

**Pakistan (38)****2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom:****Pakistan**

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

There were some slight improvements in the Government's treatment of religious minorities during the period covered by this report. For example, the Government of Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf, which took power in a military coup on October 12, 1999, abandoned his predecessor's proposal to impose Shari'a law through a constitutional amendment. Many religious minorities feared that the implementation of Shari'a law through a constitutional amendment would increase their vulnerability. According to persons in religious minority communities, Musharraf made efforts to seek minority input into decision-making and offered cabinet positions to individuals from minority communities.

The Government fails in many respects to protect the rights of minorities. This is due both to public policy and to government unwillingness to take action against societal forces hostile to those who practice a different faith. Specific government policies that discriminate against religious minorities include: the use of "Hudood" Ordinances, which apply different standards of evidence to Muslims and non-Muslims and to men and women in alleged violations of Islamic law; certain legal prohibitions against Ahmadis freely practicing their faith; "blasphemy" laws, which often are misused to target minorities; and separate political electorates for minorities under the (currently suspended) Constitution. In April 2000, Musharraf announced a proposal to make an administrative change to the blasphemy laws, which was aimed at reducing the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws; however, Musharraf failed to implement these proposed changes due to significant opposition and pressure from some religious groups.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country and proselytizing



(except by Ahmadis) is allowed; however, proselytizing is considered socially inappropriate among Muslims and missionaries face some problems due to this perception.

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

The U.S. Government discusses religious freedom with the Government in the context of its overall dialog and policy of promoting human rights. U.S. Embassy officials and visitors have raised issues such as the blasphemy laws with Government of Pakistan interlocutors on a number of occasions. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom visited the country in February 2000.

Section I. Government Policies on Freedom of Religion

Legal/Policy Framework

The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and states that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religions freely; however, the Government imposes limits on freedom of religion. Pakistan is an Islamic republic, and Islam is the state religion, as established in the Constitution. Islam also is a core element of the country's national ideology; the country was created to be a homeland for Muslims. Under the Constitution (which was suspended following the October 12, 1999 coup), both the President and the Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials must swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology." A number of other provisions of the Constitution also limit certain fundamental rights based on Islamic principles. For example, freedom of speech is provided for; however, this right is subject to "reasonable restrictions" that can be imposed "in the interest of the glory of Islam." Actions or speech deemed derogatory to Islam or to its Prophet are not protected. Further, the Constitution requires that laws be consistent with Islam and imposes some elements of Koranic law on both Muslims and religious minorities. The Government does not ban formally the practice of the Ahmadi religion, but the practice of the Ahmadi faith is restricted severely by law. For example, Ahmadis, who consider themselves Muslims, face persecution under the blasphemy laws if they refer to themselves as such.

The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions, which reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The federal Shari'at court and the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court serve as

appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinances, and judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslims. The federal Shari'at court also may overturn any legislation judged to be inconsistent with the tenets of Islam.

Religious Demography

According to the 1981 census (latest available figures), an estimated 95 percent of the population are Muslim; 1.56 percent are Christian; 1.51 percent are Hindu; and 0.26 percent are "other" (Ahmadis are included in the latter category). The majority of Muslims in the country are Sunni. An estimated 10 to 15 percent of the Muslim population are Shi'a, and it is estimated that there are 550,000 to 600,000 Ismailis (a recognized Shi'a Muslim group). Most or all Ismailis in the country are followers of the Aga Khan. The Government conducted a census in 1998; however, the updated information is not yet available.

Religious minority groups believe that they are underrepresented in government census counts. Official and private estimates of their numbers can differ significantly. Current population estimates place the number of Christians at 3 million and the number of Ahmadis at 3 to 4 million. Current estimates for the remaining communities are less contested and place the total number of Hindus at 2.8 million; Parsis (Zoroastrians), Buddhists, and Sikhs at as high as 20,000 each; and Baha'is at 12,000. The "other" category also includes a few tribes whose members practice traditional indigenous religions and who normally do not declare themselves, and those who do not wish to practice any religion but remain silent about the fact. Social pressure is such that few persons would admit to being unaffiliated with any religion.

While Christianity frequently is seen as a foreign "Westernized" religion, it has a long history in the country. Some Christian communities trace their roots to the time of St. Thomas the Apostle. Most trace their origin to mid-19th century missionary movements in both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Many Christians, in particular the recent converts, generally are in the poorest socioeconomic groups. There are several long-established Baptist churches and, in Karachi, perhaps a dozen storefront Pentacostal and other evangelical churches. The largest Christian mission group operating in Sindh and Baluchistan does Bible translation for the Church of Pakistan, mostly in tribal areas. An Anglican missionary group fields several missionaries to assist the Church of Pakistan (a united church of Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans) in administrative and educational work. Roman Catholic missionaries, mostly Franciscan, work with the disabled.

Punjab is the largest province in the country in terms of population. The Muslims are the largest religious group in Punjab, as is true for the country as a whole. Although Christians can be found throughout the country, approximately 98 percent of Christians reside in Punjab, making them the largest religious minority in the province. Approximately 60 percent of Punjab's Christians live in villages. The largest group of Christians belongs to the Church of Pakistan; the

second largest group belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The rest are from different evangelical and church organizations.

Sindh and Baluchistan provinces also are overwhelmingly Muslim, with a population that is approximately 97 percent Muslim. Slightly over 1 percent of the population in these provinces are estimated to be Christian, and slightly over 1 percent are estimated to be Hindu. The two provinces also have a few tribes that practice traditional indigenous religions and a small population of Parsis (approximately 7,000 persons). The Ismailis are concentrated in Karachi and the northern areas. The tiny but influential Parsi community is concentrated in Karachi, although some live in Islamabad and Peshawar. According to local Christian sources, between 70,000 and 100,000 Christians and a few thousand Hindus live in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Christians constitute about 2 percent of Karachi's population. The Roman Catholic diocese of Karachi estimates that there are 120,000 Catholics in Karachi, 40,000 in the rest of Sindh, and 5,000 in Quetta, Baluchistan. Evangelical Christians have converted a few tribal Hindus of the lower castes from interior Sindh. Hindus are concentrated in Sindh and constitute 1 to 2 percent of the province's population. An estimated 100,000 Hindus live in Karachi. Ahmadis are concentrated in Punjab and in Sindh.

No data are available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals (as opposed to mere membership). However, because religion is tied closely to a person's ethnic, social, and economic identity, there is less room for nominal, secular passivity with regard to religion. Most Muslim men offer prayers at least once a week at Friday prayers, and the vast majority of Muslim men and women pray at home or at the workplace during one or more of the five daily times of prayer. During the month of Ramadan, even many of the otherwise less observant Muslims fast and attend mosque services more faithfully. About 70 percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worship regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu speakers do so.

Many Muslims consult Pirs (hereditary saints) or saints' shrines, where pre-Islamic practices are common. As many as 25 percent of Muslims regularly consult such Pirs, and up to 50 percent may seek their help in times of crisis.

The Shikaris (a hunting caste now mostly employed as trash collectors in urban Sindh) are converts to Islam, but eat foods forbidden by Islam. Other Muslims generally ostracize the Shikaris, primarily because of their eating habits.

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

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

Parsis, who practice the Zoroastrian religion, have no regularly scheduled congregational services, except for a 10-day festival in August during which they celebrate the New Year and pray for the dead. All Parsis are expected to attend these services; most reportedly do. During the rest of the year, individuals offer prayers at Parsi temples. Parsis maintain a conscious creedal and ceremonial separation from other religions, preserving ancient rites and forbidding marriage to members of other religions. The Parsi community is self-sufficient in religious leaders, and there are no known Parsi missionaries operating in the country.

Only one group described by the authorities as a "foreign cult" reportedly has been established in the country. In Karachi members of the U.S.-based "Children of God" are rumored to be operating a commune where they practice polygamy.

Governmental Restrictions on Religious Freedom

Government policies do not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority faiths. For example, all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, are subject to certain provisions of Islamic law. In the Malakand division and the Kohistan district of the NWFP, ordinances require that "all cases, suits, inquiries, matters, and proceedings in the courts shall be decided in accordance with Shari'a." These ordinances define Shari'a as the injunctions found in both the Koran and the Sunna. Islamic law judges with the assistance of the Ulema (Islamic scholars), under the general supervision of the Peshawar High Court, try all court cases in the Malakand Division and the Kohistan District. Elsewhere in the country, partial provisions of Shari'a apply. In 1998 then-Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, proposed an amendment to the Constitution (the 15th Amendment) that would have imposed Shari'a throughout the country; minority religious groups feared that the implementation of this amendment would have restricted further the freedom to practice religions other than Islam. However, the Musharraf Government did not enact the proposed 15th Amendment.

The Government does not ban formally the public practice of the Ahmadi religion, but the practice of the Ahmadi faith is restricted severely by law. A 1974 Constitutional amendment declared Ahmadis to be a non-Muslim minority because, according to the Government, they do not accept Mohammed as the last Prophet of Islam. However, Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims and observe Islamic practices. In 1984 the Government inserted Section 298(c) into the Penal Code, prohibiting Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslim or posing as Muslims; from referring to their faith as Islam; from

preaching or propagating their faith; from inviting others to accept the Ahmadi faith; and from insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. This section of the Penal Code has caused problems for Ahmadis, particularly the provision that forbids them from "directly or indirectly" posing as Muslims. Armed with this vague wording, mainstream Muslim religious leaders have brought charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting form and for naming their children Mohammed. The constitutionality of Section 286 (c) was upheld in a split-decision Supreme Court case in 1996. The punishment for violation of this section is imprisonment for up to 3 years and a fine. This provision has been used extensively by the Government and anti-Ahmadi religious groups to harass and to persecute Ahmadis. Ahmadis also are prohibited from holding any conferences or gatherings.

There are a variety of other legal restrictions on the right to freedom of religion, and religious minorities are afforded fewer legal protections than Muslim citizens. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdiction, which reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The federal Shari'at court and the Shari'a bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinances, and judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslims. The federal Shari'at court also may overturn any legislation judged to be inconsistent with the tenets of Islam.

The martial law era Hudood Ordinances criminalize nonmarital rape, extramarital sex, and various gambling, alcohol, and property offenses. The Hudood Ordinances reportedly are based on Islamic principles and are applied to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Some Hudood Ordinance cases are subject to Hadd, or Koranic, punishment; others are subject to Tazir, or secular punishment. Although both types of cases are tried in ordinary criminal courts, special rules of evidence apply in Hadd cases. For example, a non-Muslim may testify only if the victim also is non-Muslim. Likewise, the testimony of women, Muslim or non-Muslim, is not admissible in cases involving Hadd punishments. Thus, if a Muslim man rapes a Muslim woman in the presence of women or non-Muslim men, he cannot be convicted under the Hudood Ordinances.

For both Muslims and non-Muslims, all consensual extramarital sexual relations are considered a violation of the Hudood Ordinances; thus, if a woman cannot prove the absence of consent in a rape case, there is a risk that she may be charged with a violation of the Hudood Ordinances for fornication or adultery. The maximum punishment for this offense is public flogging or stoning. According to a police official, in a majority of rape cases, the victims are pressured to drop rape charges because of the threat of Hudood adultery charges being brought against them. A parliamentary commission of inquiry for women has criticized the Hudood Ordinances and recommended their repeal. It also has been charged that the laws on adultery and rape have been subject to widespread misuse, with 95 percent of the women accused of adultery being found innocent in the court of first instance or on appeal. This commission found that the main victims of the Hudood Ordinances are

poor women who are unable to defend themselves against slanderous charges. According to the commission, the laws also have been used by husbands and other male family members to punish their wives and female family members for reasons that have nothing to do with sexual propriety. Approximately one-third or more of the women in jails in Lahore, Peshawar, and Mardan in 1998 were awaiting trial for adultery under the Hudood Ordinances. However, no Hadd punishment has been imposed since the Hudood Ordinances went into effect. Human rights monitors and women's groups believe that a narrow interpretation of Shari'a has had a harmful effect on the rights of women and minorities, as it reinforces popular attitudes and perceptions and contributes to an atmosphere in which discriminatory treatment of women and non-Muslims is accepted more readily.

Under the Anti-Terrorist Act, any act, including speech, intended to stir up religious hatred, is punishable by up to 7 years of rigorous imprisonment. In the antiterrorist courts, which virtually were shut down by the Supreme Court in 1998, cases were to be decided within 7 working days, and trials in absentia were permitted. Appeals to an appellate court also were required to occur within 7 days, but appellate authority since has been restored to the high courts and the Supreme Court. Under the act, bail is not to be granted if the judge has reasonable grounds to believe that the accused is guilty.

The Penal Code incorporates the doctrines of Diyat (blood money) and Qisas (roughly, an eye for an eye). Qisas is not known to have been invoked, but Diyat occasionally is used, especially in the NWFP, with the result that compensation sometimes is paid to the family of a murder victim in place of punishment of the murderer. Under these ordinances only the family of the victim, not the state, may pardon the defendant. Like the Hudood Ordinances, Qisas and Diyat apply to both ordinary criminal courts and Shari'at courts.

Section 295(a), the colonial-era blasphemy provision of the Penal Code, originally stipulated a maximum 2-year sentence for insulting the religion of any class of citizens. In 1991 this sentence was increased to 10 years. In 1982 Section 295(b) was added, which stipulated a sentence of life imprisonment for "whoever willfully defiles, damages, or desecrates a copy of the holy Koran." In 1986 during the martial law period, another amendment, Section 295(c), established the death penalty or life imprisonment for directly or indirectly defiling "the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed." For example, persons who overtly deny that Mohammad was the final prophet can be prosecuted for indirectly defiling the Prophet's name under Section 295 (c). In 1991 a court struck down the option of life imprisonment for this offense. In 1997 cases filed under Penal Code Section 295(a) were transferred to antiterrorist courts. Personal rivals and the authorities have used these blasphemy laws, especially Section 295(c), to threaten, punish, or intimidate Ahmadis, Christians, and even Orthodox Muslims. No one has been executed by the State under any of these provisions; however, some persons have been sentenced to death, and religious extremists have killed persons accused under the provisions. The blasphemy laws also have been used to "settle scores" unrelated to

religious activity, such as intrafamily or property disputes. In 1998 the previous Government instituted a policy that required magistrates to investigate the credibility of blasphemy allegations before filing formal charges; however, the Musharraf Government ended this policy due to opposition from some religious political parties.

Due to increasing local and international pressure to repeal or modify the blasphemy laws, Musharraf announced a proposal in April 2000 to modify the administration of the laws so that complainants would have to register new blasphemy cases with the local deputy commissioners instead of with police officials. The goal of this proposed change was to reduce the number of persons who are accused wrongly under the laws; however, many religious minority representatives stated that this suggested administrative change would have done little to protect their communities from being charged under the blasphemy laws. Religious and sectarian groups mounted large-scale protests against the proposed change and some religious leaders stated that if the laws were changed, even just procedurally, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves. In May 2000, in response to increasing pressure and threats, Musharraf abandoned his proposed reforms to the blasphemy laws.

When blasphemy and other religious cases are brought to court, extremists often pack the courtroom and make public threats about the consequences of an acquittal. As a result, low level judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid a confrontation with, or violence from, the extremists, often continue trials indefinitely, and those accused of blasphemy often are burdened with further legal costs and repeated court appearances.

According to the Constitution, both the President and the Prime Minister must be Muslims, and all senior officials must swear an oath to preserve the country's "Islamic ideology."

The Constitution states that "the state shall safeguard the legitimate rights and interest of minorities, including their due representation in the federal and provincial bodies," and the National Assembly and provincial assemblies have seats reserved for non-Muslims. However, following the October 1999 coup, the National and provincial assemblies were suspended.

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

On September 4, 1999, Lahore High Court Justice Nazir Akhtar reportedly stated that those accused of blasphemy "must be punished or killed on the spot without any trial and there is not need of the law." Christian leaders publicly criticized this statement and Justice Akhtar subsequently rescinded his remarks.

Although there are reserved seats in the National Assembly (NA) and the provincial assemblies for non-Muslims, the Government distinguishes between Muslims and non-Muslims with regard to political rights. In national and local elections, Muslims cast their votes for Muslim candidates by geographic locality, while non-Muslims can cast their votes only for at-large non-Muslim candidates. Since separate electorates exist for Muslims and non-Muslims, there is little participation by non-Muslims in the mainstream Muslim parties, and local mainstream parliamentary representatives have little incentive to promote their minority constituents' interests. Many Christian activists state that these "separate electorates" are the greatest obstacle to the attainment of Christian religious and civil liberties. Ahmadi leaders encourage the Ahmadis not to register as "non-Muslims" (since Ahmadis consider themselves to be Muslims, so most Ahmadis are completely unrepresented).

Until the suspension of the National Assembly (NA) after the October 1999 coup, Christians held four reserved seats, Hindus and members of scheduled castes another four; Ahmadis one; and Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and other non-Muslims one. The 1997 general election report states that each Christian NA member represented 327,606 persons; each Hindu and scheduled castes member, 319,029; the Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, and other non-Muslim NA member, 112,801; and the Ahmadi member, 104,244. These figures significantly understate the population of the religious minorities because they are based on 1981 census figures. However, legal provisions for minority reserved seats do not extend to the Senate and the federal Cabinet, which were composed entirely of Muslim members until the coup. The Prime Minister, federal ministers and ministers of state, as well as elected members of the Senate and National Assembly (including non-Muslims), must take a religious oath to "strive to preserve the Islamic ideology, which is the basis for the creation of Pakistan."

On June 28, 1999, the one-member election tribunal of the Peshawar high court disqualified Walter Siraj, the Christian seat member of the NWFP provincial assembly for alleged vote rigging.

The Ministry of Religious and Minority Affairs, the government ministry that is entrusted with safeguarding religious freedom, has on its masthead a Koranic verse: "Islam is the only religion acceptable to God." The Ministry claims that it spends 30 percent of its annual budget to assist indigent minorities, to repair minority places of worship, to set up minority-run small development schemes, and to celebrate minority festivals. However, the Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace questioned its expenditures, observing that localities and villages housing minority citizens go without basic civic amenities. The Bishops' Conference, using official budget figures for expenditures in 1998, calculated that the Government actually spent \$17 (PRs 850) on each Muslim and only \$3.20 (PRs 16) on each minority citizen per month.

Missionaries are allowed to operate in the country, and proselytizing

(except by Ahmadis) is allowed so long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge that they are not Muslim. However, all missionaries are required to have specific missionary visas, which have a validity of 2 to 5 years and allow only one entry into the country per year. These visas carry the annotation "missionary." Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries are available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems are frequent. Proselytizing generally is considered socially inappropriate among Muslims; missionaries face some difficulties due to this perception. For example, some Sunni Muslim groups oppose missionary activities and have at times issued verbal threats against missionaries in order to discourage them from working.

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

In a highly publicized case in 1998, a district court in Rawalpindi removed three sisters from the custody of their Christian parents after the sisters allegedly had converted from Christianity to Islam. However, it is not clear to what extent the decision was based upon the parents' religion. A subsequent decision in March 1999 awarded custody of the two youngest girls to their older sister and her new Muslim husband; the eldest of the three sisters reportedly had married her attorney. The girls' parents attribute the loss of their children to the influence of religious extremists who packed the courtroom, and claim to have suffered harassment because of the case. The girls' family since has moved, and has relinquished contact with the girls out of fear of further persecution.

Upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian men remain legal; however, upon conversion to Islam, the marriages of Jewish or Christian women, or of other non-Muslims, which were performed under the rites of the previous religion, are considered dissolved.

Links with coreligionists in other countries are relatively trouble free. The Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan report no difficulties. Ismailis are in regular contact with their headquarters, and their officials, including Prince Karim Aga Khan, visit Pakistan regularly. Under reciprocal visa arrangements, Indian Hindu and Sikh leaders and groups travel regularly to Pakistan. However, the Government prohibits Ahmadis from participating in the Hajj (the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia).

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

"Islamiyyat" (Islamic studies) is compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. In March 1998, the Government announced a new education policy that increased mandatory Islamic instruction in public schools. While students of other faiths are not required to study Islam, they are not provided with parallel studies in their own religions. In practice teachers compel many non-Muslim students to complete Islamic studies.

The Government nationalized all church schools and colleges in Punjab and Sindh in 1972. The Government of Sindh gradually denationalized church schools without compensation from 1985 to 1995. The Government of Punjab devised a scheme to denationalize schools and return them to their original owners in 1996. In Punjab, several schools belonging to the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. were denationalized and returned to the former owners in 1998. Other church-affiliated institutions, including the prestigious Kinnaird College, received or were granted administrative autonomy. Discussions currently are underway between the government of Punjab and the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. on the denationalization of Forman Christian College. Throughout 1999, religion-based political parties in Punjab opposed denationalization of schools.

The Constitution specifically prohibits discriminatory admission to any governmental educational institution solely on the basis of religion; however, students must declare their religion on their application forms. Muslim students must declare in writing that they believe in the unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Mohammed; non-Muslims must have their religion verified by the head of their local religious community. Many Ahmadis and Christians report that they face discrimination in applying to government educational institutions due to their religious affiliation.

The Constitution provides for the "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle, the Government does not restrict organized religions from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy. However, in practice, Ahmadis suffer from restrictions on this right. Several Ahmadi mosques have reportedly been closed; others have reportedly been violated. Ahmadis also are prohibited from being buried in Muslim graveyards.

In 1998 the Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution to change the name of the Punjab town that serves as the administrative religious center of the Ahmadi community. In March 1999, the son of a prominent Muslim fundamentalist filed charges with the police against two Ahmadi leaders, Mirza Masroor Ahmad and Colonel Ayyaz Mahmud (ret.) for allegedly instructing Ahmadi activists to write in the former Ahmadi name of the town (Rabwah) on a newly installed plaque. In April 1999, four Ahmadi leaders were arrested on blasphemy charges for allegedly inciting desecration of the plaque. The charges eventually were dropped and the four were released; however, they still face criminal charges under the Maintenance of Public Order Act.

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

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

Permission to buy land comes from one municipal bureaucracy, and permission to build a house of worship from another. With all religious groups, the process appears to be subject to bureaucratic delays and requests for bribes. In May 1999, the International Church of Karachi, an evangelical congregation serving missionaries, foreigners, and English-speaking Pakistanis, were denied permission to build after refusing to pay a large bribe. The congregation continues to meet in rented quarters.

The Constitution protects religious minorities against being taxed to support the majority religion; no one may be forced to pay taxes for the support of any religion other than his or her own. The majority Sunni Muslims are subject to the "zakat," a religious tax of 2.5 percent of their income, which is taken once a year from their bank accounts. Shi'a Muslims are exempted from the tax. Non-Muslims do not have a special tax.

The Government does not restrict religious publishing per se; however, the Government restricts the right to freedom of speech with regard to religion. Speaking in opposition to Islam and publishing an attack on Islam or its Prophet are prohibited. The Penal Code mandates the death sentence for anyone defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed, life imprisonment for desecrating the Koran, and up to 10 years' imprisonment for insulting another's religious beliefs with intent to outrage religious feelings. Although prosecutions appear to be few, the threat of the blasphemy law is ever present. The effectively suspended Anti-Terrorist Act stipulates imprisonment with rigorous labor for up to 7 years for using abusive or insulting words, or possessing or distributing written or recorded material, with intent to stir up sectarian hatred. No warrant is required to seize such material.

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

In December 1999, the Supreme Court ruled that charging interest is un-Islamic and directed the Government to implement an interest-free financial system by June 2001.

Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom

No estimate of the number of religious detainees exists; however, the Government has arrested and detained numerous Muslims and non-Muslims for their religious beliefs and practices under the blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws. The blasphemy laws were meant to protect both majority and minority faiths from discrimination or abuse; however, in practice these laws frequently are used by rivals and the authorities to threaten, punish, or intimidate religious minorities. Credible sources estimate that several hundred persons have been arrested since the laws were implemented; however, significantly fewer persons have been tried. Most of the several hundred persons arrested since 1989 have been released due to a lack of sufficient evidence. According to the Bishops' Conference of the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), religious minorities constitute a greater than expected proportion of the prison population. Prison conditions, except for the "class A" facilities provided to wealthy and politically high profile prisoners, are extremely poor and constitute a threat to the life and health of prisoners. According to the NCJP, non-Muslim prisoners do not enjoy the same facilities as Muslim inmates.

According to Ahmadi sources, 80 Ahmadis were implicated in criminal cases on a "religious basis" (including blasphemy) in 22 cases in 1999. Seven Ahmadis were charged in Bakhoo Bhatti, Punjab, with blasphemy on July 3, 1999. On July 19, 1999 two Ahmadis were charged in Muzaffargarh for preaching and distributing religious literature; the case later was transferred to an antiterrorist court at Dera Ghazi Khan. Ahmadi sources report that bail was denied; the two Ahmadis remained in prison as of mid-2000. On July 21, 1999, authorities reportedly arrested a man from District Sialkot, Punjab for issuing a call to prayer. On September 6, 1999, police officials arrested Dr. Abdul Ghani for preaching; he was denied bail by the antiterrorist court and remained in prison as of mid-2000. In September 1999, Azharur Rehman was arrested for preaching; his trial was underway as of mid-2000. On April 27, 2000 four Ahmadis were arrested for preaching in District Sialkot Punjab. According to Ahmadi sources, on July 30, 1999, a subdivisional magistrate ordered an Ahmadi mosque sealed in Naseerabad, Sindh; it remained sealed as of mid-2000. Ahmadi sources report that on September 8, 1999, police personnel

arrested an Ahmadi in Bahawalnagar, Punjab for building a place of worship. Officials reportedly closed the mosque and confiscated Ahmadi books and a copy of the Koran. On August 10, 1999, an Ahmadi from Mirpur Khas, Sindh was arrested for wearing a shirt with an inscription of the Kalima (Islamic creed) after he was attacked by extremists who tore the shirt off of him; the man remained in prison as of mid-2000. On September 8, 1999, police officials arrested an Ahmadi from Sialkot district for preaching his faith; he currently is serving a 10-year term in prison. On September 16, 1999, police arrested one Ahmadi in Daska, Sialkot district, Punjab, for preaching; his plea for bail was rejected and he remains in jail. On September 22, 1999 an Ahmadi from Jahanian Shah was arrested; he later was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment. Three Ahmadis were convicted of blasphemy in December 1997; they were found guilty and were sentenced to life imprisonment and \$1,250 (PRs 50,000) fines. Lawyers for the men appealed the decision to the Lahore high court, whose ruling had not been issued as of mid-2000. According to Ahmadi sources, 16 Ahmadis have been charged under the blasphemy laws since the October 12, 1999 coup.

In December 1999, several hundred persons looted and burned property in Haveli Lakha, Okara district, Punjab, which belonged to Mohammad Nawaz, a local Ahmadi leader accused of planning to build an Ahmadi house of worship. A neighbor reportedly incited the incident by accusing Nawaz of building the house of worship after the two were involved in a property dispute. Nawaz, a doctor, reportedly intended to build a free clinic next to his home. The mob destroyed the clinic and looted and burned Nawaz's home. According to Ahmadi sources, police personnel arrived at the scene, but did nothing to stop the crowd. As of mid-2000, neither the neighbor nor anyone in the crowd had been arrested or questioned in connection with the incident, and police took no steps to find or return any of Nawaz's property. However, Nawaz and his two sons were arrested and charged with blasphemy. Several days later, they were released on bail; however, the blasphemy case against them was pending as of mid-2000. Three other Ahmadis in Haveli Lakha also were charged with blasphemy in connection with the incident, even though they were not in town at the time.

Christian minorities also are frequent targets of the blasphemy laws. According to the NCJP, police arrested two Christians in 1998 for allegedly throwing pages of the Koran onto their neighbor's lawn; they were released on bail during the period covered by this report. In October 1999, Shafiq Masih was acquitted of a blasphemy charge, but was sentenced to 8 years' imprisonment for having uttered derogatory comments against the Prophet Mohammed; he is appealing the decision. In May 2000, a lower court in Sialkot district, Punjab, sentenced two Christian brothers to 35 years' imprisonment each and fined both of them \$1,500 (75,000 RS). The brothers were convicted of desecrating the Koran and blaspheming against the Prophet Mohammed; both cases were registered by an ice cream vendor who allegedly fought with the brothers after he asked them to use their own dishes, stating that his were reserved for Muslim customers. Lawyers for the brothers filed an appeal in the Lahore high court. On May 2, 2000, Augustine Ashiq

Masih was charged with blaspheming against the Prophet in Faisalabad. According to press reports, Masih converted to Islam, married a Muslim woman, and then converted back to Christianity, which angered local Muslims who brought the charges against him. Ayub Masih (detained since 1996) was convicted of blasphemy for making favorable comments about Salman Rushdie, the author of the controversial book, "The Satanic Verses," and was sentenced to death in April 1998. Ayub's family and 13 other landless Christian families were forced from their village in 1996 following the charges, and he survived an attempt on his life in 1997, when he was shot at outside of the courtroom while in trial. The case was pending appeal before the Lahore high court at the end of June 2000. In May 1998, police arrested a Christian in Sahiwal, Punjab for stoning a billboard that bore Islamic scripture; he remained in prison at the end of June 2000. Another Christian, Ranjha Masih, was arrested and charged with blasphemy for allegedly throwing stones at an Islamic sign in 1998; he remained in prison as of mid-2000.

Police also arrest Muslims under the blasphemy laws; government officials maintain that about two-thirds of the total blasphemy cases that have been brought to trial have affected Muslims. In September 1998, a Shi'a Muslim, Ghulam Akbar, was convicted of blasphemy in Rahimyar Khan, Punjab, for allegedly making derogatory remarks about the Prophet Mohammed in 1995. He was sentenced to death, the first time that a Muslim had been sentenced to death for a violation of the blasphemy law. The case was pending as of mid-2000.

In June 1999, two Muslim faith healers from Lahore were arrested for allegedly burning a copy of the Koran; the healers claimed to be burning evil spirits. Police officials later stated that they were suffering from mental illness. According to the NCJP, in October 1999, police officials arrested two Muslims from Bhati Gate Lahore, Punjab for allegedly burning a copy of the Koran; they were released on bail in early 2000.

In November 1999, an antiterrorist court in Sindh convicted two Muslim journalists of blaspheming the Prophet Mohammed; both journalists were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and a large monetary fine. In March 2000, an antiterrorist court in Sindh convicted Muslim author, Gohar Shahi in absentia under the blasphemy laws.

There are scattered reports that authorities interrogate persons due to their religious beliefs or practices.

The law regulates arrest and detention procedures; however, the authorities do not always comply with the law, and police arbitrarily arrest and detain citizens. Violence in Punjab has prompted the Government on several occasions to round up hundreds of members of religious extremist groups and students at religious schools (madrassahs) believed to be terrorist recruiting centers and training grounds. The police also arrested demonstrators, including members of religious minorities.

The Punjab government ordered a crackdown on extremists in early October 1999; as a result several hundred persons were arrested,

including the leader of the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Maulana Mohammad Azam Tariq, and SSP branch president Maulana Mohammad Ahmad Ludhianvi. Tariq was released after a year of imprisonment.

In July 1999, police personnel arrested four Hindus who had traveled to Islamabad from around the country to request visas for travel to India. According to credible sources, police interrogated the Hindus at length and subsequently released them.

The authorities sometimes prevent leaders of politico-religious parties from traveling to certain areas if they believe that the presence of such leaders would increase sectarian tensions or cause public violence.

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

There have been instances in which police have used excessive force against individuals because of their religious beliefs and practices. The police also have failed to act against persons who use force against other individuals due to their religious beliefs. Both the Christian and Ahmadi communities have documented instances of the use of excessive force by the police and police inaction to prevent violent, and often lethal, attacks on members of their communities. For example, both the Christian and Ahmadi communities claim that persons have been murdered because of their religious beliefs.

Police torture and other forms of mistreatment of persons in custody are common. However, there were no confirmed reports of torture of prisoners or detainees based on their religious beliefs during the period covered by this report. There were a number of deaths in police custody during the period covered by this report. Two of the persons who died in police custody were Christians; however, they were not arrested in connection with their religious beliefs. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Asif Masih was tortured and killed by police personnel in Gujranwala in early 2000; officials have not disclosed the reason for his arrest. The district magistrate ordered an inquiry; however, the inquiry results were not known by mid-2000. In September 1999, police personnel arrested Ilyas Masih, a Christian, on suspicion of possessing illegal firearms. According to the NCJP, Masih died as a result of being tortured in police custody. It is unclear if Masih's religion played any role in his death.

Ahmadis, Christians, and other minority groups also report that they experience harassment and discrimination in public sector employment. Religious minorities very rarely are promoted to senior ranks in civil service or the military.

Improvements in Respect for Religious Freedom

The Musharraf Government took several specific steps that slightly improved the situation of religious minorities. For example, Musharraf abandoned his predecessor's proposal to implement Shari'a law through

a constitutional amendment. In February 2000, Musharraf created a minority affairs portfolio and appointed a Christian to fill the position. According to persons in religious minority communities, the Musharraf Government made efforts to seek minority input into decision-making and offered cabinet positions to individuals from religious minority communities. The tenor of government-minority relations changed somewhat since the October 1999 coup. Hostile comments from government officials regarding minorities are less prevalent since the change in Government, and some officials in the Musharraf Government took steps to reach out to some minority communities.

In April 2000, the Government convened a human rights convention, which included representatives from most of the religious minority groups, stating that it was "imperative" that the country "build a culture" that was conducive to human rights. At the convention, Musharraf announced a proposed change in the implementation of the blasphemy laws. The proposed change was for local administrators, as presumably neutral parties, to review all accusations of blasphemy before a case is filed with police officials; however, the Musharraf Government did not implement this change due to strong opposition from some Muslim groups.

Government officials have discussed the possibility of eliminating the separate electorate system as a part of electoral reforms currently being considered; however, no specific steps were taken to implement this reform as of mid-2000.

Forced Religious Conversion of Minor U.S. Citizens

There were no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U.S. Citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

Section II. Societal Attitudes

Discriminatory religious legislation has encouraged an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which has led to acts of violence directed against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus, and Zikris. Members of religious minorities are subject to violence and harassment, and police at times refuse to prevent such actions or to charge persons who commit them.

There are many sectarian divisions in the country, growing intolerance for religious minorities within society, and violence between religious groups, particularly between rival Sunni and Shi'a organizations, frequently occurred during the period covered by this report. There were instances when the Government failed to intervene in cases of societal violence (also see Section I). One newspaper estimated that 300 persons were killed in sectarian attacks during the last 2 years. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that nearly 1,000 persons were killed in religious or ethnic violence each year since 1990.

A wave of violence occurred just prior to the October 1999 coup, which

claimed dozens of lives. Following the coup, there was a period of relative quiet until the traditionally tense Muharram period in April 2000, when a number of persons were killed in incidents of sectarian violence. Shi'a activists report that approximately 40 Shi'as have been killed since the coup.

On August 19, 1999, members of an extremist Shi'a organization, Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-Jafria (TJP), fired on a rally held by members of the rival Sunni militant group, Sipah-e-Sahabah Pakistan, killing Mohammed Khalid Rajput. On the following day, a Shi'a mourning procession was fired upon, although there were no casualties. Five persons were charged in connection with the killing of Rajput; three had been arrested by June 30, 2000. On September 6, 1999, an explosion in a madrassah in Karachi injured more than 20 persons; no arrests have been made in connection with this attack. On September 24, 1999, three members of the SSP killed Khurshid Anwar, the Secretary General of the TJP, his daughter, and his bodyguard, setting off a wave of sectarian violence. All three of the SSP leaders were arrested soon after the killing and later were released; no one has been charged with the murder. After Anwar's murder, Shi'a and Sunni extremist groups perpetrated numerous attacks in which more than 30 persons were killed. Among those killed were the president of the Gujranwala division of the TJP, Ijaz Hussain Rasool Nagri, on September 30, 1999; 9 worshipers in a Shi'a mosque in Karachi on October 1, 1999; the assistant inspector general of police in the NWFP, Farooq Haider, a Shi'a, on October 2, 1999; 5 students in a Sunni madrassah in Karachi on October 2, 1999; and Dr. Quaiser Abbas Sayyal, a relative of an advisor to the Prime Minister, along with several others, in a clinic in Lahore in early October 1999. On October 6, 1999, Nisa Ali Hazara, a Shi'a member of the Baluch assembly and the Baluchistan Education Minister, was shot and injured in Quetta by masked gunmen as his car left the Baluch assembly; his driver was killed. Also on October 6, 1999, two Shi'a homeopathic doctors, Al-e Hassan and Muttasim Hassan, were shot and killed at their home in Karachi by motorcycle gunmen; another doctor, Mohammad Nisar, an influential member of the Sunni Jamaat-i-Islam, was killed in Karachi earlier on the same day. Aun Mohammed Rizvi, a senior Shi'a official from the state-run television station, was shot and killed by motorcycle gunmen in Rawalpindi on October 7, 1999. On October 8, 1999, unknown assailants killed Syed Abbas Shah, president of the TJP, near Bhalwal.

On November 4, 1999, 3 explosions occurred in Murdike, where the Sunni militant group Lashkar-e-Taibe was holding its annual conference; 1 person was killed and more than 30 others were injured. On December 27, 1999, 13 Sunnis were killed and 6 were injured in Sikanderpur village, Haripur district, NWFP. The victims reportedly belonged to the SSP and were returning from the funeral of another SSP member and were killed by three Shi'as. On December 28, 1999, thousands of SSP members destroyed homes and shops belonging to local Shi'as after attending the funerals of those killed the previous day. As of mid-2000, no suspects were detained in connection with these events.

In August 1999, the leader of the Sunni religious party Jamiat Ulema-i-Islami (JUI) Fazlur Rehman, accused the Aga Khan Foundation of the killing of a Sunni religious leader and his nephew in Chitral and called for the closure of Aga Khan activities. The Sunni leader was killed by an Ismaili in a property dispute on August 19, 1999. (The Aga Khan Foundation is a community service organization sponsored by Ismaili Shi'as.)

On January 17, 2000, a bomb exploded in front of a Karachi mosque, killing 9 persons and injuring 25. No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

Several incidents of sectarian violence between rival Sunni and Shi'a groups occurred during Muharram, during which Shi'a Muslims mourn the deaths of the Prophet Mohammed's nephew, Ali and his son Hussain; this period highlights the major division between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims over whether Islam should be ruled by the codified Sunnah or by the lineal successors of the Prophet. On April 7, 2000, a Shi'a lawyer and the secretary general of TJP, Syed Waqar Hussain, his son, and his driver were killed by unknown gunmen in Karachi; the assailants may have been members of the extremist SSP. On April 12, 2000, in the worst incident of sectarian violence since the coup, unknown assailants attacked a Shi'a religious congregation in Mullowali, Rawalpindi, with grenades and bullets, killing 19 persons and injuring 37. Police personnel arrested several Sunni Muslims following the attack.

On April 19, 2000, unknown gunmen killed TJP activist, Iqbal Hussain in Multan. On April 26, 2000, unknown assailants killed TJP activist, Syed Farrukh Birjis Haider and his personal aide in Khanewal. On April 28, 2000, unknown gunmen killed local Shi'a leader Hakeem Syed Shahbaz Hussain Sherazi in Chishtian. On May 2, 2000, unidentified assailants killed a Shi'a doctor, his pharmaceutical dispenser, and a patient in the doctor's Karachi office. The next day, unknown assailants killed Shi'a lawyer, Malik Ibrar Hussain in Toba Tek Singh, Punjab. On May 15, 2000, unknown assailants killed Shi'a lawyer Syed Sardar Hussain Jafri. Unknown assailants also killed Qudratullah Cheema, the chief of the Ahmadi community of Khanpur, Punjab during the period covered by this report. On May 19, 2000, unknown assailants killed eminent Sunni cleric Maulana Yousuf Ludhianvi, and Abdur Rehman, a teacher at the Sunni Banuri Town religious school in Karachi; following these murders, hundreds of Sunni Muslims rioted in Karachi.

In March 2000, 12 men broke into the Lourdes Convent and attacked Sister Christine, a 78-year old nun; she died in a nearby hospital a few days later. According to the Christian Liberation Front (CLF), a nongovernmental organization (NGO), the perpetrators of the attack were Muslims who previously had accused Sister Christine of proselytizing. Police officials did not arrest anyone in connection with this attack. In May 2000, five masked men stopped a factory bus of female factory employees in Ferozewala and raped six to eight Christian girls who were passengers; the assailants reportedly spared the two

Muslim passengers on the bus. Initially, police officials urged the girls to report that were robbed, not raped; however, when the CLF complained to government officials, the officials immediately registered the cases as rape cases, arrested two suspects, and promised to investigate police behavior. Three of the suspects were charged under the Hudood Ordinances and are scheduled to stand trial in September 2000.

In July 1999, the Government released Sunni extremist leader Mohammad Azam Tariq, chief of the SSP, who had been arrested in May 1997 and charged with the murder of a former PPP Member of Parliament and in 58 other cases of murder, terrorism, and incitement to sectarian violence. The SSP and its militant offshoot, Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, frequently are involved in anti-Shi'a sectarian violence.

Sectarian violence among members of different religious groups continued to be a serious problem throughout the period covered by this report; Ahmadis, Christians and other religious minorities often were the targets of this violence. In September 1999, a mob raided a church in Sangla Hill, Punjab, allegedly attacking members of the congregation as they fled the church. In October 1999, a Sunni Muslim youth set fire to St. Peter's Catholic Church in Lahore. Police arrested the individual and charged him under the blasphemy laws; his case was pending as of mid-2000. In December 1999, a mob vandalized the home of an Ahmadi in Okara district, Punjab, in the presence of some members of the local administration; police officials reportedly charged the Ahmadi and his two sons under the blasphemy laws. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, in January 2000, persons broke into a church in Sialkot and desecrated religious literature.

In 1997 mobs looted and burned the Christian village of Shantinagar in Punjab. Local police participated in the attack and are suspected of having instigated the riot by inventing spurious charges that a Christian man had desecrated a copy of the Koran. Hundreds of homes and a dozen churches were destroyed, and 20,000 persons were left homeless. The Government has rebuilt damaged and destroyed homes, but has not provided compensation for personal property lost in the incident. The police officers accused in the incident were suspended temporarily; however, after their suspension they either were transferred or granted early retirement. The results of the official investigation of the incident were never made public; all of the 86 persons who were charged with offenses related to the attack remain free on bail and there was no indication that authorities planned to bring them to trial.

Most Ahmadis are home-schooled or go to private Ahmadi-run schools. Those Ahmadi students in public schools often are subject to abuse by their non-Ahmadi classmates. The quality of teachers assigned to predominately Ahmadi schools by the Government reportedly is poor. Christian students reportedly sometimes are forced to eat at separate tables in public schools that are predominately Muslim.

On some university campuses, well-armed groups of students, primarily from radical religious organizations, clash with and intimidate other

students, instructors, and administrators on matter of language, syllabus, examination policies, grades, doctrines, and dress. These groups facilitate cheating on examinations, interfere in the hiring of staff at the campuses, control new admissions, and sometimes control the funds of their institutions. At Punjab University, the largest university in the province, Islami Jamiat-e-Tulaba (IJT -- the student wing of the religious political party Jaamat-i-Islami) imposes its self-defined code of conduct on teachers and students.

Discrimination in employment is believed to be widespread (also see Section I). Christians in particular have difficulty finding jobs other than those of menial labor, although Christian activists say that the employment situation has improved somewhat in the private sector. There is a problem of bonded labor in Pakistan and, according to the Bishops' Conference of Pakistan's National Commission for Justice and Peace, the vast majority of bonded labor in certain sectors is non-Muslim. All are subject to the same conditions, whether they are Muslim, Christian, or Hindu. In September 1999, the Government removed colonial-era entries for "sect" from government job application forms to prevent discrimination in hiring. However, the faith of some, particularly of Christians, often can be ascertained from their names.

While many Christians are in the poorest socioeconomic groups, this may be due more to ethnic and social factors than to religion, per se. These factors also may account for a substantial measure of the discrimination that poor Christians face. In Karachi, the majority of Roman Catholics are Goan Christians, or descendants of Eurasian marriages. They often are light-skinned and are relatively well-educated and prosperous, in sharp contrast to their coreligionists (mostly members of evangelical denominations), who are often dark-skinned and poorly educated. Many poor Christians remain in the profession bequeathed by their low caste Hindu ancestors (most of whom were "untouchables"). Their lot, though somewhat better today than in the past, does not reflect any major progress in spite of over 100 years of consistent missionary aid and development.

Ahmadis also have limited chances for advancement into management levels in government service. Even the rumor that someone may be an Ahmadi or have Ahmadi relatives can stifle opportunities for employment or promotion.

Although there are few if any citizens who are Jewish, anti-Semitic sentiments appear to be widespread, and anti-Semitic articles in the press are relatively common.

On May 8, 2000, 19 religious parties and politico-religious groups announced their decision to launch a strike on May 19 to pressure the Government not to amend the blasphemy laws, as well as to reinstate Friday as the country's official weekly holiday, ban NGO's funded by Christian and Jewish groups, and abandon the idea of reforming the country's madrassahs. The religious parties cancelled the strike after they received assurances from the Government that the proposed amendments to the blasphemy laws would not be enacted. However, on

May 11, 2000, approximately 750 religious activists gathered to protest the proposed amendment to the blasphemy laws; some speakers at the protest said that if the blasphemy laws were amended, persons would be justified in killing blasphemers themselves (also see Section I.).

Section III. U.S. Government Policy

Advocacy, programming, and reporting on issues of religious freedom and persecution form a significant part of the work of the U.S. Embassy and the consulates in Pakistan. U.S. representatives maintain regular contacts with major Muslim and minority religious groups. U.S. representatives also maintain a dialog with government, religious, and minority community representatives to encourage religious freedom and to discuss problems. U.S. representatives closely monitor the situation and act when appropriate. For example, embassy officials and the Ambassador-at-Large for Religious Freedom met with high-level government officials in February 2000 to discuss the blasphemy laws, separate electorates for religious minorities, and the issue of impunity for violent sectarian groups. On an informal basis, the Embassy has assisted some Christian-affiliated relief organizations in guiding paperwork through government channels. The Embassy also has assisted local and international human rights organizations to follow up on specific cases involving religious minorities.

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