of violence directed against minority Muslim groups, as well as against Christians, Hindus, and members of Muslim offshoot groups, such as Ahmadis and Zikris. The Government does not encourage sectarian violence; however, there were instances in which the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence directed at minority religious groups, particularly Shi'as. The lack of an adequate government response contributed to an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities. Parties and groups with religious affiliations target minority groups.

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom issues with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has a total area of 310,527 square miles, and its population is approximately 132 million. According to the 1998 census, an estimated 96 percent of the population are Muslim; 1.69 percent are Christian; 2.02 percent are Hindu; and 0.35 percent are "other" (including Ahmadis). The majority of Muslims in the country are Sunni. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the Muslim population are Shi'a. It is estimated that there are between 550,000 and 600,000 Ismailis (a recognized Shi'a Muslim group). Most Ismailis in the country are followers of the Aga Khan; however, an estimated 50,000 Ismailis, known as Borahs, are not.

Religious minority groups believe that they are underrepresented in government census counts. Official and private estimates of their numbers can differ significantly. The most recent census estimates place the number of Christians at 2.09 million and the Ahmadi population at 286,000. The communities themselves each claim membership of approximately 4 million. Estimates for the remaining communities are less contested and place the total number of Hindus at 2.8 million; Parsis (Zoroastrians), Buddhists, and Sikhs at as high as 20,000 each; and Baha'is at 30,000. The "other" category includes tribes whose members practice traditional indigenous religions and who normally do not declare themselves to be adherents of a specific religion, and those who do not wish to 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 70 million persons, it contains almost half of the country's total population. Muslims are the majority in Punjab. More than 90 percent of the country's Christians reside in Punjab, 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; the second largest group belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The rest are from different evangelical and church organizations.

Christians and Hindus each constitute approximately 1 percent of the populations of Sindh and Baluchistan provinces. These two provinces also have a few tribes that practice traditional indigenous religions and a small population of Parsis (approximately 7,000 persons). The Ismailis are concentrated in Karachi and the northern areas. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi, although some live in Islamabad and Peshawar. 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 are concentrated in Punjab and Sindh. The spiritual center of the Ahmadi community is the large, predominantly Ahmadi town of Rabwah in Punjab.

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, religion often plays an important part in daily life. Most Muslim men offer prayers at least once a week at Friday prayers, and 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.

The Shikaris (a hunting caste now mostly employed as trash collectors in urban Sindh) are converts to Islam, but eat foods forbidden by Islam.

Many varieties of Hinduism are practiced, depending upon location and caste. Hindus have retained or absorbed many traditional practices of Sindh. Hindu shrines are scattered throughout the country. Approximately 1,500 Hindu temples and shrines exist in Sindh and approximately 500 in Baluchistan. Most shrines and temples are tiny, no more than wayside shrines. During Hindu festivals, such as Divali and Holi, attendance is much greater.

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

Parsis, who practice the Zoroastrian religion, have no regularly scheduled congregational services, except for a 10-day festival in August during which 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, preserving rites and forbidding marriage to members of other religions.

Only one group described by the authorities as a "foreign cult" reportedly has been established in the country. In Karachi members of the U.S.-based "Children of God" are rumored to be operating a commune where they practice polygamy. However, during the period covered by this report, there was no evidence that this group existed.

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), mostly in tribal areas. 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 suspended Constitution provided for freedom of religion, and stated that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposed limits on freedom of religion. The suspended Constitution also provided that there was 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. According to the suspended Constitution, the country was an Islamic republic, and Islam was the state religion. Islam also was a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. Under the suspended Constitution, both the President and the Prime Minister were to be Muslims, and all senior officials were required to swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology." Freedom of speech was 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 not protected. Under the suspended Constitution, the Ahmadi community is defined as non-Muslim because Ahmadis do not believe that Mohammed was the last prophet of Islam; however, most Ahmadis consider themselves Muslims. In 2000 the Government incorporated the Islamic provisions of the suspended Constitution into the Provisional Constitutional Order, including the clause declaring Ahmadis to be non-Muslims.

The suspended Constitution protected religious minorities from being taxed to support the majority religion; no one could be forced to pay taxes for the support of any religion other than his own. For example, Sunni Muslims are subject to the "zakat," a 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. Hindus and Sikhs, because of population shifts that occurred between India and Pakistan after partition, 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 from another. For all religious groups, the process appears to be subject to bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes.

The suspended Constitution safeguarded "educational institutions with respect to religion." For example, under the suspended Constitution, no student could 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 was prohibited under the suspended 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 practice teachers compel many non-Muslim students to complete Islamic studies.

The suspended 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; 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.

Several Muslim religious holidays are considered national holidays, including Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Azha, Muharram (Shi'a), and the Prophet Mohammed's Birthday. Most businesses have limited hours during the month of Ramadan.

On June 19, 2002, the Government announced the Madrassah Registration Ordinance of 2002, which went into effect immediately. Under the ordinance, all madrassahs (religious schools) were required to register with the Pakistan madrassah Education Board and provincial boards. Madrassahs failing to do so may be fined or closed. The madrassahs no longer are allowed to accept grants or foreign aid from foreign sources, although madrassahs offering courses in science, math, Urdu, and English are eligible for government funds. Foreign madrassah students are to be required to obtain no objection certificates. Madrassahs were given 6 months to comply. The ordinance was designed to regulate the madrassahs, where many poor children are educated, and combat religious extremism.

In December 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that all forms of interest (riba) are un-Islamic and directed the Government to implement an interest-free banking and financial system by June. In June 2001, the Shari'a Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court extended for 1 year the deadline for implementation of this judgement. However, on June 24, 2002, the Supreme Court vacated the earlier decision and remanded the case to the Federal Shariat Court for reconsideration.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The Government does not ban formally the public practice of the Ahmadi religion, but the practice of the Ahmadi faith is restricted severely by law. A 1974 constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be a non-Muslim minority because, according to the Government, 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 Muslim 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 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 286(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 extensively by the Government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to target and harass Ahmadis. Ahmadis also are prohibited from holding any conferences or gatherings.

The suspended 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. Ahmadis also are prohibited from being buried in Muslim cemeteries.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country. Proselytizing (except by Ahmadis) is permitted as long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge 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. These visas carry the annotation "missionary." Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries are available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems are frequent.

There have been press reports that the authorities are conducting surveillance on the Ahmadis and their institutions.

The blasphemy laws refer to 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 during the martial law period, 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 even orthodox Muslims. No person has been executed by the State under any of these provisions; however, some persons have been sentenced to death, and religious extremists have killed persons accused under the provisions. The blasphemy laws also have been used to "settle scores" unrelated to religious activity, such as intrafamily or property disputes.

President Musharraf has not modified the blasphemy laws since his attempt to reform them in April 2000. The attempted reform would have required complainants to register new blasphemy cases with the local deputy commissioners instead of with police officials, to reduce the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws. Religious and sectarian groups mounted large-scale protests against the proposed change and some religious leaders stated that if the laws were changed, even just procedurally, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves. 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. As a result, 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 act, including speech, intended to stir up religious hatred is punishable by up to 7 years of rigorous imprisonment. In the antiterrorist courts, cases were to be decided within 7 working days, and trials in absentia were permitted. Appeals to an appellate authority were required to occur within 7 days, but appellate authority since has been restored to the high courts and the Supreme Court. Under the act, bail is not to be granted if the judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the

accused is guilty.

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 an attack on 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. Although prosecutions for publishing appear to be few, the threat of the blasphemy law is ever present. There were 80 blasphemy cases pending throughout the country during the period covered by this report.

Government authorities closed down a leading provincial newspaper, the Frontier Post, and placed five of its employees under protective custody in late January 2001, following the publication of a letter to the editor that contained comments that were critical of Islam. Two employees of the Frontier Post remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. Government law enforcement officials failed to prevent a mob from setting fire to the Frontier Post printing presses on January 30, 2001. Security officials did not arrest any of the participants in the mob violence.

On June 4, 2001, government authorities in Abbotabad, NWFP, sealed the office and printing press of Mahaasaib, a local daily newspaper, and arrested the resident editor, shift manager, and subeditor. The authorities accused the newspaper of committing blasphemy because it published an article that argued that Islam does not require men to grow beards. The Governor of the NWFP reportedly asked the local administration to reverse its decision; however, the local administration denied the request, stating that it did not wish to provoke social unrest. The staff members remained in custody, and the office still was closed, at the end of the period covered by this report. There were no new developments in this case.

Ahmadis charge that they suffer from restrictions on their press. Christian scriptures and books are available in Karachi and in traveling bookmobiles. However, in recent years, the owner of a Christian bookshop in Karachi has reported frequent questioning by local Muslim religious leaders and occasional questioning by the police. Such questioning may lead to self-censorship among Christians. Hindu and Parsi scriptures are freely available. Foreign books and magazines may be imported freely, but are subject to censorship for objectionable religious content.

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The Government restricts the distribution and display of certain religious images such as the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ.

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. Under increasing pressure from fundamentalist leaders, in May 2002, the Government reinstated a column on the voter registration form that requires Muslims to make 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 heavily because it no longer identified Ahmadis on the voter lists. The Election Commission in June 2001 announced that it would accept objections to Ahmadis who registered to vote as Muslims from members of the public. 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.

Links with coreligionists in other countries are maintained relatively easily. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan report no difficulties. Ismailis are in regular contact with their headquarters, and 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 from traveling to their spiritual center in Israel.

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. During the period covered by this report, religious party leaders from the Jamaat-e-Islami and Jammat-Ulema-Islamia remained under house arrest for several months during the winter and spring of 2001 and 2002, following threats that they would lead protests and riots against the Government's crackdown on jihadi organizations.

In January 2002, the Government eliminated the separate electorate system. Separate electorates had been a longstanding point of contention between religious minorities and human rights groups on the 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 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 elective office under the previous separate electorate system.

However, the return of joint electorates eliminated parliamentary and assembly seats reserved for

minorities. Some minority leaders complained that these seats should have been retained after the joint electorate system was eliminated. While minorities welcome the opportunity to be able to elect local representatives to the national and provincial assemblies, it is unlikely that any of the future elected officials will come from minority groups; having reserved seats for the minorities would do more to increase their presence in law-making bodies.

Civil marriages do not exist; marriages are performed and registered according to one's religion. Upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian men remain legal; however, upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian women, or of other non-Muslims that were performed under the rites of the previous religion, are considered dissolved. Children born to Jewish or Christian women who convert to Islam after marriage are considered illegitimate only if their husbands do not also convert, and if women in such cases do not separate from their husbands. Children of non-Muslims men who convert are not considered illegitimate.

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 do not rise above the rank of major general and are not assigned to politically sensitive positions. Ahmadis report severe discrimination in the civil service; they complain that a "glass ceiling" prevents them from being promoted to top 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), were denationalized and returned to the former owners in 1998. However, the notification was withdrawn in 1999. In November 2001, the government of Punjab notified PCUSA of the denationalization of six schools. The Church gained possession of three of the schools, but a group of teachers filed a case in civil court challenging the denationalization, obtained stay orders against the PCUSA, and took possession of the other three. The case still was pending, although the government of Punjab considers the matter settled.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, entrusted with safeguarding 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, to repair minority places of worship, to set up minority-run small development schemes, and to celebrate minority festivals. However, religious minorities question its expenditures, 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 (PRs 850) on each Muslim and only \$3.20 (PRs 16) on each religious minority citizen per month.

Religious minorities are afforded fewer legal protections than Muslim citizens. 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 Ulama (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 martial law-era Hudood Ordinances criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and various gambling, alcohol, and property offenses. The Hudood Ordinances reportedly are based on the Government's interpretation of Islamic principles and are applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some Hudood Ordinance cases are subject to Hadd, or Koranic, punishment; others are subject to Tazir, or secular, punishment. Although both types of cases are tried in ordinary criminal courts, special rules of evidence apply in Hadd cases, which discriminate against

non-Muslims. 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 both Muslims and non-Muslims, all consensual extramarital sexual relations are considered a violation of the Hudood Ordinances; 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 Ordinances 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 1980's. 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 adultery charges being brought against them. In March 2002, Zafra Bibi was sentenced to death for a violation of the Hudood Ordinances, in a case that drew national and international attention to the Hudood ordinances. Bibi filed rape charges against her brother-in-law, but when a medical exam indicated that she already was pregnant at the time of the alleged rape, her father-in-law then accused

her of adultery with another person as a way to settle an old rivalry and protect his son. A lower Shari'a court convicted her of adultery and sentenced her to death by stoning. When Bibi's husband claimed to be the father of the child she carried, refuting the charge of adultery, the Federal Shariat bench overturned the verdict and acquitted Bibi. A Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry for Women has criticized the Hudood Ordinances and recommended their repeal. 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 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 are poor women who are unable to defend themselves against slanderous charges. According to the Commission, the laws also have been used by husbands and other male family members to punish their wives and female family members for reasons that have nothing to do with perceived sexual impropriety. Approximately one-third or more 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 stated that this ratio remained unchanged during 2001. However, no Hadd punishment has been imposed since the Hudood Ordinances went into effect.

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. However, there were no confirmed reports of torture of prisoners or detainees because of their religious beliefs during the period covered by this report.

There have been instances in which police have used excessive force against individuals because of their religious beliefs and practices; however, it sometimes is difficult to determine whether or not religious affiliation is a factor in police brutality. The police also have failed to act against persons who use force against other individuals because of their religious beliefs (see Section II). 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. For example, both the Christian and Ahmadi communities claim that in the past persons were killed because of their religious beliefs; however, there were no such allegations during the period covered by this report.

The law regulates arrest and detention procedures; however, the authorities do not always comply with the law, and police arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Violence in Punjab has prompted the Government on several occasions to round up hundreds of members of religious extremist groups and students at madrassahs believed to be terrorist recruiting centers and training grounds. The police also arrest demonstrators, including members of religious minorities. For example, on January 16, 2001, security personnel arrested 16 Muslim, Christian, and Hindu protesters from the All Faiths' Spiritual Movement International during a demonstration protesting the country's blasphemy laws. Several participants in the demonstration threw stones and ignored police orders to disperse peacefully. No formal charges were filed, and all of those arrested were released after several days.

There were scattered reports that authorities interrogated persons due to their religious beliefs or practices.

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 the Center for Legal Aid, Assistance, and Settlement (CLAAS), non-Muslim prisoners do not enjoy the same facilities as Muslim inmates.

Blasphemy laws often target members of the Ahmadi community or other Muslims. According to Ahmadi sources, 70 Ahmadis were charged formally in criminal cases on a "religious basis" (including blasphemy) in 2001, compared to 166 cases in 2000 and 80 cases in 1999. In March 2002, a foreign Ahmadi of Pakistani origin was arrested, tried, and acquitted of publishing blasphemous pamphlets. In April 29, 2001, four Ahmadis, including Abdul Majeed, president of the local Ahmadi community, were charged with blasphemy for constructing minarets and the Mihrab of an Ahmadi mosque. During the period covered by this report, there was no further information regarding Ghaffar Ahmad and Nasir Ahmad. On May 12, 2001, the court rejected the bail application for Pervaiz Masih, and his case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

In December 1999, several hundred persons looted and burned property in Haveli Lakha, Okara district, Punjab, which belonged to Mohammad Nawaz, a local Ahmadi leader accused of planning to build an Ahmadi house of worship. A neighbor reportedly incited the incident by accusing Nawaz of building the house of worship after the two were involved in a property dispute. Nawaz, a doctor, reportedly intended to build a free clinic next to his home. The mob looted and burned Nawaz's home. According to Ahmadi sources, police personnel arrived at the scene but did nothing to stop the crowd. As of the end of the period covered by this report, neither the neighbor nor anyone in the crowd had been arrested or questioned in connection with the incident, and police had not taken steps to find or return any of

Nawaz's property. However, Nawaz and his two sons were arrested and charged with blasphemy. They were released on bail several days later; however, the blasphemy case against them was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. Three other Ahmadis in Haveli Lakha also were charged with blasphemy in connection with the incident despite being out of town at the time.

The blasphemy laws also are used to harass Christians; A number of cases have lingered for years. On April 1, 2001, police registered a blasphemy case against Pervez Masih, a Christian who ran a private school in Sialkot district, Punjab. 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. However, according to the press reports, Pervez Masih was charged because he answered a student's questions about Mohammed's life. Masih remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. In May 2000, a lower court in Sialkot district, Punjab, sentenced two Christian brothers to 35 years' imprisonment each and fined both of them \$1,500 (PRs 75,000). The brothers were convicted of desecrating the Koran and blaspheming against the Prophet Mohammed. The Lahore High court was scheduled to hear their appeal in June 2002; however, the appeal was not heard during the period covered by this report. On May 2, 2000, Augustine Ashiq Masih was charged with blaspheming against the Prophet in Faisalabad; he remained in custody at the end of the period covered by this report. Ayub Masih (detained since 1996) was convicted of blasphemy for making favorable comments about Salman Rushdie, the author of the controversial book "The Satanic Verses," and was sentenced to death in April 1998; his appeal was scheduled to be heard by the Supreme Court in October 2002.

Police also arrested Muslims under the blasphemy laws; government officials maintain that approximately three-quarters of the total number of blasphemy cases that have been brought to trial involved Muslims. Often the cases are drawn out, with a very lengthy appeal process. In September 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. The case was pending at the end of the period covered by this report. In October 2001, a Sunni Muslim, Dr. Younis Shaikh, was sentenced to death for blasphemy in Rawalpindi, Punjab, reportedly for stating in front of his students at Capital Homeopathic College in Rawalpindi that the Prophet Mohammed's first marriage was not conducted according to Islamic law and custom. His appeal was pending at the end of the period covered by this report.

No estimate of the number of religious detainees exists; however, the Government has arrested and detained numerous Muslims and non-Muslims for their religious beliefs and practices under the blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws. The blasphemy laws were meant to protect both majority and minority faiths from discrimination or abuse; however, in practice these laws frequently are used by rivals and the authorities 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 since 1989 have been released due to a lack of sufficient evidence. However, many judges reportedly handed down guilty verdicts to protect themselves and their families from retaliation by religious extremists. Many judges also repeatedly postpone action in certain blasphemy cases in response to religious extremists; the result of this practice is that accused blasphemers remain in prison for extended periods of time. 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. Yusuf Ali, who had been convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death in August 2000, was shot and killed in the Lahore Central Jail by another inmate on June 11, 2002. The prisoner who killed Ali was a member of the banned Muslim extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan. Some jail officials were arrested in connection with the incident, including an Assistant Superintendent (who reportedly took responsibility for the shooting and stepped down). At the end of the period covered by this report, the shooting still was under investigation by the authorities.

The Government has taken steps to curb religious extremism and militancy, with mixed results. In August 2001, the Government banned two groups known for sectarian violence, the Lashkar-e-Jangvi and Sipah-e-Mohammad Pakistan, and ordered their offices closed. During the following week, the Government arrested several hundred activists belonging to two larger sectarian organizations, the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and the Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan. On August 20, the Sindh provincial government announced a ban on fundraising activities by certain militant religious groups. On August 22, the police raided more than 50 offices, mosques, and madrassahs in Karachi in connection with the ban. More than 250 persons were detained temporarily in the raids. On January 12, 2002, the Government banned another four groups suspected of inciting religious violence and jihad: Jaish-e-Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, and Tehrik-e-Jafria. Hundreds of local and national offices were closed, and almost 2,000 members of these groups were arrested in the weeks following the January announcement. Most detainees were low-level organization members who were released after 90 days without being charged. Rumors persist that higher level party leaders enjoyed the protection and patronage of government agencies, and avoided arrest by going underground. In late June 2002, the authorities in Lahore arrested at least 30 members of 2 of the banned groups. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had accelerated its crackdown against members of several extremist groups.

The Punjab government ordered a crackdown on extremists in early October 1999; as a result several hundred persons were arrested, including the leader of the SSP, Maulana Mohammad Azam Tariq, and SSP branch president Maulana Mohammad Ahmad Ludhianvi. Tariq was released after a year of imprisonment; however, he was arrested again in February 2001 and remained in detention at the end of the period covered by this report.

Following the killings of four Sunni clerics on January 28, 2001, Sunni Muslim students participated in violent demonstrations and arson attacks in Karachi (see Section III). The Government dispatched police, paramilitary, and military forces to disperse the demonstrations, and several students and police officers were injured. Following a wave of sectarian killings between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims (see Section III), the Government arrested between 150 and 250 alleged Sunni and Shi'a militants in Karachi. Government officials stated that the arrests and a public call for religious leaders to enforce a code of conduct resulted in a reduction of such killings during the traditionally violent period of Muharram.

Forced Religious Conversion

There were no reports of forced religious conversion, including 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.

Religious minorities state that members of their communities, especially minors, sometimes are pressured by private groups and individuals to convert to Islam.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Government took some specific steps to improve the situation of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. In January 2002, the Government eliminated the separate electorate system. The Government also continued to promote human rights awareness in its training of police officers.

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, Christians, Hindus, and Zikris. Members of religious minorities are subject to violence and harassment, and police at times refuse to prevent such abuses or charge persons who commit them (see Section II). Most victims of religious violence in the country are Shi'a Muslims. Wealthy religious minorities and those who belong to religious groups that do not seek converts report fewer instances of discrimination.

Sectarian violence and tensions continued to be a serious problem throughout the country. More than 300 persons died in incidents of sectarian violence in Punjab in the last 4 years, according to one credible newspaper report. Despite the Government's ban on groups involved in sectarian killings, violence between rival Sunni and Shi'a Muslim groups continued during the period covered by this report. Many of the victims were Shi'a professionals—doctors and lawyers—who were not politically active or involved with sectarian groups. During the period covered by this report, at least 53 cases of sectarian violence occurred in the country, most carried out by unidentified gunmen.

On August 14, 2001, unidentified motorcycle riders shot and killed Rizwan Shah, an activist, in the Harkatuk Ansar. On August 27, 2001, two men killed District Superintendent of Police Syed Kausar Abbas Gilani as he jogged in Bahawalpur stadium. On August 28, 2001, unidentified assailants shot and killed Abid Abbas Naqvi, a subdivisional officer in Baluchistan's building and roads department. On September 1, 2001, Syed Hamid Ali Rizvi, the father of a television executive, was ambushed and killed in Karachi. On September 4, 2001, gunmen motorcyclists shot and killed Ali Hussain Naqvi, a prayer leader at a Karachi Shi'a mosque. On September 10, 2001, senior bureaucrat Altaf Hussain Bangash was shot and killed in Karachi, 2 years after his father-in-law and brother-in-law were killed in the same manner. On September 11, 2001, Allama Razi Haider and his 11-year-old son were killed in their car in Karachi. On September 13, 2001, three were killed and four persons were injured when unidentified gunmen opened fire on a religious gathering in Azizabad. The same day, Professor Atiq Hasan Naqvi of Balochistan University in Quetta was injured and his son was killed in an ambush. On September 25, 2001, unidentified gunman killed Karachi industrialist Abdul Razzaq. There were no new developments in the cases of Sheikhul Hadih Maulana, Saleem Qadri, and Kausar Abbas Shah Gillani.

On October 3, 2001, gunmen killed Dr. Jameeluddin and injured nurse Nighat Seema in Karachi. The next day, three assailants killed six worshippers and injured eight others at the Ali-Murtaza Shi'a mosque in Karachi. On October 6, 2001, four persons were killed and nine others were injured when gunmen on a motorcycle fired at persons leaving a madrassah. On October 9, 2001, Jamiat Ahle Hadith leader Maulana Abdul Ghafoor was shot and killed while returning from prayers. The same day, Syed Gul Iman Shah, principal of a technical college, was killed in front of the school in Karachi. On October 10, 2001, two motorcycle riders killed Hasan Zaidi, grandson of noted scholar Syed Salman Nadvi and chairman of the Sindh board of technical education. On October 15, 2001, two more motorcycle riders killed two police constables guarding a Shi'a mosque. On October 17, 2001, police constable Syed Didar Hussain Shah was shot and killed outside the residence of a district judge. On October 19, 2001, Tehrik-e-Jafria Pakistan (TJP) leader Allama Nazir Ahmed Abbas was shot and killed in his shop in Vehari. One hour earlier, a mob killed the uncle of a former National Assembly member.

On November 10, 2001, gunmen ambushed and killed Advocate Ashiq Ali Abdullah in Karachi. The next day, four assailants killed a

TJP leader's cousin in Lahore. The day after, another TJP activist was shot and killed in Karachi. On November 15, 2001, Syed Hasan Abidi, general finance manager at Abbas Dying, was attacked and killed in his car in Karachi. On November 22, 2001, Dr. Ghulam Ali Sheikh, chief medical officer at the Hyderabad central prison, died 10 days after being shot in the head. On November 28, 2001, gunmen shot and killed a leading Karachi fruit exporter. On December 21, 2001, Ehteshamuddin Haider, elder brother of Interior Minister Haider, was shot and killed in Karachi. On December 31, 2001, Nazir Hussain, a local Shi'a activist, was killed in Dera Ismail Khan. On January 9, 2002, Syed Hassan Ali Rizvi was shot and killed by two motorcyclists in Karachi. On January 28, 2002, one person was killed and two others were injured when motorcycle gunmen opened fire on a policeman. On January 29, 2002, Syed Jawwad Ali, a retired insurance company officer, was killed in Karachi. On February 4, 2002, Jhang Police Inspector Mohammad Jamil was killed after conducting several successful operations against the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. The same day, Dr. Fayyaz Karim was shot and killed outside a mosque in Karachi. On February 12, 2002, Dr. Rashid Mehdi was shot and killed in a Karachi hospital parking lot. On February 26, 2002, 11 persons were killed and 16 others were injured when 3 militants opened fire on a Shi'a mosque in Khayaban-e-Sirsyed. On March 4, 2002, noted urologist Dr. Aale Safdar was killed in Karachi. In May 2002, masked gunmen killed well-known moderate Sunni scholar Ghulam Mustafa Malik, his driver, and a police officer who pursued the assailants. On April 26, 2002, in Bukker, Punjab province, 12 women were killed and many others were injured when a bomb exploded in the women's section of a Shi'a mosque. On June 17, 2002, unknown extremist groups shot and killed three Shi'a men outside of a Shi'a mosque, who was opposed by the Sunni extremist groups Lash-Kar-e Jhangyi and Singh Sahaba Pakistan.

Sectarian violence between members of different religious groups received national attention in the period covered by this report and continued to be a serious problem. Ahmadis, Christians, and other religious minorities often were the targets of such violence.

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 do not intervene to prevent trouble. In August 2001, a mob destroyed an Ahmadi mosque in Shekhpura; authorities did not stop the violence and later arrested 28 Ahmadis in connection with civil disorder. In July 2001, Sheikh Nazir Ahmed, an Ahmadi leader in Faisalabad, was killed. On September 14, 2001, Noor Ahmed and his son Tahir were killed and two others were injured in an armed attack on their house in Narowal. In October 2001, Ahmadi Ejaz Ahmed Basra and his son Shahjehan were shot and killed in Ghatilalian. Basra had provided evidence in a trial against several men accused of killing five Ahmadis the previous year, and the shooting was thought to be in retaliation for his testimony. In January 2002, Ghulam Mustafa Mohsin, an Ahmadi who had received previous death threats, was killed in his home in District Toba Tek Singh. Ahmadi activists maintain a list of more than 20 other cases involving harassment during the period of this report.

Christians also have been victims of violence. In October 2001, masked gunmen opened fire at the St. Dominic church in Bahawalpur, killing 11 persons and injuring more than a dozen worshippers. Authorities still were investigating the case at the end of the period covered by this report. Officially, three members of an extremist group thought to be responsible for the Bahawalpur incident were killed in a "police encounter." Authorities also detained three others in relation to the church killings. In March 2002, an attack on a church in Islamabad left five persons dead, including two foreign nationals. During the period covered by this report, police made no arrests in connection with past sectarian killings. Numerous such killings remain unresolved.

Ahmadi 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. Those 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 late May, in response to a question from Islamic clerics, President Musharraf denounced Ahmadis as "non-Muslims."

While many Christians belong to the poorest socioeconomic groups, this 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. In Karachi the majority of Roman Catholics are Goan Christians, or descendants of Eurasian marriages. They often are light-skinned and are relatively well educated and prosperous, in sharp contrast to their coreligionists (mostly members of evangelical denominations), who often are dark-skinned and poorly educated. Many poor Christians remain in the profession of their low caste Hindu ancestors (most of whom were "untouchables"). Their position in society, though somewhat better today than in the past, does not reflect any 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 object of resentment of Sunni Muslims due to the comparative economic advances they have made. Ismailis have not been harassed by the Government nor have they been targeted by extremist groups; however, they report that they frequently are pressured to adopt certain practices of conservative Muslims or risk being ostracized socially.

Although there are few if any citizens who are Jewish, anti-Semitic sentiments appear to be widespread,

and anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist press articles are common.

Shikharis generally are ostracized by other Muslims, primarily because of their eating habits.

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.

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 in order to discourage them from working.

While there is no law instituting the death penalty for apostates (those who convert from Islam) as required by the Koran, social pressure against such an action is so powerful that most such conversions reportedly take place in secret. In one high-profile case in 2001, a movie actress from Karachi converted to Christianity from Islam without penalty. However, 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 is believed to be widespread. Christians in particular 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. Agriculture, 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. In 1999 the Government removed colonial-era entries for sect from government job application forms to prevent discrimination in hiring. However, the faith of some, particularly of Christians, often can be ascertained from their names.

There are a number of NGO's and civic groups that promote interfaith dialog.

There have been no reported updates to the 1998 bombing of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Karachi or the 1999 killing of 9 persons in Nowshera during the period covered by this report.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. Government discussed religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. representatives maintained regular contacts with major Muslim and minority religious groups. Embassy officers also maintained a dialog 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. The Embassy also has assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up on specific cases involving religious minorities.

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