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Home Office

Country Information and Guidance

Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts

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Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained within this document; the available COI; any applicable caselaw; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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Guidance

Updated 10 May 2016

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of Claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by the state or non-state actors because the person is a Christian, or has converted to Christianity from Islam.

1.2 Other Points to Note

- 1.2.1 Decision makers should be aware that there are a number of Christian denominations, each with varying beliefs and practices. For a brief overview, see [BBC: Christianity](#).

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2. Consideration of Issues

2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For further guidance on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview: see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#).
- 2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing: see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

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2.2 Assessment of Risk: Christians

- 2.2.1 The country guidance (CG) case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan \(CG\) \[2014\] UKUT 569 \(IAC\) \(15 December 2014\)](#) held that 'Christians in Pakistan are a religious minority who, in general, suffer discrimination but this is not sufficient to amount to a real risk of persecution' (paragraph 240).

Treatment by the state

- 2.2.2 The CG case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan](#) held that:

'Unlike the position of Ahmadis, Christians in general are permitted to practise their faith, can attend church, participate in religious activities and have their own schools and hospitals' (paragraph 241).

'Evangelism by its very nature involves some obligation to proselytise. Someone who seeks to broadcast their faith to strangers so as to encourage them to convert, may find themselves facing a charge of blasphemy. In that way, evangelical Christians face a greater risk than those Christians who are not publicly active. It will be for the judicial fact-finder to assess on a case by case basis whether, notwithstanding attendance at an evangelical church, it is important to the individual to behave in evangelical ways that may lead to a real risk of persecution' (paragraph 242).

- 2.2.3 Evidence suggests that both evangelical and non-evangelical Christians face increased discrimination and targeted attacks because of their faith. However, there are a large number of Christians in Pakistan and, whilst some individuals may be at greater risk, taken as a whole the evidence does not indicate that Christians are, in general, subject to a real risk of persecution or inhuman or degrading treatment.
- 2.2.4 The CG case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan](#) held that 'Along with Christians, Sunnis, Shi'as, Ahmadis and Hindus may all be potentially charged with blasphemy. Those citizens who are more marginalised and occupy low standing social positions, may be less able to deal with the consequences of such proceedings' (paragraph 243)

Treatment by non-state actors

- 2.2.5 Discrimination against Christians exists in many aspects of employment and education. There are reports of harassment, threats and violence, including targeted attacks by non-state actors – sometimes resulting in death – against Christians as well as lawyers, judges, human rights defenders and journalists representing/defending Christians.
- 2.2.6 Christians from the lower classes may experience higher levels of discrimination than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds. Religious minorities are disproportionately affected by the misuse of the blasphemy laws, which are frequently used for personal or political gain. Whether or not a blasphemy charge is found to be true, the whole community and the individual in question may be at risk of coming under attack.
- 2.2.7 Some Christian women and girls have been subject to abduction, rape, sexual assault, forced conversion to Islam and marriage to Muslim men. (See [Discrimination in employment and education](#) and [Societal treatment and attitudes](#), [Legal rights](#), [Lawyers, judges, human rights defenders and journalists](#) and [Women](#)).
- 2.2.8 The CG case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan](#) held that:
 'The risk of becoming a victim of a blasphemy allegation will depend upon a number of factors and must be assessed on a case by case basis. Relevant factors will include the place of residence, whether it is an urban or rural area, and the individual's level of education, financial and employment status and level of public religious activity such as preaching. These factors are not exhaustive' (paragraph 244).
 'Non state agents who use blasphemy laws against Christians, are often motivated by spite, personal or business disputes, arguments over land and property. Certain political events may also trigger such accusations. A blasphemy allegation, without more will not generally be enough to make out a claim for international protection under the Refugee Convention. It has to be actively followed either by the authorities in the form of charges being brought or by those making the complaint. If it is, or will be, actively pursued, then an applicant may be able to establish a real risk of harm in the home area and an insufficiency of state protection' (paragraph 245). [For context, country information suggests that 187 Christians have been accused of

blasphemy between 1987 and 2014 – see [Demography](#) and [Blasphemy laws](#)].

‘Like other women in Pakistan, Christian women, in general, face discrimination and may be at a heightened risk but this falls short of a generalised real risk. The need for a fact-sensitive analysis is crucial in their case. Factors such as their age, place of residence and socio- economic milieu are all relevant factors when assessing the risk of abduction, conversions and forced marriages’ (paragraph 246).

- 2.2.9 In respect of forced conversions from Christianity to Islam, the CG case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan](#) held that:

‘Pakistani law strictly forbids forced conversions, as does Islam. The Supreme Court has actively pursued cases related to forced conversion and discouraged it. In such cases, the courts have ensured that concerned individuals have an opportunity to express their wishes to convert or complain about any threat or pressure they may be facing in complete privacy and safety. The Supreme Court has also given them a period of reflection away from all sources that may influence their decision (paragraph 61).

- 2.2.10 See the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based harm/violence](#) for the general situation of women in Pakistan, including the forced conversion and marriage of Christian women and girls.

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2.3 Assessment of risk: Christian converts

- 2.3.1 The situation is far more difficult for a person **who is known** to have converted from Islam to Christianity, than for a person who was born Christian. However it is rare, in Pakistan, for a person to convert to Christianity, especially openly. It is likely that the fact of a person’s conversion will be well-known within their community, with potential repercussions (see [Christian converts](#)).
- 2.3.2 It would be difficult for those known to be Christian converts to live freely and openly in Pakistan. People who are known to have converted to Christianity suffer acts of violence, intimidation and serious discrimination from non state actors, which can in individual cases amount to persecution. Such treatment is prevalent throughout Pakistan.
- 2.3.3 As the situation has deteriorated for Christian converts since the country guidance case of [AJ \(Risk, Christian Convert\) Pakistan CG \[2003\] UKIAT 00040 \(August 2003\)](#)., decision makers must **no longer** follow this guidance which found that converts to Christianity in general do not face a real risk of inhuman or degrading treatment (paragraph 36).
- 2.3.4 For further guidance on assessing risk, see section 6 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.4 Protection: Christians

- 2.4.1 Where the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.4.2 As regards protection from non-state actors, despite constitutional rights and a Supreme Court ruling calling for the protection of religious minorities, many reports suggest that the government fails to provide sufficient protection to minority citizens against societal violence including the state's general failure to bring perpetrators to justice. Some sources indicated infiltration into the police force by extremists, who are then able to access individuals' personal information and thus seek persons of interest (see [Legal rights](#), [State treatment and attitudes](#), [State response](#) and [Use of identity cards and mobile phone data](#)).
- 2.4.3 Many reports cite a failure by the police to investigate, arrest, or prosecute those responsible for societal abuses against religious minorities. There have been accusations of police involvement in human rights abuses committed against Christians. However, there is also some evidence of measures taken by the authorities to protect Christians against incidents of violence. Some Christians reportedly feel "unsafe" in approaching the police in relation to blasphemy charges and some report having been refused support, whilst some actors involved in the criminal justice system including the police, lawyers and judges, demonstrate bias against those accused of blasphemy. In cases of forced conversion and marriage, the police have at times been reluctant to intervene in such cases, or have pressured the woman to return to her husband. There are reports that the police do not properly investigate, or provide adequate protection to Christian women who have faced sexual assault, rape and abduction (see [State treatment and attitudes](#), [State response](#) and [Women](#)).
- 2.4.4 Any past persecution and past lack of effective protection may indicate that effective protection would not be available in the future. There are instances where the authorities have been unable or unwilling to protect the lives and properties of Christians or to bring perpetrators of such violence to justice.

2.5 Protection: Christian converts

- 2.5.1 People who are known to have converted to Christianity suffer serious societal discrimination and acts of violence, as well as discrimination by the authorities (see [Christian converts](#)).
- 2.5.2 As such, Christian converts would not generally be able to seek and obtain effective protection from the state against acts perpetrated against them by non-state actors.
- 2.5.3 For further guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see section 8.1 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.6 Internal relocation: Christians

- 2.6.1 Where the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.

- 2.6.2 Where the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of non-state actors, in general they will be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.6.3 In the case of Christians, relocation is normally a viable option, unless, as held in the CG case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan](#) an individual is accused of blasphemy which is being seriously pursued; in that situation there is, in general, no internal relocation alternative (paragraph 247).
- 2.6.4 Whilst there are Christian neighbourhoods in some urban areas across Punjab and Sindh provinces (see [Demography](#)), such Christian communities have become increasingly isolated from other communities. Therefore whilst it may be more difficult to socially exclude and harass a Christian who lives in a larger Christian community, it does not necessary preclude that harassment, especially when blasphemy charges have been raised.

2.7 Internal relocation: Christian converts

- 2.7.1 Where a person's fear is of ill-treatment/persecution at the hands of the state or non-state actors on the basis that they are a Christian convert, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.
- 2.7.2 Given that ill-treatment towards Christian converts is prevalent throughout Pakistan, internal relocation to escape such treatment is unlikely to be a viable option, particularly where the person is known to have converted to Christianity.
- 2.7.3 For further guidance on internal relocation, see section 8.2 of the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.8 Certification

- 2.8.1 Where a claim falls to be refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.8.2 For further guidance on certification, see the [Appeals Instruction on Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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3. Policy Summary

- 3.1.1 Christians in Pakistan are a religious minority who, in general, suffer discrimination but this is not sufficient to amount to a real risk of persecution.
- 3.1.2 In general, Christians are able to practise their faith, attend church, participate in religious activities and have their own schools and hospitals. Although Christians, as with other faiths, may be at risk of blasphemy allegations, this in itself is not generally enough to make out a claim under the Refugee Convention unless there is evidence that the charge is pursued.
- 3.1.3 Some Christians in Pakistan face discrimination and attacks targeted against them by non-state actors and there are reports of a general failure by the police to investigate, arrest, or prosecute those responsible for societal abuses against religious minorities. Christian women may be at risk of forced

conversion and marriage. There is also some evidence of measures taken by the authorities to protect Christians against incidents of violence.

- 3.1.4 Internal relocation may be a viable option, where it would not be unreasonable or unduly harsh to expect them to do so, unless a person faces an accusation of blasphemy which is being seriously pursued.
- 3.1.5 A person who fears persecution in Pakistan purely on the basis of their Christian faith is unlikely to qualify for a grant of asylum or humanitarian protection although full account must be taken of the individual circumstances of each case.
- 3.1.6 People who are known to have converted to Christianity are likely to face and be at real risk of attacks by non-state actors. Effective protection and internal relocation will generally not be available. Christian converts, depending on their particular circumstances, i.e. if they are known to have converted to Christianity, are likely to be at real risk of persecution on return.

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Country Information

Updated 29 April 2016

4. Background

4.1.1 For general background information on Pakistan's religious demography, laws, and freedoms, see Section 3.4.1 of the [European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\) Country of Origin Information Report: Pakistan Country Overview](#).

4.2 Official festivals

4.2.1 Christmas and Easter festivals are officially celebrated in Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan's response to the Expert Committee's Concluding Observations and Recommendations on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), published on 4 November 2015, noted that the President and/or Prime Minister of Pakistan hosted special functions on such occasions, and attended religious ceremonies in churches.¹

5. Demography

5.1.1 The estimated number of Christians living in Pakistan varied greatly. Official estimates from the 1998 census cited 1.59 per cent of the total population at that time (132 million) were Christian.² Other estimates ranged from 2-3 per cent in 2009 (between 3 and 5 million people).³ The Secretary of the Ministry of National Interfaith Harmony estimated that about 4 million Christians lived in Pakistan.⁴ In 2016 an official at the British High Commission (BHC), Islamabad, estimated that there were 2.8 million Christians in Pakistan.⁵

5.1.2 The BHC official estimated that 2 million Christians lived in and around Lahore and Faisalabad, and 0.5 million in the rest of Punjab.⁶ In January 2013, the Christian news site, Christians in Pakistan, stated that the total Christian population of the district of Lahore was 368,089.⁷ A large number

¹ Government of Pakistan: Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention; Twenty-one to twenty-three periodic reports of States parties due in 2014; Pakistan [02 November 2015] [CERD/C/PAK/21-23], 4 November 2015 (published by CERD, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc, paragraph 99, date accessed 11 February 2016.

² Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998 Census, Population by Religion, <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//tables/POPULATION%20BY%20RELIGION.pdf>, date accessed 2 February 2016.

³ Gregory, S. R., and Valentine, S. R., Pakistan: The Situation of Religious Minorities, Writenet, May 2009, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4b01856e2.pdf>, page 17, date accessed 2 February 2016.

⁴ Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Report on Fact Finding Mission – Pakistan, June 2013, Religious minorities, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1729_1374674206_ffm-bericht-pakistan-2013-06.pdf, page 38, accessed 27 January 2014, English translation available on request

⁵ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Letter, Christians in Pakistan](#), updated 13 April 2016.

⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Letter, Christians in Pakistan](#), updated 13 April 2016.

⁷ Christians in Pakistan, Largest Christian Community of Pakistan resides in Lahore District, 2

of Christians were said to reside in Karachi, including the Goan Christian community.⁸ In May 2015 Bishop Sadiq Daniel, leader of the Church of Pakistan in Sindh province, told The Washington Post that about 1 million of Karachi's 22 million inhabitants were Christian.⁹ In December 2015 a reported 60,000 Christians lived in Islamabad.¹⁰ (see also [State treatment and attitudes](#), paragraph 9.1.5)

- 5.1.3 The Christian population was reported to be split equally between Catholics and Protestants.¹¹ The 'Church of Pakistan' is the largest Protestant community, uniting four churches: the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Lutheran Church. Other Protestant churches include the United Presbyterian Church and the Salvation Army. Other Evangelical churches, such as Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventists, Full Gospel Assemblies Church and the Pentecostal Church, exist in Pakistan. There are also a number of smaller churches and off-shoots.¹²
- 5.1.4 According to a Fact Finding Mission undertaken in June 2013 by the Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, there were 54 villages in Punjab, and 4 in Sindh, run directly by Christian communities. According to data provided by the Ministry for National Harmony, there were 500 churches in Pakistan, 65 of which were in Lahore. A representative from the National Commission of Justice and Peace (NCJP) stated there were 166 Catholic parishes in as many districts, about 350 Catholic priests and 2,000 nuns.¹³ The Christians in Pakistan news site reported that the mainstream churches of Lahore were Sacred Heart Cathedral, St. Andrew's Church, St. Anthony's Church and St. Joseph's Church.¹⁴

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January 2013, <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/largest-christian-community-of-pakistan-resides-in-lahore-district/>, date accessed 2 February 2016.

⁸ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Letter, Christians in Pakistan](#), updated 13 April 2016.

⁹ The Washington Post, A 'bulletproof' cross rises in Karachi, 15 May 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistans-biggest-city-has-unlikely-addition-to-skyline-14-story-christian-cross/2015/05/14/cc8cea3e-f268-11e4-bca5-21b51bbdf93e_story.html, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁰ Agence France Presse, Islamabad's largest Christian slum praying for survival on Christmas eve, 25 December 2015, available at <http://nation.com.pk/national/25-Dec-2015/islamabad-s-largest-christian-slum-praying-for-survival-on-christmas-eve>, date accessed 4 February 2016.

¹¹ Gregory, S. R., and Valentine, S. R., Pakistan: The Situation of Religious Minorities, Writenet, May 2009, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4b01856e2.pdf>, page 17, date accessed 2 February 2016.

¹² Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Report on Fact Finding Mission – Pakistan, June 2013, Religious minorities, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1729_1374674206_ffm-bericht-pakistan-2013-06.pdf, pages 39-40, accessed 27 January 2014, English translation available on request

¹³ Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Report on Fact Finding Mission – Pakistan, June 2013, Religious minorities, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1729_1374674206_ffm-bericht-pakistan-2013-06.pdf, pages 39-40, accessed 27 January 2014, English translation available on request

¹⁴ Christians in Pakistan, Largest Christian Community of Pakistan resides in Lahore District, 2 January 2013, <http://www.christiansinpakistan.com/largest-christian-community-of-pakistan-resides-in-lahore-district/>, date accessed 2 February 2016.

6. Legal rights

6.1 The Constitution

- 6.1.1 Whilst there are no specific laws that discriminate against Christians in Pakistan, some Articles in the Constitution favour Islam over minority religions.¹⁵
- 6.1.2 The Government of Pakistan's response to the Expert Committee's Concluding Observations and Recommendations on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), published on 4 November 2015, cited Articles 20, 21, 22, 26, 27 and 28 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which state minorities are equal citizens of Pakistan and are free to profess their religion and visit their places of worship. The Government's response to the ICERD added 'We have a number of legislative measures and policies that translate constitutional principles into firm state action for promotion and protection of rights of minorities. [The] Government has recently strengthened [the] National Commission for Minorities (NCM) which works for the protection of minorities' rights. The Commission comprises members representing all minority communities living in the country.'¹⁶
- 6.1.3 The Government's response to the ICERD cited a Supreme Court judgement from 2012, which held that 'a Church being a religious institution, its construction could not be halted as it was an expression of the right of the Christian citizens of Pakistan under the Constitution's Article 20.'¹⁷
- 6.1.4 The Government of Pakistan also cited a case heard at the Lahore High Court in 2005, noting:
- 'In response to the plea that the Provincial Government [of Punjab] be directed to impose ban on the book "God's Special Agents" and that the respondent be restrained from preaching and projecting Christian faith in Pakistan, the court held that under Article 20 of the Constitution, every citizen enjoys Fundamental Right to profess, practice and propagate his religion and every religious denomination and every sect thereof has a right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions. The court was of the view that the Petitioner failed to point out and advance any argument as to how the actions of the respondent violated any particular law, public order

¹⁵ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, <http://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁶ Government of Pakistan: Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention; Twenty-one to twenty-three periodic reports of States parties due in 2014; Pakistan [02 November 2015] [CERD/C/PAK/21-23], 4 November 2015 (published by CERD, available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc)) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc, paragraph 19, date accessed 11 February 2016.

¹⁷ Government of Pakistan: Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention; Twenty-one to twenty-three periodic reports of States parties due in 2014; Pakistan [02 November 2015] [CERD/C/PAK/21-23], 4 November 2015 (published by CERD, available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc)) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc, paragraph 61, date accessed 11 February 2016.

or morality so as to exclude the application of Article 20 of the Constitution.’
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(Also see [State treatment and attitudes](#))

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6.2 Blasphemy laws

- 6.2.1 For a tabulated summary of the blasphemy laws and the penalties for breaching them, see Section 3.1.2 of the [European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\) Country of Origin Information Report: Pakistan Country Overview](#).
- 6.2.2 In 2014, according to the National Commission of Justice and Peace (NCJP), 187 Christians have been accused under various clauses of the blasphemy law since 1987.¹⁹ Although the majority of those accused of blasphemy were Muslim²⁰, figures suggested that religious minorities were disproportionately affected by the misuse of the blasphemy laws, which were frequently used for personal or political gain.²¹ According to the British Pakistani Christian Association (BPCA), 15 per cent of all blasphemy allegations in the Pakistan are lodged against Christians despite them being only 1.6 per cent of the population.²² HRCP reported that in 2015, four Christians were charged under Section 295-c of the blasphemy laws, compared to 15 Muslims and three Ahmadis.²³ According to CLAAS, a non-denominational Christian organisation based in the UK and Pakistan, when an individual is accused of blasphemy, the whole community comes under attack.²⁴ (See [Attacks against Christians](#))

¹⁸ Government of Pakistan: Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention; Twenty-one to twenty-three periodic reports of States parties due in 2014; Pakistan [02 November 2015] [CERD/C/PAK/21-23], 4 November 2015 (published by CERD, available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc)) http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc, paragraph 64, date accessed 11 February 2016.

¹⁹ BBC News, What are Pakistan's blasphemy laws?, 6 November 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12621225>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

²⁰ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2015, Chapter III, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, March 2016, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freedom-of-thought.pdf>, page 11, date accessed 1 April 2016.

²¹ US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Section II; International Commission of Jurists, On Trial: The Implementation of Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws, November 2015, <http://icj.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Pakistan-On-Trial-Blasphemy-Laws-Publications-Thematic-Reports-2015-ENG.pdf>, page 25, date accessed 5 February 2016.

²² British Pakistani Christian Association, Persecution of Christians in Pakistan Reportedly at all-time High, 25 January 2016, <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/persecution-of-christians-in-pakistan-reaches-all-time-high-or-does-it>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

²³ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2015, Chapter III, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, March 2016, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freedom-of-thought.pdf>, page 12, date accessed 1 April 2016.

²⁴ CLAAS, Submission to the APPG, 3 October 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/03-11-15.pdf>, page 1, date accessed 15 March 2016.

- 6.2.3 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported in its annual report covering 2015 that ‘Even if they are acquitted, the people who have once been accused of blasphemy are seldom able to go back to their homes’.²⁵
- 6.2.4 The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights covering 2015 reported that ‘Courts routinely failed to protect the rights of religious minorities. Courts used laws prohibiting blasphemy discriminatorily against Shi’a, Christians, Ahmadis, and members of other religious minority groups. Lower courts often did not require adequate evidence in blasphemy cases, and some accused and convicted persons spent years in jail before higher courts eventually overturned their convictions or ordered them freed.’²⁶
- 6.2.5 The International Committee of Jurists (ICJ) reported in November 2015 that: ‘In more than 80 per cent of reported cases, those accused of blasphemy are eventually acquitted on appeal, with judges expressly stating in a large majority of such cases that the complaint was fabricated and spurred on by personal vendettas [...] blasphemy allegations often become religiously and politically charged, with real dangers to the life and liberty for the accused and his or her family on the one hand, and judges and lawyers associated with the case on the other. In a number of cases, members of extremist religious groups get involved in private altercations and give them the color of blasphemy. Often, they then make public announcements in mosques of the alleged blasphemous incident and the alleged blasphemer to organize mobs to intimidate, and even attack, the accused individuals and their families, as well as influence the outcome of the criminal proceedings [...] various actors in the criminal justice system, including the police, lawyers and most significantly, judges, frequently demonstrate bias against those accused of blasphemy. Judges who appear to lack independence and impartiality often presume guilt on the part of the accused and some sections of the lawyers’ community create a hostile environment against the accused in court by raising slogans condemning the accused.’²⁷
- 6.2.6 Reporting on 29 September 2014, the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) noted that since 1990, according to data on reported blasphemy cases, 59 people accused of blasphemy had been extra-judicially killed; 49 of those were in Punjab province. Half of those killed were non-Muslim.²⁸ (Also see [Attacks against Christians](#))

²⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2015, Chapter III, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, March 2016, <http://hrqp-web.org/hrqpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freedom-of-thought.pdf>, page 12, date accessed 26 April 2016.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015, Pakistan, 14 April 2016, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252973>, Section 1e, date accessed 27 April 2016.

²⁷ International Committee of Jurists, On Trial: The implementation of Pakistan’s blasphemy laws, November 2015, <http://icj.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Pakistan-On-Trial-Blasphemy-Laws-Publications-Thematic-Reports-2015-ENG.pdf>, pages 7 and 26, date accessed 14 March 2016.

²⁸ Center for Research and Security Studies, Blatant misuse of blasphemy law, 29 September 2014, <http://crss.pk/story/blatant-misuse-of-blasphemy-law/>, date accessed 11 March 2016.

7. Attacks against Christians

This section should be read in conjunction with the [State response](#) to violence against Christians as well as [Societal treatment and attitudes](#).

- 7.1.1 The annual World Watch List 2016, published by the Open Doors International Research Unit, highlighted the 50 countries where, according to its global survey, academic and media reports, it is most difficult to live as a Christian [a ranking of 1 indicated “Extreme levels of persecution” down to 50 as “High levels of persecution”]. The World Watch List is based on a scoring system that takes into account the reality of religious freedom in various spheres of life: the individual, the social, the communal, the legal, the national – as well as measuring levels of violence.²⁹ Open Doors ranked Pakistan at number six (‘extreme levels of persecution’), where the level of persecution ‘increased seriously’ (scoring 87 out of 100, an increase of 8 points compared to the World Watch List 2015).³⁰ Open Doors recorded a “minimum” of 39 Christians killed for their faith between 1 November 2014 and 31 October 2015 and 17 attacks on places of worship during the same period.³¹
- 7.1.2 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan noted in its annual report covering 2015 that ‘Christians faced some of the most serious faith-based attacks during the year under review. In addition to facing violence provoked by accusations of blasphemy, the community’s worship places were also targeted by terrorists.’³²
- 7.1.3 Minority Rights Group International stated in a report published in December 2014 that ‘cases of violence perpetrated against Christians include land-grabbing in rural areas; abductions, forced conversion and marriage of women; and the vandalizing and torching of homes and churches. In addition, many Pakistani Christians have been convicted of blasphemy under the country’s repressive laws.’³³ (See [Blasphemy laws](#))
- 7.1.4 The Jinnah Institute, a public policy think tank, noted in its report on religious freedom in Pakistan, published January 2016, that targeted attacks against Christians, that had been reported, increased from 5 in 2012 to 29 in 2014.

²⁹ Open Doors, Freedom of Religion and the Persecution of Christians, The Open Doors Report 2016, <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/documents/ww-report-160113.pdf>, pages 5 and 28, date accessed 8 March 2016.

³⁰ Open Doors, World Watch List 2016, January 2016, https://www.opendoorsusa.org/file_viewer.php?id=2250, page 1, date accessed 8 March 2016.

³¹ Open Doors, Freedom of Religion and the Persecution of Christians, The Open Doors Report 2016, <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/documents/ww-report-160113.pdf>, page 8, date accessed 8 March 2016.

³² Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2015, Chapter III, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, March 2016, <http://hrqp-web.org/hrqpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freedom-of-thought.pdf>, page 9, date accessed 26 April 2016.

³³ Minority Rights Group International, Searching for Security: The Rising Marginalization of Religious Communities in Pakistan, December 2014, <http://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/mrg-searching-for-security-pakistan-report.pdf>, page 7, date accessed 11 March 2016.

The report added that the majority of incidents occurred in Punjab Province, namely Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Okara and Gujranwala. All incidents in Sindh occurred in Karachi, and those in Balochistan took place in Quetta. The report produced a table of incidents:

Incidents of Violence against Christians by type 2012 – 2014				
	2012	2013	2014	Total
Targeted attacks	5	10	29	44
Sexual assault/forced conversion	6	6	8	20
Damage to worship area	4	1	2	7
Mob attack		3	2	5
Accused of blasphemy		9	3	12

³⁴

- 7.1.5 In a submission to the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Pakistan report, Imran Ishaq of the Iman Foundation Trust recorded 378 deaths and 987 injuries against Pakistani Christian civilians and church workers due to targeted attacks between 11 September 2001 and 31 August 2015. According to the data, over 60 per cent of these attacks occurred in Punjab Province; approximately 16 per cent in Sindh; and around 8 per cent in both Khyber Paktunkhwa and Islamabad. A small number of attacks occurred in Balochistan and Azad Kashmir. The statement added that, due to under-reporting, the account of attacks was incomplete.³⁵ According to partial data compiled by the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), reporting on 28 March 2016, 'at least 20 terrorist attacks targeting Christians, resulting in at least 128 fatalities, have taken place across Pakistan since 2001, prior to the Easter Sunday Attack [see paragraph 7.1.5].'³⁶ In March 2015, the English-language news website, Dawn, provided a timeline of incidents of violence against Christians in Punjab province from 2002-2014.³⁷
- 7.1.6 On 15 March 2015, at least 15 people died and more than 70 were injured in bomb blasts outside two churches in a Christian neighbourhood in Lahore. A splinter group of the Pakistani Taliban, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for the two attacks. After the bombings, Lahore's Christian community demonstrated about the lack of security, and a mob lynched two

³⁴ Jinnah Institute, State of Religious Freedom in Pakistan, January 2016, <http://jinnah-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Minority-Report-2016.pdf>, pages 17-18, date accessed 8 March 2016.

³⁵ Ishaq. I.r, Iman Foundation Trust submission to the APPG, Islamic Terror Attacks on Pakistani Christians (Since 9/11), <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/Attacks-on-Pakistan-Christians-Summary.pdf>, date accessed 3 March 2016.

³⁶ South Asia Terrorism Portal, South Asia Intelligence Review, Weekly Assessments & Briefings, Volume 14, No. 39, 28 March 2016, Pakistan: No Place for Other Faiths, http://www.satp.org/satporqtp/sair/Archives/sair14/14_39.htm, date accessed 29 March 2016.

³⁷ Dawn, Attacks on Christians in Punjab in over a decade, 16 March 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1169844>, date accessed 1 March 2016.

people who were suspected of involvement.³⁸ According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Annual Report 2015, it later emerged that neither of the lynched victims were involved in the church attacks, and police arrested those suspected of involvement in the lynchings. The HRCP added that the Christian community in Youhanabad complained of harassment during indiscriminate police raids of their homes.³⁹ These bombings in Lahore were the first major attack on Christians since the September 2013 twin-suicide bombings in Peshawar at the All Saints Church, which killed at least 82.⁴⁰ According to open sources and locally engaged staff at the British High Commission, Islamabad, there are many churches in Pakistan, which are mostly safe but may be the targets of extremist actions.⁴¹

- 7.1.7 World Watch Monitor reported in April 2015 on the death of a Christian boy who was reportedly doused with petrol and set alight by unknown assailants on account of his faith.⁴² However, conflicting reports in The Express Tribune⁴³ and Dunya News⁴⁴ suggested the incident was the result of a family dispute regarding property. Dawn noted that police rejected reports that the attack was religiously motivated – despite claims that the boy made a declaration to that effect before he died – and added that contradictory statements had made the investigation complicated and that the real motive behind the incident had not been ascertained.⁴⁵
- 7.1.8 The Catholic Herald reported that on 24 May 2015, according to reports by Christian human rights group, CLAAS, a mob attacked Christian homes and a church in Lahore after a Christian man was accused of blasphemy.⁴⁶ Reporting on the same incident, Pakistan Today stated that local police intervened and prevented protesters from setting fire to the church and the house of the accused.⁴⁷

³⁸ Dawn, 15 killed in Taliban attack on Lahore churches, 17 March 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1169713>, date accessed 6 February 2016.

³⁹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2015, Chapter III, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, March 2016, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freedom-of-thought.pdf>, pages 9-10, date accessed 1 April 2016.

⁴⁰ Dawn, 15 killed in Taliban attack on Lahore churches, 17 March 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1169713>, date accessed 6 February 2016.

⁴¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Letter, Christians in Pakistan](#), updated 13 April 2016.

⁴² World Watch Monitor, Confusion around Pakistani Christian boy's burns death, amid communal tensions, 17 April 2015, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/04/3815784/>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁴³ The Express Tribune, Heinous crime: Police record injured Nauman Masih's statement, 13 April 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/868985/heinous-crime-police-record-injured-nauman-masih-statement/>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁴⁴ Dunya News, Lahore: Nauman set on fire by uncle and aunt for property: Grandfather, 11 April 2015, <http://dunya.com.pk/News/273297-Lahore-Nauman-set-on-fire-by-uncle-and-aunt-for-property>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁴⁵ Dawn, Teenager set on fire dies in hospital, 16 April 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1176259>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁴⁶ Catholic Herald, Mob reportedly attacks Christian homes in Lahore after blasphemy row, 27 May 2015, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/05/27/mob-reportedly-attacks-christian-homes-in-pakistan-after-blasphemy-row/>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

⁴⁷ Pakistan Today, Violent clashes as 'mentally ill' Christian 'desecrates' Quran in Lahore, 25 May

- 7.1.9 On 26 November 2015, The New York Times reported that the office of Christian cable television station, Gawahi TV, was destroyed by fire. Employees of the service believed that the fire, which occurred during the middle of the night, was a deliberate act of arson.⁴⁸ Religious News Service reported on 17 December that local police stated that an electrical short circuit caused the fire, whilst Lahore-based lawyer and advocate for Pakistani Christians, Nadeem Anthony, described the fire as an act of religious intolerance, adding “it is impossible for them (the [TV] station owners) to point a finger at anybody, as in all other Christian persecution in Pakistan,” he said. If they did, he said, “it would be difficult for them to survive.” The television station had since resumed broadcasting.⁴⁹
- 7.1.10 More than 70 people were killed⁵⁰, including at least 29 children⁵¹, in a suicide bomb attack at a public park in Lahore on 27 March 2016 (Easter Sunday). Jamaat-ur-Ahrar, a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack, stating the group was targeting the Christian community. Despite this, the majority of those killed were Muslims, who were also in the park on that day. A spokesperson for Jamaat-ur-Ahrar added that the attack was also a protest against Pakistan’s military operations in the tribal regions.⁵² A number of arrests were made following the attack, and the government of Punjab declared a state of emergency and three days of mourning.⁵³
- 7.1.11 World Watch Monitor reported in January 2016 that ‘For Christians in Pakistan, the New Year has begun with attacks on their worship places, with three separate incidents in less than a week, including a church being set on fire’.⁵⁴

7.2 Women

- 7.2.1 In an April 2014 report, the NGO Movement for Solidarity and Peace (MSP) reported estimates of 100 to 700 forced conversions to Islam of Christian

2015, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/05/25/national/violent-clashes-as-mentally-ill-christian-man-burns-quran-in-lahore/>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

⁴⁸ The New York Times, Pakistani Police Investigate Fire at Christian TV Station, 26 November 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/27/world/asia/pakistani-police-investigate-fire-at-christian-tv-station.html?_r=0, date accessed 5 February 2016.

⁴⁹ Religion News Service, Pakistan Christian TV station is back, after suspicious fire, 17 December 2015, <http://www.religionnews.com/2015/12/17/pakistan-christian-tv-station-back-suspicious-fire/>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

⁵⁰ The Express Tribune, Gulshan-i-Iqbal attack: Death toll rises to 72, security beefed up, 29 March 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1074644/gulshan-i-iqbal-attack-death-toll-rises-to-72-security-beefed-up/>, date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁵¹ Reuters, Pakistan plans new paramilitary crackdown; Easter bombing kills 70, 28 March 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-blast-idUSKCN0WTOHR>, date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁵² Al Jazeera, Lahore bombing: Pakistan mourns as death toll rises, 28 March 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/lahore-bombing-pakistan-mourns-death-toll-rises-160328091627212.html>, date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁵³ BBC News, Lahore attack: Pakistan PM Sharif demands swift action on terror, 28 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-35910124>, date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁵⁴ World Watch Monitor, Three Attacks on Pakistani Christians mark New Year, 15 January 2016, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/01/4241296/>, date accessed 26 April 2016.

girls and women each year.⁵⁵ The Jinnah Institute's report from January 2012 to June 2015 noted that:

'Women continue to bear the brunt of forced conversion in Pakistan with the Hindu and Christian community severely traumatized by rising cases of forced conversion by an increasing number of religiously motivated seminaries in Sindh and Punjab that consider it their duty to convert non-Muslims to Islam. However, equally significantly, forced conversions have also been used by feudal landlords to oppress scheduled casts and claim dominance over the women folk belonging to minority communities'.⁵⁶

7.2.2 The same source further noted with regards to sexual assault that:

'The threat and use of sexual assault and subsequent forced conversion is fast becoming rampant against Christians in Pakistan too. For many years, cases involving sexual assault and forced conversion have been largely used as tools of violence against Hindu community members. According to a Christian community leader in Michael Colony, "Rape cases and sexual assault have become common place in Issa Nagri in Gulshan Town, Karachi. These cases often don't make it to the newspapers as most women avoid reporting rape due to the social stigma attached with such cases. The use of threats of sexual assault against women is also being used to intimidate the community".⁵⁷

7.2.3 The BPCA reported on the kidnapping of two Christian sisters, Tahira and Reema, on 2 December 2015, stating that they were raped and forced to marry their Muslim abductors. After Tahira escaped, her husband filed a First Information Report and six members of Tahira's family were arrested. Although the men were released following pressure from human rights groups, the police still insisted that Tahira be returned to her husband. In another incident of forced marriage, the BPCA reported that a Christian women was forced to marry her Muslim employer and, despite her escape, police had visited her parent's home on two occasions calling for her arrest.⁵⁸

7.2.4 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) noted in a submission to the APPG Pakistan report that:

⁵⁵ Movement for Solidarity and Peace, Forced Marriages & Forced Conversions in the Christian Community of Pakistan, April 2014, page 2, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/msp/pages/162/attachments/original/1396724215/MSP_Report_-_Forced_Marriages_and_Conversions_of_Christian_Women_in_Pakistan.pdf?1396724215, date accessed 19 February 2016.

⁵⁶ Jinnah Institute, State of Religious Freedom in Pakistan, January 2016, <http://jinnah-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Minority-Report-2016.pdf>, page 14, date accessed 26 April 2016.

⁵⁷ Jinnah Institute, State of Religious Freedom in Pakistan, January 2016, <http://jinnah-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Minority-Report-2016.pdf>, page 45, date accessed 26 April 2016.

⁵⁸ Fernandes, D., Education, Human Rights Violations in Pakistan and the Scandal involving UNHCR and Christian asylum seekers in Thailand, Updated 2nd Edition, page 29, February 2016, Hard copy only, date accessed 3 March 2016.

'CSW partners, women's organisations and lawyers described the discriminatory experiences of minority women. District Minority Committees have failed to review matters for minority women's rights such as personal laws and rules. Hindu girls in Sindh and Christian girls in Punjab are abducted, raped and forced to convert to Islam, they face extreme pressure including threats to themselves and their families from the abductor and his family. Police in cases are at times complicit fulfilling wishes of the local elite. Women and girls face discrimination and marginalization and are targeted because they are minorities with many cases of hostility, abduction, extortion, hijacking and ransom.'⁵⁹

- 7.2.5 The 'in-year update' of the FCO's Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015 for Pakistan, published April 2016, noted that 'minority communities also suffered discrimination and violence, including forced conversions to Islam and forced marriage. Reports suggested that the problem of Christian women being forcibly married to Muslim men continued to grow'.⁶⁰

See also [State treatment and attitudes](#)

See the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based harm/violence](#) for the general situation of women in Pakistan, including the forced conversion and marriage of Christian women and girls.

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7.3 Lawyers, judges, human rights defenders and journalists

- 7.3.1 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported in its annual report covering 2015 that 'Even lawyers and judges associated with blasphemy cases are not safe and have at times been threatened inside courtrooms. The assassination of human rights lawyer Rashid Rehman in 2014 for daring to represent a blasphemy accused is just one example of that'.⁶¹
- 7.3.2 World Watch Monitor reported in May 2015 that 'in February [2015], the press club in Quetta, the Baloch capital, received a letter claiming to have come from a new Islamist extremist group, ordering four Christian journalists to be banned [...] The letter ordered the Quetta Press Club to suspend their membership (for defaming Islam and propagating Christianity) or face the consequences'.⁶²
- 7.3.3 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported in June 2015 that 'Lawyers representing persons accused of blasphemy have cited an

⁵⁹ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

⁶⁰ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Human Rights and Democracy Report 2015: Pakistan - in-year update December 2015, 21 April 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pakistan-in-year-update-december-2015/pakistan-in-year-update-december-2015>, date accessed 27 April 2016.

⁶¹ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Annual Report 2015, Chapter III, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, March 2016, <http://hrdp-web.org/hrdpweb/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/freedom-of-thought.pdf>, page 12, date accessed 26 April 2016.

⁶² World Watch Monitor, Christian journalists threatened in Pakistan, 3 May 2015, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/05/3832599/>, date accessed 26 April 2016.

intimidating courtroom atmosphere as a major hindrance in pursuing cases adequately and feel that their security is threatened in such an environment. Similarly, judges, especially those hearing controversial cases against persons with ties to militant groups and blasphemy offenses, have been threatened and intimidated in order to influence their decisions'.⁶³

- 7.3.4 In a statement to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2015, CSW and the Jubilee Campaign reported on the difficulties faced by some lawyers, human rights defenders and judges in Pakistan who work on issues such as blasphemy cases, and who pursue justice for religious minorities. The report noted:

'Lawyers defending blasphemy-related, or other sensitive cases relating to minority issues, frequently face threats of violence, sometimes leading to death. On 7 May 2014 a lawyer from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Rashid Rehman, was shot dead by gunmen in front of colleagues in his office, for defending a university lecturer accused of blasphemy. After Rehman's killing, Shahbaz Gormani, the lecturer's new defence counsel, was attacked at his residence by gunmen on motorcycles on 3 December 2014. The attackers warned there would be violent consequences if he pursued the case.'⁶⁴

- 7.3.5 The report highlighted other incidences of threats and harassment against defence lawyers, and stated:

'CSW has received reliable information about various forms of harassment experienced by lawyers defending people accused of blasphemy. The lawyers face frequent intimidation and harassment, both in their homes and in the courtroom. They are frequently barred from entering courtrooms or judge's chambers. Once in the courtroom, they may face hostility from violent mobs. Religious extremist organisations regularly attend court hearings in order to intimidate the defence counsel and increase tensions by chanting religious verses and slogans. Extremist organisations such as Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) often organise busloads of protesters for this purpose.'⁶⁵

- 7.3.6 With regards to the situation of judges the same source noted 'Judges also face significant challenges, which can undermine their independence and that of the legal system. Several judges have been physically attacked and threatened with torture even during the court hearings. Many judges are afraid to hear prominent minority cases for fear of reprisal, making progress in these cases painfully slow.'⁶⁶

⁶³ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan: A look back at our promises, June 2015, <http://hrctp-web.org/hrctpweb/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/A-look-back-at-our-promises.pdf>, page 54, date accessed 27 April 2016.

⁶⁴ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UN Statement on Pakistan, 7 September 2015, <http://www.csw.org.uk/2015/09/07/report/2757/article.htm>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁶⁵ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UN Statement on Pakistan, 7 September 2015, <http://www.csw.org.uk/2015/09/07/report/2757/article.htm>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁶⁶ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UN Statement on Pakistan, 7 September 2015, <http://www.csw.org.uk/2015/09/07/report/2757/article.htm>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

- 7.3.7 The International Committee of Jurists noted in its November 2015 report on Pakistan's blasphemy laws that 'accused persons in blasphemy cases are often unable to engage a lawyer of their choice to represent them is the often well-founded fear of lawyers of intimidation and attacks by complainants or other "interested" parties (who are at times members of, or supported by, armed Islamist groups).' The report added that lawyers defending blasphemy cases run the risk of being accused of blasphemy themselves.⁶⁷

See [Blasphemy laws](#)

7.4 Schools

- 7.4.1 On 30 January 2015, Fides news agency reported on the attack on a Christian boys' school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa following the publication of cartoons of the prophet Mohammed in the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. According to the report, around 300 Muslim students armed with iron bars and sticks stormed the school, demanding its closure. Four Christian students were injured and the school was closed for two days whilst the head teacher arranged additional security.⁶⁸
- 7.4.2 According to Morning Star News, on 5 October 2015, a Christian headmaster of a government high school was assaulted by his Muslim colleagues, who resented his promotion and because he refused to comply to their demands. The report noted that three Muslim teachers were taken into custody but later released following pressure from a local political activist. The article concluded that the Christian headmaster 'reportedly continues to receive threats.'⁶⁹

For information on discrimination in schools see [Education](#)

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8. Christian converts

- 8.1.1 In a letter dated 17 March 2016, anecdotal evidence from the British High Commission's (BHC) external contacts in Pakistan reported that:
- 'it would be difficult for Christian converts to live freely and openly in Pakistan, as converts over and above being Christian. It is our view that people who are known to have converted to Christianity suffer serious discrimination, for example in the workplace or by the authorities. It is far

⁶⁷ International Committee of Jurists, On Trial: The implementation of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, November 2015, <http://icj.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Pakistan-On-Trial-Blasphemy-Laws-Publications-Thematic-Reports-2015-ENG.pdf>, page 38, date accessed 14 March 2016.

⁶⁸ Fides, Asia/Pakistan - Anti-Charlie Hebdo protesters storm Christian school, 30 January 2015, http://www.fides.org/en/news/37196-ASIA_PAKISTAN_Anti_Charlie_Hebdo_protesters_storm_Christian_school#.VMtz8y7Nv4x, date accessed 4 March 2016.

⁶⁹ Morning Star News, Police Set Up Christian in Pakistan with False Blasphemy Charge, Sources Say, 22 October 2015, <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/10/police-set-up-christian-in-pakistan-with-false-blasphemy-charge-sources-say/>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

more difficult for people in Pakistan who are known to have converted to Christianity, than it is for people who were born Christian. We understand that it would be rare for someone to convert to Christianity, or at least to do so openly, in Pakistan. It is therefore something of note for the community, with potential repercussions.⁷⁰

- 8.1.2 Information obtained from locally engaged staff at the BHC and other open sources was provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, stating that:

‘Although no examples of anyone actually being criminally prosecuted for apostasy were found, conversion is not without consequence. It has been reported that if a married Muslim couple converts to another religion, the couple’s children become illegitimate and may become wards of the State. In addition, according to one report, though it is theoretically possible to change one’s religion from Islam, in practice, the state attempts to hinder the process. Converts from Islam and atheists may also be vulnerable to Pakistan’s blasphemy law...’⁷¹

- 8.1.3 There were reports of threats and attacks against Muslims who had converted to Christianity to get married. On 19 October 2015, Asia News reported on a family who had been forced into hiding for nearly ten years following threats they received due to their conversion to Christianity.⁷² See also section 6.2 of the [Country Information and Guidance Pakistan: Interfaith marriage](#), for similar incidents against Christian converts.

- 8.1.4 In a submission to the APPG Pakistan report, CSW stated:

‘Our sources have noted that once a Muslim makes a decision to become a Christian and if their conversion becomes public knowledge, their life is at risk. They are deemed an apostate and to have blasphemed the prophet Mohamed, which carries a death sentence. Our sources have informed us that usually a Mullah will be informed and he will issue a “Fatwah” and a male cousin or family member will attempt to kill or will kill the apostate.’⁷³

- 8.1.5 The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) cited the British Pakistani Christian Association (BPCA) as saying in December 2012 ‘In all mainstreams of Islamic jurisprudence abandoning Islam is considered a capital crime, particularly for men. Thus in general, families think and society thinks very poorly of converts to Christianity, and many deem it their duty to kill them. ... Pakistani society in general is extremely hostile to converts, and attacks on those who have converted can re-occur years or even decades after they have changed religion.’ The IRB report provided examples of such

⁷⁰ British High Commission, Islamabad, [Letter regarding Christian converts](#), updated 17 March 2016.

⁷¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Letter, Christians in Pakistan](#), updated 13 April 2016.

⁷² Asia News, A Pakistani family converted to Christianity is hounded, victim of death threats, 19 October 2015, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/A-Pakistani-family-converted-to-Christianity-is-hounded,-victim-of-death-threats-35623.html>, date accessed 8 March 2016.

⁷³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

attacks.⁷⁴ According to the Jubilee Campaign, ‘Converts to Christianity are often extremely vulnerable, finding police and local authorities on the side of those perpetrating violence against them.’⁷⁵ The children of a Muslim man and a Muslim woman who both convert to another religious group are considered illegitimate, and the government may take custody of the children.⁷⁶

8.1.6 The BHC noted:

‘Our Political Section considered that internal relocation may be possible, in theory, as there were Christian communities in many urban areas such as Rawalpindi, and across Punjab and Sindh provinces. Due to the anonymity afforded by moving to an urban area, it may be feasible to relocate and not reveal the fact of the conversion. However, our view was also that the Christian communities were themselves becoming increasingly isolated from other communities. Therefore whilst it may be more difficult to socially exclude and harass a Christian who lives in a larger Christian community, it does not necessary preclude that harassment.’⁷⁷

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9. State treatment and attitudes

- 9.1.1 Following the bombing of a church in Peshawar in September 2013⁷⁸ the Supreme Court held, in a landmark judgement, that ‘every citizen of Pakistan is free to exercise the right to profess, practice or propagate his or her religious views, even against the prevailing or dominant views of his or her own religious denomination or sect.’⁷⁹ Minority Rights Group International added that the Supreme Court ruling ‘called on the government to ensure that victims of the attack were compensated, [and] also directed federal and provincial governments to develop institutions to monitor implementation of minority protection laws and to create a National Council for Minorities.’⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Pakistan: Religious conversion, including treatment of converts and forced conversions (2009-2012) [PAK104258.E], 14 January 2013, available at: http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/237372/346403_en.html, date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁷⁵ Jubilee Campaign, Written statement* submitted by the Jubilee Campaign, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status to the UN Human Rights Council, 7 June 2012, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1340630327_g1213858.pdf, date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁷⁶ US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Section II; date accessed 5 February 2016.

⁷⁷ British High Commission, Islamabad, [Letter regarding Christian converts](#), updated 17 March 2016.

⁷⁸ BBC News, Pakistan church blast kills dozens, 22 September 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24193734>, date accessed 11 February 2016.

⁷⁹ Government of Pakistan: Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention; Twenty-one to twenty-three periodic reports of States parties due in 2014; Pakistan [02 November 2015] [CERD/C/PAK/21-23], 4 November 2015 (published by CERD, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1449143463_cerd-c-pak-21-23-6549-e.doc, paragraph 62, date accessed 11 February 2016.

⁸⁰ Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015 - Pakistan, 2 July 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4fa94.html>, date accessed 11 February 2016.

- 9.1.2 Despite constitutional rights and the Supreme Court ruling, the US Department of State noted in its International Religious Freedom Report for 2014 (US IRF 2014) that Pakistan government policies:
- ‘did not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority religious groups, and due to discriminatory legislation, minorities often were afraid to profess freely their religious beliefs. Media and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) reported killings of religious minorities by police... The government’s general failure to investigate, arrest, or prosecute those responsible for societal abuses promoted an environment of impunity that fostered intolerance and acts of violence, according to domestic and international human rights organizations. In numerous cases during the year, authorities failed to protect victims of religiously motivated mob violence.’⁸¹
- 9.1.3 The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights covering 2015 reported that ‘Police often failed to protect members of religious minorities – including Christians, Ahmadiyya Muslims, Shi’a Muslims, and Hindus – from attacks. There were improvements, however, in police professionalism and instances of local authorities protecting minorities from discrimination and communal violence’.⁸²
- 9.1.4 In correspondence with the Country Policy and Information Team, the British Pakistani Christian Association stated ‘Evidence suggested a general lack of respect towards Christians by the authorities of Pakistan and its institutions [see [Discrimination in employment and education](#)]. The police were often reluctant to initiate charges against those responsible for societal abuses and attacks on Christians.’⁸³ Citing an incident in November 2015, whereby local police reportedly attacked a group of Christian brick kiln workers and stole their wages before briefly detaining them without charge⁸⁴, the BPCA noted ‘Moreover police have been known to abet or initiate actual attacks on Christians, and four prisoner fatalities whilst in custody suggests foul play [see paragraph 9.1.7].’⁸⁵
- 9.1.5 According to open sources and locally engaged staff at the British High Commission, Islamabad, as cited in correspondence from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dated April 2016:

⁸¹ US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Section II, date accessed 5 February 2016.

⁸² U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015, 14 April 2016, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252973>, Section 1d, date accessed 27 April 2016.

⁸³ British Pakistani Christian Association, 15 April 2016, Correspondence with the Country Policy and Information Team.

⁸⁴ British Pakistani Christian Association, Christian brick kiln workers suffer police brutality, 27 November 2015, <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/BlogRetrieve.aspx?PostID=674878&A=SearchResult&SearchID=446100&ObjectID=674878&ObjectType=55>, date accessed 15 April 2016.

⁸⁵ British Pakistani Christian Association, 15 April 2016, Correspondence with the Country Policy and Information Team.

'There is little protection of religious minorities from the Government. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony primarily deals with Hajj participation and has been ineffective in protecting the rights of religious minorities. In May 2015, a National Commission for Human Rights was established although it is not yet fully operational. In March 2016, the government launched a Human Rights National Action Plan which includes a commitment to set up a Commission for Minorities.'⁸⁶

- 9.1.6 Following the publication of the US IRF 2014 report, the Organization for Legal Aid (OLA), the European Centre for Law and Justice's (ECLJ) affiliate in Pakistan, stated 'Our attorneys in Pakistan deal on a regular basis with the kind of cases and situations that are detailed in the IRF report. Mob violence against religious minorities, discrimination against and persecution of Christians, false accusations of blasphemy, etc., are just a few examples of the wide range of cases that our attorneys handle in Pakistan.'⁸⁷ (See [Attacks against Christians](#) and [Lawyers, judges, human rights defenders and journalists](#)).
- 9.1.7 CSW noted in a submission to the APPG Pakistan report that:
'Our cases indicate that Christians do not feel safe going to police stations when they have problems related to unjust blasphemy charges. The main alleged charges related to (PPC) 295A, saying something derogatory against Islam, with numerous incidences occurring against Christians. The police in Pakistan will often treat members of religious minorities with disrespect calling them 'sweepers'. Furthermore, the police officers may also feel threatened by extremists, especially Mullahs and agitators, who usually initiate these charges. However, the police fail to provide protection to religious minorities and often turn them away.'⁸⁸
- 9.1.8 Al Jazeera reported on 14 December 2015 that plans to demolish a Christian-majority katchi abadie (slum) by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) of Islamabad had been put on hold following a stay-order by the Supreme Court. According to Al Jazeera, the CDA's response to the Court order read "Most of these katchi abadies [slums] are under the occupation of the Christian community. It seems this pace of occupation of land by Christian community may increase. Removal of katchi abadies is very urgent to provide [a] better environment to the citizen[s] of Islamabad and to protect the beauty of Islam". A CDA spokesperson refused to comment on the statement and told Al Jazeera that the organisation had good relations with the Christian community, adding "This community is part of Islamabad and

⁸⁶ Foreign and Commonwealth Office, [Letter, Christians in Pakistan](#), updated 13 April 2016.

⁸⁷ Gill. S., State Department Reports Severe Persecution of Christians in Pakistan, American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), November 2015, <http://aclj.org/persecuted-church/state-department-reports-severe-persecution-of-christians-in-pakistan>, date accessed 3 March 2016.

⁸⁸ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

we ensure that we look after their places of worship and their religious events”.⁸⁹

- 9.1.9 On 15 January 2016, the British Pakistani Christian Association (BPCA) reported on the death of Christian man, Liaquat Masih, who died whilst in police custody in Gujranwala, Punjab province, following his arrest for theft in November 2015. The BPCA stated that Masih’s body showed evidence of torture. Police maintained that Masih had a heart attack and was taken to a local hospital but did not survive. The BPCA claimed that Masih’s death was the fourth Christian death to occur in police custody since September 2009, though police reported that the other deaths were suicide.⁹⁰
- 9.1.10 With regards to the protection of Christian women, the Asian Legal Resource Centre in its written statement to the Human Rights Council in June 2015 reported that ‘despite the new laws, impunity remains common in the following cases: [...] forced conversion to Islam, [...] Women from religious minority groups, particularly from the Hindu and Christian communities are especially subject to sexual violence. Girls from these communities suffer disproportionate acts of abduction and rape. When the perpetrators are caught, they claim that the girl had converted to Islam. In this way they are afforded impunity through the Courts in the name of spreading Islam.’⁹¹ Similarly, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported in June 2015 that ‘Religious minority groups have consistently highlighted the gravity of the issue of forced conversions in Pakistan. The government, however, has failed to enact legislation criminalizing the offence and penalizing perpetrators, including the police, judiciary and local seminaries and clerics, who all play a part in forcible conversion of non-Muslim girls to Islam.’⁹²
- 9.1.11 CSW noted in a submission to the APPG Pakistan report that ‘Partners have confirmed that police in all provinces are gender blind in cases of forced conversion and marriage affecting Hindu and Christian girls. In cases of sexual assault, rape and sexual violence they do not conduct proper investigation and minority women are “re-victimised” because police take bribes and do not adequately protect minority women.’⁹³

⁸⁹ Al Jazeera, Islamabad's Christian slums face demolition, 14 December 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/islamabad-christian-slums-face-demolition-151212093750321.html>, date accessed 9 February 2016.

⁹⁰ British Pakistani Christian Association, Fourth Christian man dies while in custody of Pakistan's Christianophobic Police, 15 January 2016, 1.1.1 <http://www.britishpakistanichristians.org/blog/5th-christian-man-dies-while-in-custody-of-pakistans-christianophobic-police>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

⁹¹ Asian Legal Resource Centre: Written statement submitted by the Asian Legal Resource Centre, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status; Pakistan: all private courts should be declared illegal for protecting the women's rights [25 May 2015] [A/HRC/29/NGO/54], 5 June 2015, http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1930_1434538648_g1511505.pdf, date accessed 27 April 2016.

⁹² Human Rights Commission of Pakistan: A look back at our promises, June 2015, <http://hrqpweb.org/hrqpweb/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/A-look-back-at-our-promises.pdf>, page 76, date accessed 27 April 2016.

⁹³ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

9.2 State response

- 9.2.1 Whilst both the US IRF 2014⁹⁴ and the US Committee on International Religious Freedom 2015 (US CIRF 2015)⁹⁵ reports told of the government's failure to protect minority and majority citizens against societal violence including the state's general failure to bring perpetrators to justice, there were also reports on measures taken by the authorities to protect Christians against incidents of violence.
- 9.2.2 Minority Rights Group International reported that in June 2014 'the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pervaz Khattak directed that increased security should be provided to protect places of worship for minorities.'⁹⁶
- 9.2.3 In an apparent response to the US CIRF 2015 report, which criticised Pakistan's stance on religious minorities⁹⁷, the Barnabus Fund noted that Pakistan's Minister of State for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Pir Aminul Hasnat, said that several measures had been implemented to protect religious minorities, including workshops and seminars promoting tolerance and co-existence, and additional public spending for financial aid, scholarships for children and the celebration of religious festivals.⁹⁸
- 9.2.4 Dawn reported on 2 July 2015 that police in a village near Lahore prevented a Christian couple from being lynched by an angry mob after they were accused of blasphemy for using an advertising awning, which allegedly contained quotes from the Quran, as a sleeping mat. The couple were accused by a local barber, and two clerics, one of whom was later arrested for inciting violence. The report noted that Nadeem Anthony, a Christian human rights lawyer, hailed the police action and recounted three other instances where the authorities had intervened in time to prevent such incidences occurring.⁹⁹ According to Morning Star News, police registered a case against the clerics and 400 others for inciting violence and endangering

⁹⁴ US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Section II, date accessed 5 February 2016.

⁹⁵ US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2015 Annual Report, 1 May 2015, Pakistan chapter, <http://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Pakistan%202015.pdf>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

⁹⁶ Minority Rights Group International, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2015 - Pakistan, 2 July 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4fa494.html>, date accessed 11 February 2016.

⁹⁷ US Commission on International Religious Freedom, 2015 Annual Report, 1 May 2015, Pakistan chapter, <http://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/Pakistan%202015.pdf>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

⁹⁸ Barnabus Fund, Christians and other religious minorities mentioned in Pakistan school textbooks for first time, 12 May 2015, <https://barnabasdfund.org/news/Christians-and-other-religious-minorities-mentioned-in-Pakistan-school-textbooks-for-first-time>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

⁹⁹ Dawn, Police save Christian couple from 'blasphemy' mob near Lahore, 2 July 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1191891>, date accessed 11 February 2016.

the lives of the Christian couple. However, the article also stated that this was a “rare move by Pakistani police”.¹⁰⁰

- 9.2.5 On 29 September 2015, World Watch Monitor reported that, since 2013, the All Pakistan Ulema Council – a representative group of senior Muslim clerics – had intervened, often with the help of local police, in a number of confrontations concerning Christians accused of blasphemy and therefore preventing them from becoming major incidents. The report added that ‘Napoleon Qayyum, a Christian politician from the Pakistan People’s Party, said that despite evidence that police in the Punjab province often protect Christians from communal violence, those who have been accused of blasphemy are usually forced to relocate, leaving their homes and families behind.’¹⁰¹ (See [Attacks against Christians](#))
- 9.2.6 In October 2015, the Supreme Court of Pakistan upheld the death sentence of Mumtaz Qadri for shooting dead Punjab governor, Salmaan Taseer, whom he claimed committed blasphemy for his support of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman accused of insulting the prophet Muhammad.¹⁰² Qadri was executed on 29 February 2016. His funeral was attended by thousands of mourners and protests against his death took place across the country.¹⁰³ Asia Bibi was sentenced to death in 2010¹⁰⁴; her appeal to the Supreme Court was still pending as of March 2016.
- 9.2.7 On 7 November 2015, police officials met with church leaders in Islamabad to discuss the provision of security to the places of worships of the Christian community. A police official said that whilst it was the duty of the state to provide security to the people of every religion without discrimination, the church should also take steps for their own security. Officials offered to support church leaders in obtaining weapon licenses.¹⁰⁵
- 9.2.8 The German Federal Office for Migration and Asylum reported in its Briefing Notes dated 14 December 2015 that several Christian churches in Lahore, Punjab, received warnings of terror attacks at Christmas, adding that Christian communities reported the matter to the police and requested

¹⁰⁰ Morning Star News, Islamic Cleric in Pakistan Arrested in Mob Attack on Christians Accused of Blasphemy, 5 July 2015, <http://morningstarnews.org/2015/07/islamic-cleric-in-pakistan-arrested-in-mob-attack-on-christians-accused-of-blasphemy/>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

¹⁰¹ World Watch Monitor, Pakistan: 23 unreported ‘blasphemy’ cases in 2 years, 29 September 2015, <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2015/09/4032430/>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁰² The Guardian, Pakistan’s top court upholds death sentence in blasphemy murder case, 7 October 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/07/pakistan-supreme-court-mumtaz-qadri-blasphemy-murder>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁰³ BBC News, Pakistan Salman Taseer murder: Thousands mourn at Mumtaz Qadri funeral, 1 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-35693767>, date accessed 4 March 2016.

¹⁰⁴ International Commission of Jurists, On Trial: The Implementation of Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws, November 2015, <http://icj.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Pakistan-On-Trial-Blasphemy-Laws-Publications-Thematic-Reports-2015-ENG.pdf>, page 25, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Pakistan Christian News, Churches in Pakistan advised to get security gadget and weapon licenses for security reasons, 7 November 2015, <http://www.pakistanchristiannews.com/churches-in-pakistan-advised-get-weapons-security-gadgets-for-security/>, date accessed 1 April 2016.

enforced protection.¹⁰⁶ On 25 December, Dawn reported on the Christmas celebrations occurring across the country, whilst adding ‘Security forces have made comprehensive security arrangements on the eve of Christmas and special deployment will be ensured at Churches and public places.’¹⁰⁷ CPIT found no indication that any attacks against churches in Pakistan occurred during the Christmas 2015 period.

- 9.2.9 In January 2016, police arranged a reconciliation meeting between Muslims and Christians in Sialkot district, Punjab province, after a Muslim man disrupted a private prayer meeting the previous day. However, members of the Christian congregation claimed that, rather than attending the meeting, a group of Muslims armed with guns, machetes and batons, stormed their homes and attacked residents. Whilst no one was arrested, Sialkot District Police Officer Ijaz said that he had assigned officials to resolve the issue and stated “We will not allow anyone to force their beliefs on any other person... The police will protect the Christians of Nawan Pind, and no harm will come their way. They are free to practice their faith, and we will ensure their security”. Officer Ijaz also agreed to investigate the seizure of a local church building by Muslims who claimed they had bought the land it was built on.¹⁰⁸

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9.3 Use of identity cards and mobile phone data

- 9.3.1 Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) noted in a submission to the APPG Pakistan report in November 2015 that in relation to the option of internal relocation:

‘Every Pakistan citizen is required to carry a national identity (NADRA) card which contains an electronic chip with date of birth, home address, fingerprints and religion and has to be used in the purchase and renting of housing; hiring and leasing cars; purchase and leasing mobile phones and is shown on demand by the police. There are at least ten different police and security agencies in Pakistan that share information with each other, but are also infiltrated by Muslim extremists.’¹⁰⁹ In August 2014, the United States Institute of Peace noted ‘Computerized record-keeping and Internet communication between stations and headquarters remain limited to a handful of model stations in urban centers.’¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Briefing Notes, 14 December 2015, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/4543_1450353927_deutschland-bundesamt-fuer-migration-und-fluechtlinge-briefing-notes-14-12-2015-englisch.pdf, date accessed 18 February 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Dawn, Merry Christmas: ‘Tis the season, 25 December 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1228612>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Morning Star News, Muslims in Pakistan Disrupt Christians’ Worship, Storm Homes, 14 January 2016, <http://morningstarnews.org/2016/01/muslims-in-pakistan-disrupt-christians-worship-storm-homes/>, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹⁰⁹ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

¹¹⁰ United States Institute of Peace, A Counterterrorism Role for Pakistan’s Police Stations, August 2014, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR351-A-Counterterrorism-Role-for-Pakistan%E2%80%99s-Police-Stations.pdf>, date accessed 15 March 2016.

9.3.2 CSW also noted that:

‘... from May 2015 onwards, the Pakistan authorities began to block all unregistered mobile phones and nationally required all mobile to phones to be registered to a named person with an address with their fingerprints on their data files. This was an anti-terrorism measure but means that anyone can be traced via their mobile phone and because of the infiltration into the police and security services that information is available to the extremist organisations.’¹¹¹ The Express Tribune reported on 29 October 2015 that the Punjab police were investigating the possible infiltration into the force by extremist groups, including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), which is blamed for much of the sectarian violence in Pakistan.¹¹²

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10. Societal treatment and attitudes

10.1.1 Speaking to The Express Tribune in August 2015, based on research gathered into the perspectives of Pakistani Christians living in Islamabad and Rawalpindi on violence, identity, and citizenship, Associate Professor Dr Lubna Chaudhry of Binghamton University, New York, stated that:

‘Pakistani Christians belonging to the upper and middle class saw structural discrimination against the community at large but they did not feel it at the more personal level. On the other hand,... Pakistani Christians belonging to the lower and lower-middle class experienced discrimination in all walks of life, ranging from education to jobs to everyday interaction with Muslim Pakistanis.’¹¹³

10.1.2 In correspondence with the Country Policy and Information Team, the British Pakistani Christian Association indicated that relations between many Christians and Muslims were strained and, because of strong influence of Islamism over Pakistani society, overall attitudes were overwhelmingly negative.¹¹⁴

10.1.3 Sabatina James of the Muslim women’s rights group Sabatina e.V, based in Hamburg, and Rainer Rothfuss, Professor for Human Geography and Global Studies at Tübingen University, Germany, reported that Christians in Pakistan usually belong to the lower class with limited access to education and political power, adding they belong to the ‘socially most marginalised and vulnerable population group due to their status of being “the inferior

¹¹¹ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

¹¹² The Express Tribune, Punjab police looking into possible extremist infiltration, 29 October 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/981139/emerging-scandal-punjab-police-looking-into-possible-extremist-infiltration/>, date accessed 15 March 2016.

¹¹³ The Express Tribune, Voices of Pakistani Christians: Call for equal citizenship for non-Muslim Pakistanis, 6 August 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/933032/voices-of-pakistani-christians-call-for-equal-citizenship-for-non-muslim-pakistanis/>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

¹¹⁴ British Pakistani Christian Association, 15 April 2016, Correspondence with the Country Policy and Information Team.

other” as seen by the majority Muslim [population]”.¹¹⁵ In 2012, the then Minister for National Harmony was reported as saying that ‘Christians are among “the poorest and most marginalised people” in the country and suggested that discrimination against Christians is motivated not only by religion but also by caste.’¹¹⁶ In 2011 the Jinnah Institute reported ‘From interviews conducted with Christians from a variety of professions and ages, it is clear that many feel they are treated as second-class citizens and discriminated against in all aspects of life.’¹¹⁷

- 10.1.4 In January 2015, the Christian news agency Fides reported that Pakistani Christians were often seen as “Western allies”.¹¹⁸ In correspondence sent to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada’s Research Directorate in 2012, a representative of the Evangelical Asian Church, a faith-based charitable organization based in Toronto, stated that ‘many Pakistanis consider local Christians to be “Western” agents and believe that they act on behalf of “the West” to promote a “foreign agenda”’.¹¹⁹
- 10.1.5 Similarly, the Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) submission to the APPG in November 2015 stated that ‘Christians in Pakistan are seen as pro-Western and pro-Israeli and are now considered a target for the Taliban and ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant]’.¹²⁰
- 10.1.6 The Jinnah Institute’s report from January 2012 to June 2015 noted that: ‘The most gruesome and widely applied tool of religiously motivated extremists instilling fear within the Christian community has been vigilante mob attacks against Christian homes. These mob attacks occur after a consistent hate campaign in the area has been undertaken against the community and a Christian has been accused of blasphemy, or in response to the publishing of hate material against Muslims in western newspapers.’¹²¹

¹¹⁵ James. S., and Rothfuss. R., Chapter 2 of The Education System in Pakistan: Discrimination and the Targeting of the ‘Other’, published by the British Pakistani Christian Association, November 2014, page 77, date accessed 18 February 2016. Hard copy.

¹¹⁶ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Pakistan: Situation of Christians in Pakistan, including social and government attitudes, treatment and rights (2010-2012) [PAK104259.E], 14 January 2013, available at http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/237374/346406_en.html, date accessed 04 March 2016.

¹¹⁷ Jinnah Institute, A Question of Faith, 2011, http://www.jinnah-institute.org/images/stories/jinnah_minority_report.pdf, page 31, date accessed 9 March 2016.

¹¹⁸ Fides, Asia/Pakistan - Anti-Charlie Hebdo protesters storm Christian school, 30 January 2015, http://www.fides.org/en/news/37196-ASIA_PAKISTAN_Anti_Charlie_Hebdo_protesters_storm_Christian_school#.VMtz8y7Nv4x, date accessed 4 March 2016.

¹¹⁹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Pakistan: Situation of Christians in Pakistan, including social and government attitudes, treatment and rights (2010-2012), 14 January 2013, PAK104259.E, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/510f8dbd2.html>, date accessed 9 March 2016.

¹²⁰ Christian Solidarity Worldwide, submission to the APPG, 10-11 November 2015, <https://freedomdeclared.org/media/CSW-submission-Parliamentary-Inquiry-Pakistan-031115.pdf>, date accessed 26 April 2016.

¹²¹ Jinnah Institute, State of Religious Freedom in Pakistan, January 2016, <http://jinnah-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Minority-Report-2016.pdf>, pages 42-43, date accessed 26 April 2016.

- 10.1.7 According to the Austrian Fact Finding Mission report, symbols such as the cross can be displayed although this can provoke discriminatory behaviour.¹²² Open Doors noted in its Pakistan Country Profile that ‘Churches can still work and meet unhindered, but they will be monitored, and sometimes their services are interrupted or attacked. Congregations hire guards to protect their meetings.’¹²³
- 10.1.8 On 15 May 2015, The Washington Post reported on the construction of a 43 metre tall cross at the entrance to Karachi’s largest Christian cemetery. The report noted that crosses and religious statues in the burial ground were frequently desecrated and that waste from a settlement encroaching on the cemetery was thrown into the graveyard. According to Bishop Sadiq Daniel of the Church of Pakistan, Sindh province, many Christians from rural areas sought sanctuary in Karachi. However, businessman Parvez Henry Gill, whose idea it was to build the giant cross, claimed that “every few weeks” he heard from Christians planning to leave Karachi because of threats.¹²⁴
- 10.1.9 Asia News reported on 11 September 2015 that, despite receiving threats from local Muslims, the “Hope for Light” Christian association had built three new churches in Shekhupura and Jaranwala districts of Punjab, and was in the process of building a fourth in Kasur district.¹²⁵

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11. Discrimination in employment and education

11.1 Employment

- 11.1.1 The US Department of State noted in its International Religious Freedom Report for 2014 (US IRF 2014) that:
- ‘Most religious minority groups complained of discrimination in government hiring. While there was a 5 percent quota for hiring religious minorities at the federal and provincial levels, employers did not consistently enforce this requirement... Discrimination against Christians in employment was widespread. Christians had difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, although Christian activists stated the situation had improved somewhat in the private sector and in the military in recent years.’¹²⁶

¹²² Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, Report on Fact Finding Mission – Pakistan, June 2013, Religious minorities, available at http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1729_1374674206_ffm-bericht-pakistan-2013-06.pdf, page 39, accessed 27 January 2014, English translation available on request

¹²³ Open Doors, Pakistan Country Profile, Persecution in Pakistan, undated, <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/worldwatch/pakistan.php>, date accessed 8 March 2016.

¹²⁴ The Washington Post, A ‘bulletproof’ cross rises in Karachi, 15 May 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/pakistans-biggest-city-has-unlikely-addition-to-skyline-14-story-christian-cross/2015/05/14/cc8cea3e-f268-11e4-bca5-21b51bbdf93e_story.html, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹²⁵ Asia News, Lahore, Christians build churches despite death threats, 11 September 2015, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Lahore,-Christians-build-churches-despite-death-threats-35821.html>, date accessed 15 March 2016.

¹²⁶ US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Sections II

Sabatina James and Professor Rainer Rothfuss reported that many Christians in Pakistan, who were generally the poorest in society in Punjab Province, were subject to bonded labour.¹²⁷

11.1.2 The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported in June 2015 that:

‘Religious minorities also face economic and social discrimination, and the government has made few attempts to curb it. Members of the religious minorities, particularly Christians and Hindus from ‘scheduled castes’ usually take up sanitation jobs that Muslims are unwilling to do. Additionally, in the agricultural sector, Christians and scheduled caste Hindus account for a big proportion of bonded labourers who are coerced into lives of servitude as a result of the unpaid debts, including those of their previous generations. The government has failed to secure even a single conviction of perpetrators of bonded labour under the existing bonded labour law, which criminalizes the practice.’¹²⁸

11.1.3 In September 2015, the Punjab Institute of Cardiology posted a job advertisement for sanitary workers and specified “Only Non-Muslim Persons who belong to Minorities will be accommodated”.¹²⁹ The Express Tribune reported that, on 16 November 2015, following a request by the Chief Minister’s Special Monitoring Unit, the Minister for Minorities Tahir Khalil Sindhu and Punjab Assembly Minister Mary Gill, the Punjab Government’s Services and General Administration Department issued a notification to amend the eligibility rules for sanitation jobs, to end such discriminatory practices. The Express Tribune noted that ‘through the prevalence of the practice, minority community workers were not being preferred for high level jobs... Christians make up most of the non-Muslim population in central Punjab and account for 1.5 per cent of the total population. Their representation in sanitation jobs is above 80 percent.’¹³⁰

11.1.4 However, in a report published in 2011, the Jinnah Institute noted that ‘While it is a stereotype that many Christians are employed in menial work, they are robustly represented in a variety of positions across the cultural and professional spectrum. They are active in teaching, social work, the arts and institution building’ whilst adding ‘From interviews conducted with Christians from a variety of professions and ages, it is clear that many feel they are

and III, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹²⁷ James. S., and Rothfuss. R., Chapter 2 of The Education System in Pakistan: Discrimination and the Targeting of the ‘Other’, published by the British Pakistani Christian Association, November 2014, pages 77, date accessed 18 February 2016. Hard copy.

¹²⁸ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan: A look back at our promises, June 2015, <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/A-look-back-at-our-promises.pdf>, page 70, date accessed 27 April 2016.

¹²⁹ Pakistan Jobs, Punjab Institute of Cardiology Lahore Jobs 2015 September BPS-1 to 4 NTS, 15 September 2015, <http://www.pakistanjobsbank.com/Jobs/42710/Punjab-Institute-of-Cardiology-Lahore-Jobs-2015-September-BPS-1-to-4-NTS-Application-Form-Download-Latest/>, date accessed 9 February 2016.

¹³⁰ The Express Tribune, Ending discrimination: Eligibility rules changed for sanitation jobs, 30 November 2015, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1000860/ending-discrimination-eligibility-rules-changed-for-sanitation-jobs/>, date accessed 9 February 2016.

treated as second-class citizens and discriminated against in all aspects of life.¹³¹ (See also [Societal treatment and attitudes](#)).

11.2 Education

- 11.2.1 The US IRF 2014 report indicated that discrimination against Christians in admission to higher education institutions persisted.¹³² Reporting on the education system in Pakistan, Desmond Fernandes, author on genocide and former Senior Lecturer in Human Geography and Genocide Studies at De Montfort University, stated that Christian students and staff in schools faced discrimination and targeting in the form of: being subjected to false blasphemy claims; being pressured to convert to Islam; physical and verbal assault, and social isolation; having limited support from management, and being refused admission on spurious grounds. The report cited incidences of such occurrences.¹³³ Wilson Chowdhry of the British Pakistani Christian Association stated in August 2011 that ‘many Christians can’t afford to send their children to school, but instead must send them out to work and earn money for the family to survive. There are free schools in Pakistan, but their standard is generally poor, and most minority parents can’t afford the travel costs...’¹³⁴
- 11.2.2 The US IRF 2014 report stated that ‘According to a 2013 report by the human rights NGO National Commission for Justice and Peace, hate material in school curricula was the main reason for discrimination towards minority groups. Examining textbooks for the 2012-13 academic years in Punjab and Sindh for grades 1 to 10, the report found the curricula included discriminatory and inflammatory material against Hindus, Christians, and other religious minorities.’¹³⁵
- 11.2.3 The Jinnah Institute’s report from January 2012 to June 2015 noted that ‘The Christian community has also faced consistent harassment at academic and educational institutions across the country. Affected by pervasive biases ingrained in curricula, Christians are forced to learn Islam through the innumerable lessons in Urdu, Mathematics, History and English books that carry references to Islam and Islamic history.’¹³⁶

¹³¹ Jinnah Institute, A Question of Faith, 2011, http://www.jinnah-institute.org/images/stories/jinnah_minority_report.pdf, page 30, date accessed 9 March 2016.

¹³² US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Section II, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹³³ Fernandes. D., Chapter 7 of The Education System in Pakistan: Discrimination and the Targeting of the ‘Other’, published by the British Pakistani Christian Association, November 2014, pages 99-102, date accessed 18 February 2016. Hard copy.

¹³⁴ Christian Today, The UK should cut aid to Pakistan, 6 August 2011, <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/the.uk.should.cut.aid.to.pakistan/28387-2.htm>, date accessed 10 March 2016.

¹³⁵ US Department of State, International Religious Freedom Report for 2014, Pakistan, 14 October 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=238504>, Section II, date accessed 5 February 2016.

¹³⁶ Jinnah Institute, State of Religious Freedom in Pakistan, January 2016, <http://jinnah-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Minority-Report-2016.pdf>, page 44, date accessed 26 April 2016.

- 11.2.4 In May 2015, Asia News reported that the Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association (PMTA) had successfully changed the history course curriculum for grades 8, 10 and 11 to include references to the role that Christians, Hindus and Sikhs played in building Pakistan after independence.¹³⁷ In contrast, it was reported in October 2014 that chemistry, physics, English, history and geography school textbooks in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were being rewritten to make them "more Islamic".¹³⁸
- 11.2.5 In a report published in April 2016 by US Commission on International Religious Freedom it was found that 'the content of Pakistani public school textbooks related to non-Islamic faiths and non-Muslims continue to teach bias, distrust, and inferiority. Moreover, the textbooks portray non-Muslim citizens of Pakistan as sympathetic towards its perceived enemies: Pakistani Christians as Westerners or equal to British colonial oppressors, and Pakistani Hindus as Indians, the arch enemy of Pakistan.'¹³⁹

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¹³⁷ Asia News, Pakistan's religious minorities included in school textbooks, 5 May 2015, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Pakistan%E2%80%99s-religious-minorities-included-in-school-textbooks-34160.html>, date accessed 18 February 2016.

¹³⁸ Reuters, Pakistan province rewrites text books to satisfy Islamic conservatives, 30 October 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-pakistan-education-idUKKBN0IJ1G620141030>, date accessed 26 February 2016.

¹³⁹ US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Teaching Intolerance in Pakistan: Religious Bias in Public School Textbooks, 11 April 2016, http://www.uscifr.gov/sites/default/files/USCIRF_Pakistan_FINALonline_0.pdf, page 1, date accessed 14 April 2016.

Annex A: British High Commission letter



British
High Commission
Islamabad

Updated 17 March 2016

Can converts to Christianity live freely and openly in Pakistan? Are they at risk of an “honour” killing owing to their conversion? Is internal relocation an option, i.e. would any areas be deemed “safer” for Christians than others?

We consulted internally with our Political Section, who deal with humanitarian and human rights issues. In short, it is difficult to corroborate the real situation, as this is a frequently hidden problem; our view is that converts would probably not want to draw additional attention to themselves. However, we have ascertained the following anecdotal evidence from our dealings with external contacts in Pakistan:-

- Firstly, in our opinion it would be difficult for Christian converts to live freely and openly in Pakistan, as converts over and above being Christian. It is our view that people who are known to have converted to Christianity suffer serious discrimination, for example in the workplace or by the authorities. It is far more difficult for people in Pakistan who are known to have converted to Christianity, than it is for people who were born Christian.
- We understand that it would be rare for someone to convert to Christianity, or at least to do so openly, in Pakistan. It is therefore something of note for the community, with potential repercussions.
- Our Political Section considered that internal relocation may be possible, in theory, as there were Christian communities in many urban areas such as Rawalpindi, and across Punjab and Sindh provinces. Due to the anonymity afforded by moving to an urban area, it may be feasible to relocate and not reveal the fact of the conversion. However, our view was also that the Christian communities were themselves becoming increasingly isolated from

other communities. Therefore whilst it may be more difficult to socially exclude and harass a Christian who lives in a larger Christian community, it does not necessary preclude that harassment.

- Finally, it was our view that Christian converts were not at risk of an honour killing, despite these difficulties, as these are normally related to property disputes or perceived dishonourable behaviour rather than matters of faith or principle.

This letter has been compiled by staff of the British High Commission in Islamabad entirely from information obtained from the sources indicated. The letter does not reflect the opinions of the author(s), or any policy of the British High Commission. The author(s) have compiled this letter in response to a request from the Home Office and any further enquiries regarding its contents should be directed to the Home Office.

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Annex B: Foreign and Commonwealth Office letter



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Drafted 16 December 2013

Updated 13 April 2016

Country of Origin Information Report – Christians in Pakistan

Information on living conditions in Pakistan for Christians from locally engaged staff working at the British High Commission Islamabad

Locally engaged staff working at the Consular Section at the British High Commission, Islamabad, who are in touch with the Christian community in Pakistan have spoken to us about the questions sent by the Home Office regarding the situation of Christians in Pakistan. We have been told that the data requested in the majority of questions does not exist. Census and population data for Pakistan is not readily available or regularly updated. However, our colleagues are able to give an outline of the conditions in which Christians in Pakistan live, recorded below. Other information is available from open sources including the Pakistani media and human rights organisations.

Demographics

The official estimates for the minority religious populations within Pakistan are as follows:

- 96.4% Muslim
- 1.5% Christian
- 1.5% Hindu
- 0.6% other

On this basis, there would be around 2.8m Christians in Pakistan. However, some in the Christian community believe this number is too low and that there are higher numbers of Christians in Pakistan, around 5-10% of the population. It is likely to be at the lower end of that range if they are right.

The majority of Christians are based in the Punjab, where Christians are the largest religious minority. A significant number of them live in and around Lahore and Faisalabad – estimated at 2m in Lahore, and 0.5m in the rest of Punjab. The other large centre of Christians in Pakistan is in Karachi which includes a Goan Catholic community.

The majority of Christians in Pakistan belong to either the Roman Catholic Church or, slightly fewer, the Church of Pakistan (Anglican) with increasing numbers belonging to other protestant and non-conformist churches.

The Constitutional position of non-Muslims in Pakistan

The Pakistan constitution states that both the President (article 41) and Prime Minister shall be a Muslim (article 91). Article 33 discourages prejudice, Article 36 entrusts the state with protection of minorities. (Pakistan Constitution: http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1333523681_951.pdf)

Blasphemy law

The lot of Christians in Pakistan has got worse since the 1970s, partly attributable to the blasphemy laws issued by President Zia which are still in force. While the majority of those charged under the blasphemy laws are Muslim, Christians do make a high proportion of those accused. The majority of blasphemy cases come from the Punjab, which has a high Christian population.

During the Zia regime amendments to the Penal Code prohibited women and minorities from initiating blasphemy cases. Under the 'law of evidence' (Qanoon-i-Shihadah) the evidence of two women or two non-Muslims equates to that of a single male Muslim where a woman is accused of adultery under the Hudood ordinance. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudood_Ordinance)

There have been some high profile blasphemy cases against Christians recently, including against a young girl, Rimsha Masih, who has since fled to Canada and Aasia Bibi who remains in prison. The Governor of Punjab and the Minister for Minorities were murdered when they spoke out about the Aasia Bibi case. Mumtaz Qadri, who was convicted of killing the Governor of Punjab, received support from influential Muslim clerics during his trial and subsequent execution. In 2014, two Christians, accused of blasphemy, were burnt to death in a brick kiln by a Muslim mob.

There is a growing trend of Pakistani Christians leaving the country, in particular to live in countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Thailand. According to some media reports (Pakistani and Indian) families of Hindus/Sikhs living in southern Punjab/Sindh have migrated to India. Others (including Christians) have migrated to Canada and other western countries where there are small communities and some have come as asylum seekers.

Violence

Violent extremism against Christians in Pakistan is commonplace. In March 2013, the Joseph Colony in Lahore (a major Christian colony) was attacked by a mob following allegations of blasphemy against a resident. In September 2013, more than 85 people were killed and over 100 injured during a double suicide bombing at a church in Peshawar. In March 2015, the Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility for two suicide bomb attacks at Christian churches in the Youhanabad area of Lahore which killed 15 persons. And on Easter Sunday 2016, bombs killed 75 persons in a

park in Lahore. (Although the attack targeted Christians, the majority killed were Muslim).

Institutions

There are many churches in Pakistan, which are mostly safe but as mentioned above they can be targets for extremist actions. Christian schools also exist – some of these have been nationalised recently and therefore are no longer run on a Christian basis.

Christian colleges were nationalised in the 1970's by the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto although some have more recently been de-nationalised and returned to their former owners.

There is little protection of religious minorities from the Government. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony primarily deals with Hajj participation and has been ineffective in protecting the rights of religious minorities. In May 2015, a National Commission for Human Rights was established although it is not yet fully operational. In March 2016, the government launched a Human Rights National Action Plan which includes a commitment to set up a Commission for Minorities.

Religion must be registered with the state and included in one's passport.. .

There is no specific statutory law that criminalizes apostasy in Pakistan. In 2007, a bill to impose the death penalty for apostasy for males and life imprisonment for females was proposed in Parliament but failed to pass. Nevertheless, some scholars believe that the principle that "a lacuna in the statute law was to be filled with reference to Islamic law" could potentially apply to the crime of apostasy.

Although no examples of anyone actually being criminally prosecuted for apostasy were found, conversion is not without consequence. It has been reported that if a married Muslim couple converts to another religion, the couple's children become illegitimate and may become wards of the State. In addition, according to one report, though it is theoretically possible to change one's religion from Islam, in practice, the state attempts to hinder the process. Converts from Islam and atheists may also be vulnerable to Pakistan's blasphemy law, which prescribes life imprisonment for desecrating or defiling the Quran and the death sentence to anyone for using derogatory remarks towards the Prophet Mohamed.

Marriage

A Christian woman marrying a Muslim man is permissible, on the basis that the woman will convert to Islam. It is not permissible for a Christian man to marry a Muslim woman.

A child's religion is held to be the same of that of its mother.

Marriages are registered with the state according to which faith those getting married follow. As such, two Christians getting married do not have to register according to Muslim family laws. In church weddings Christians are usually married under the Indian Christian Marriage Act of 1872. In February 2016, the Sindh Assembly passed legislation recognising, for the first time in the country's history, Hindu marriages in the Sindh province as valid. Hindu marriages elsewhere in Pakistan are not recognised by the authorities.

CLAAS

CLAAS is a partner NGO for the British High Commission, in particular for its work on forced marriages. The British High Commission has paid an annual retainer to them for their assistance since 2000. The main focus of CLAAS is religious intolerance, on which they are a trustworthy source. They have campaigned extensively against the blasphemy laws. Joseph Francis from CLAAS was awarded an MBE for his services in the role.

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Version Control and Contacts

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

Clearance

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