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## **The religious hate campaign prevented the burial of a one-and-a-half year-old child**

Asian Human Rights Commission (03.01.2014) - A one-and-a-half-year-old infant was buried four days after she died from pneumonia in Toba Tek Singh, Punjab province.\*  
 \*The girl, who was from an Ahmadi family, died on December 19, and was taken for burial the following day. At the cemetery the local clerics gathered with approximately fifty men who were armed with sticks and batons. The girl belonged to the Ahmadiyya sect of Islam, declared non Islamic through constitutional amendments. The men refused to let the Ahmadis bury the girl in the common graveyard and prevented them from digging the grave.

In Chak 312-JB Kathowali, Gojra, Toba Tek Singh, the Ahmadi and local Muslim population have lived together for six decades after the creation of Pakistan and the graveyard was used by both communities without dispute. However, from the last year the Muslim fundamentalist tried to introduce some families, particularly unmarried persons, who became busy instigating the people to agitate against the Ahmadis in order to dislodge them. Their campaign was not successful and the burial of the child gave them the reason they needed to punish the Ahmadis.

The family of the infant said that Muslim residents of the area had refused to let them bury their child in the neighbourhood graveyard because she was born to an Ahmadi family.

The child was finally buried on a piece of land donated by a non-Ahmadi Muslim resident of the village, some 300 metres away from the graveyard. The settlement was reached after the family of the deceased child staged a protest demonstration.

While persecution against Ahmadis is nothing new, it is appropriate to suggest that the increasing attacks against graves, graveyards and now the family of the dead child facing such inhuman treatment calls for serious concern from the civil society.

\*A woman was also denied the right to be buried \*

The prevention of the burial of Ahmadis in graveyards has become a campaign in Punjab province after the formation of the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as during the election campaign the ruling party made an electoral alliance with Muslim fundamentalists groups.

A woman who was married to a member of the Ahmadi community was also barred from burial in the city of Faisalabad, Punjab province. The wife of Iqbal Ranhja, a resident of Faisalabad district, died on December 27. When Ranhja and members of the Ahmadi community took the body for burial at the graveyard in Kathowali, a group of Muslims led by a local cleric intercepted them and asked them to bury the dead woman at some other place.

The situation became ugly but before the two groups entered into a brawl the police arrived and persuaded the Ahmadis to bury the lady elsewhere. The woman was buried far away from their home in order to avoid a sectarian riot.

The roll of the police in these cases is biased and they played into the hands of the religious fundamentalists. Instead of arresting the perpetrators and persons spreading religious hatred in society they sided with them, purportedly to preserve order. However, it was their sworn duty to ensure that the family members of every religious group enjoy their right to perform rituals.

The government of Punjab is fully aware that in the province a systematic campaign against the religious minorities, including Christians and Hindus, is about to boil over. The situation is not far from turning into full blown sectarian and communal violence. The behaviour of the government of Punjab is similar to that of the country in general, which is to turn a blind eye to religious intolerance and persecution in order to appease the fundamentalists.

In doing so the government is denying the minority religious groups of their constitutional rights of equal citizenship (Article 25) and freedom to profess the religion of their choice and to manage religious institutions according to Article 20 of the Constitution of Pakistan.

A death in any family is a sad and traumatic affair and it is at such times when all sympathy and patience should be extended to the survivors. To use religious hatred to prevent the deceased's family from performing this basic act of reverence for their family members is unconscionable. By allowing the fundamentalists to take the law into their own hands the government is failing in its duty to ensure that the society is balanced and that every citizen can have freedom according to their faith.

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## **2 persons sentenced to death in Pakistan for blasphemy**

Business Standard (29.12.2013) - Two persons were sentenced to death by a Pakistani court after it found them guilty of blasphemy, a media report today said.

Additional Sessions Judge Chaudhry Zafar Iqbal awarded death sentences to two men found guilty under the controversial blasphemy law.

According to the prosecution, Riaz Ahmed, 34, and Ijaz Ahmed, 38, residents of Haroonabad, devotees of Chaman Sarkar in Gujrat district, had claimed in 2011 that they had seen God.

Qari Muhammad Ahmed, 27, the complainant, a resident of Haroonabad, said that the convicts had also invited other people to join them in their union with God through Chaman Sarkar.

Malik Ghulam Qasim, the defence lawyer, told The Express Tribune that he would continue to fight against a law that could be easily misused to victimise innocent people.

"I tried my best to defend them," Qasim said.

"We seriously need to reconsider the blasphemy law and its enforcement," he said.

Judge Chaudhry Zafar Iqbal also slapped a fine of Rs 1 lakh on each of them.

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## **Jailed British Ahmadi Masood Ahmad in Pakistan blasphemy appeal**



Ahmadis are increasingly being persecuted under Pakistan's laws, activists say

BBC (25.12.2013) - A British man of the minority Ahmadi sect is appealing to the UK for help after being jailed in Pakistan on blasphemy charges. Human rights activists say laws in Pakistan, where Ahmadis are considered heretics, are being increasingly used to persecute the community, as the BBC's Saba Eitizaz reports.

It was a home video that turned a man viewed as the old neighbourhood doctor into a prisoner without bail.

Masood Ahmad shuffles through the dank prison corridor, smiling when he greets me. He looks weak and speaks little. And he worries - but not for his freedom.

"I just want you to tell my children that I am fine. It grieves me more that they must be so worried."

He asks me to convey this message to his seven children living in Britain and Australia.

Last month Mr Ahmad, 72, was arrested at his homeopathic clinic in Lahore on blasphemy charges.

Two people posing as patients came to him for treatment and had a conversation about religion instead.

They used mobile phones to secretly film him reciting a verse from the Koran, and then called the police to have him arrested.



Masood Ahmad says he felt "marked", but didn't see his arrest coming

The homeopathy practitioner belongs to the Ahmadi minority sect that a large number of Pakistanis view with suspicion because of a law declaring them to be non-Muslims.

Ahmadis, whose holy book is also the Koran, believe their own founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was a prophet, which most Muslims say contradicts mainstream Islamic teaching.

Ahmadis can be jailed for up to three years in Pakistan for "behaving like Muslims", having Muslim names or using Islamic terms for their places of worship or religious rituals.

**Human rights activists say the law** is now being used to push the Ahmadi community into a legal corner by right-wing religious groups in Pakistan. They are also open targets for sectarian violence by extremists.

"When you formalise persecution of minorities, you should expect extremist elements to take advantage of that, because that is what they thrive on," says human rights lawyer Asma Jehangir, who has raised the issue at several international forums.

Masood Ahmad says he felt "marked" even before he was picked up.

"Somebody had painted a black mark on my car and outside my house a few weeks before I was arrested, so I knew I was being watched."

He still did not see his arrest coming. After all, he had lived in the old neighbourhood of Anarkali since the late 1980s and had close ties with the community.

He is a Pakistani-British dual national who says he returned with a desire to raise his children with Pakistani values and to help people through his medicine.

According to police sources, almost 10 of his neighbours gave eyewitness testimony against him for preaching his faith.

He tells me that many of them also came to see him in jail, concerned for his wellbeing.

"I do not partake in religious debate. I am a doctor, a professional," he says.



Mohammad Hasan

Moawwiya says what he is doing is in line with the law

The official complaint registered is in the name of a local cleric who refused to speak to the BBC - but the phone number on it was traced to an activist called Mohammad Hasan Moawwiya, whose name appears in several similar cases against Ahmadis.

He is associated with an emerging group called The Khattam-e-Nabuwwat Lawyer's Forum - an extended legal wing of Khattam-e-Nabuwwat - a right-wing religious group that has also been associated with distributing hate literature and actively campaigning against the Ahmadiyya community in the past.

Mr Moawwiya says it is his legal and constitutional right to do so.

"After the law of 1984 was made, it doesn't mean that it should be neglected, it should be implemented actively," he says. "They [Ahmadis] should name their religion and names as separate to us Muslims, otherwise it's a violation and we are allowed by the law of the country to carry on our work."

However, huge mobs were reported outside the police station when Mr Ahmad was arrested, chanting "Be Qadri! Be Qadri!"

This was a reference to Mumtaz Qadri, the bodyguard of former Punjab Governor Salman Taseer who he killed for speaking out against the blasphemy laws in 2011. He is currently in jail but revered by many.

"The danger is not inside jail, the danger to me is outside," says Mr Ahmad, who is being kept under tight security in Lahore's District Jail.



Ahmadis now worship and remember their dead behind high walls and barbed wire

The same angry crowds are seen at every court hearing and Mr Ahmad fears the judges may feel pressurised while reaching a verdict. His lawyers have applied for bail twice, due to his old age and illness - but their attempts have failed. The court has cited "insufficient grounds for bail".

Mr Ahmed is now appealing to the British High Commission. "Have I killed or robbed anyone? I request the British government to help me ensure a fair trial. That is all I ask."

His daughter in Australia, Sophia Ahmad, says she is corresponding with the British High Commission and international legal charities to help her father.

"He is recovering from cancer, he is sick and needs medication. We are very worried for him," she told the BBC in Skype conversation.

According to Ahmadi groups, more than 20 cases have been registered against Ahmadis this year alone.

Many others remain in jail.

Another member of the community, Faisal, is still waiting for his 60-year-old father's release after he was jailed earlier this year for reading an Ahmadi newspaper.

The complaint was filed by Mohammad Hasan Moawwiya.

Faisal prays for his father at the Ahmadi mosque in Lahore that was violently attacked by militants with grenades and guns in 2010, killing more than 80 people.

Two of the gunmen arrested at the scene have still not been convicted.

The mosque now resembles an army barracks, with concrete blockades and volunteers from the community patrolling the area at Friday prayer time, shotguns and walkie-talkies at their sides, in order to protect worshippers.



These Ahmadi graves survived this year's attack - many others were desecrated

Close by is the Ahmadi graveyard, but you cannot tell from the outside.

High walls and barbed wire are all you can see, as well as a sniper on the rooftop.

Earlier this year, the entire western portion of the graveyard was destroyed by gunmen who broke through the walls, demolishing many gravestones.

Now a fortress has been built to protect the Ahmadi dead.

Meanwhile, Masood Ahmad waits for his verdict.

"I used to read about minorities being targeted in the newspapers," he says. "Now I'm in the news."

## **WHO ARE THE AHMADIS?**

- A minority Islamic sect founded in 1889, Ahmadis believe their own founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who died in 1908, was a prophet
  - This is anathema to most Muslims who believe the last prophet was Muhammad, who died in 632
  - Most Ahmadi followers live in the Indian subcontinent
  - Ahmadis have been the subject of sectarian attacks and persecution in Pakistan and elsewhere
  - In 1974 the Pakistani government declared the sect non-Muslim
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## **Christmas excitement marred by insecurity for Pakistani Christians after deadly year of attacks**

### ***Solidarity with Muslim neighbours the sole highlight of turbulent year***

World Watch Monitor (23.12.2013) - The decorations have been put up, carol services have begun and small celebrations are being planned, but the festive spirit is marred by anxiousness and insecurity among Pakistan's small Christian community.

This year has been one of the worst years for the country's roughly 4.5 million Christians, approximately 2.4 % of the population. In September 2013, 96 people were killed and some 130 wounded in [twin suicide attacks on a church in Peshawar](#) – the most deadly such attacks since independence.

"We love to celebrate Christmas, people love to go to church, but they are insecure this year," says Romana Bashir, one of the country's leading Christian activists. "They are conscious of the danger; they know the State can't control suicide attacks. If the State can't, what can the people do? They can only pray."

Security for Christians in Pakistan has deteriorated in recent years, but the attacks on All Saints Church in Peshawar were a turning point because they were the first targeted suicide attacks on the community and it sent out a message that their places of worship were no longer safe.

Arif Gill, also a Christian activist who works with the Peace and Development Foundation, says that this year's festivities are likely to be slightly lower in profile and that most sermons will be reflective of the September tragedy and other targeted attacks the community has faced.

In March this year a Muslim majority crowd went on a rampage in a Christian colony in Lahore, [burning two churches and more than 100 homes and shops](#).

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the Peshawar attack, but other militant groups such as the [Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan](#), operating in Punjab, have been responsible for spreading messages of hate and for a host of attacks targeting religious minorities in the country. Christian and other minority activists are critical of the government's role, accusing them of both tacitly supporting these groups and failing to provide security for minorities.

"The militants can do anything and get away with it. The government does nothing. They have complete impunity," said a minority activist who did not want to be named. In 2013, Pakistan was the highest riser in a [global ranking of countries where people are most under threat of mass killings](#).

While international attention focuses mainly on the Pakistani Taliban, there are a number of other Islamic extremist groups and preachers in Pakistan who also spread messages of hatred. They share a similar religious ideology, which views religious minorities and some Islamic sects as infidels. They preach messages of hate against these communities and at times publicly advocate for their killing.

"Intolerance has definitely risen in the last few years. I see and experience things now that were unheard of 20 years ago," says Iththisham Ravi, Christian theologian and youth worker in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan was formed in 1947, with its founder Mohamed Ali Jinnah famously stating: "You are free. You are free to go to your temples; you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State."

The country had constitutional provisions protecting minorities, though these were subsequently weakened by new laws brought in during the dictatorship of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in the late 1980s. [Zia-ul-Haq spearheaded an Islamisation campaign](#) that resulted in a number of constitutional and legal changes restricting the freedom of religion or belief of non-Muslims in the country.

"It is an ideology that is widespread now, that sees Muslims as being superior; others are heathens, infidels, unclean people. They are targets of hate speech and demonised in the eyes of the average Muslim," explains a Christian preacher who did not wish to be named.

The situation for Christians in particular worsened after the United States' 2001 'War on Terror', when they began to be seen as 'Western allies' and supportive of US policies. Politics and religion formed a toxic merger that penetrated every level of society, making people who had lived side by side for decades start to become suspicious of each other.

Activists explain that because of the vague wording of Pakistan's controversial blasphemy laws, they can easily be used against non-Muslims. There are also instances when blasphemy accusations are made against non-Muslims to settle non-religious scores.

"If you have a problem with your neighbour, or someone in your school or village, it is very easy to accuse them of blasphemy and have them arrested," an activist said. As a consequence, Christians and other non-Muslims live in a perpetual state of fear.

"I am very much in fear when I give my sermons because even if unintentional, I could be accused of saying something that offends Islam," Ravi says.

Despite these targeted attacks and rising insecurity, many Christians hold their Pakistani identity close to their hearts. Some have left the country in recent years, but most others are "well rooted and love their country," Bashir says. Their only demand is for increased security and protection, and an end to the targeting and discrimination. As a minority community, they face constant discrimination in education, employment and have weak political representation.

Bashir and Arif, however, explain that, despite a painful and difficult year for Christians, they experienced great solidarity from some Muslims in their towns and neighbourhoods.

“This year there have been so many attacks and so many religious groups which are targeted, so everyone feels insecure. People feel that if you are suffering, we are suffering, and at the community level we are all finding strength in each other,” says Bashir.

Arif explains that when he returned home after engaging in relief work to help victims of the Peshawar attacks, many of his Muslim neighbours visited him and expressed their concerns and condolences. In Lahore in October, in an unusual display of public solidarity, [hundreds of Muslims joined their Christians friends to form a human chain](#) around a church in protest of the suicide attacks.

Christians say that it is on this new-found sense of solidarity and strength that they are basing their hopes for 2014, a year which given Pakistan’s deteriorating security and human rights situation does not otherwise hold much promise for its religious minorities.

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## **Ahmedi doctor again denied bail on 'posing as Muslim' charge**

The Express Tribune (17.12.2013) – An additional district and sessions judge on Monday dismissed the after-arrest bail petition of a doctor accused of preaching Ahmedi beliefs and distributing books containing derogatory remarks against some prophets.

Dr Masood Ahmed said he had been implicated in a false case for ulterior motives. Advocate Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, counsel for the complainant, said Dr Ahmed had been nominated in an FIR with a specific role and the complainant had audio and video evidence to back his allegations.

Chaudhry said Dr Ahmed had preached Ahmedi beliefs to a patient and given him books containing blasphemous material.

Earlier, a magisterial court had previously dismissed Dr Ahmed’s post-arrest bail application.

The magistrate had said that prima facie, sufficient material was on record to connect Dr Ahmed with the offence.

Thus he was not entitled to bail at that stage.

The FIR registered under Section 298/C at the Old Anarkali police station on behalf of Maulana Muhammad Ehsan states that when he and some friends visited Dr Ahmed’s clinic a few days back the doctor preached Ahmedi beliefs and gave them some books containing derogatory remarks against some prophets.

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## **Pakistan’s churches increase security after Peshawar blasts**

***Officer dies guarding another church in Peshawar***

World Watch Monitor (06.12.2013) - Security around churches in Pakistan has increased since the deadly suicide blasts in Peshawar in September and the death of a police guard outside a church last month.

On September 22, [two suicide bombers blew themselves up outside the All Saints Church in Peshawar](#) when congregants were leaving the church after the Sunday service. Ninety-six people were killed and 133 were injured.

Then on November 19, a police constable, Muhammad Attaullah, was killed during a security operation outside another church in Peshawar.

Samson Simon Sharaf, Central Defence Secretary of Peshawar's provincial ruling political party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI), told World Watch Monitor that the Pakistan Ex-Servicemen Association is "providing security to 160 churches and it can be increased further".

Following the Peshawar blasts, the Pakistani police held meetings with church leaders in Christian areas, such as Bahar Colony in Lahore.

Rev. Dr. Liaqat Qaisar from the Full Gospel Assemblies Church in Bahar Colony said that police were working alongside church members to provide security on Sundays.

"The police instructed us to put barricades on the outside of the church, to keep the entrance clear and, rather than all the congregation leaving at the same time, worshippers should leave in small groups after the church ends," said Qaisar.

After the death of police constable Attaullah outside the Swati Gate Assemblies of God (AG) church in Peshawar, Deputy Superintendent of Police Fazal Wahid told World Watch Monitor that the incident had no religious dimension; rather that terrorists were attacking police everywhere.

The church administration, however, did not rule out the possibility of another attack on a church and added that the church had employed security guards for a number of years.

"The first time indiscriminate firing took place outside the church was in 2009, after which security has been permanently deployed," AG General Secretary Dr. Arshad Masih told World Watch Monitor.

He added that another police constable, Muhammad Shehzad, was killed outside the church on July 5.

In Lahore, three men were arrested on October 6, after they were spotted at a wedding in St. John's Catholic Church in Yahounabad.

The men, Pashtoon in origin, were spotted by security guards, who noticed that they were outsiders to the area and asked why they had come to the wedding. When they could not provide a reason, they were handed over to the police.

Locals say they have noticed Pashtoons (from the north-west region of Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan) moving into Yahounabad – one of the largest Christian settlements in South Asia – in recent years. They add that they are concerned not only by possible terrorist attacks, but also of increasing hostilities to the long-term residents, such as trying to manoeuvre them out of this prime area of the city, by buying up land.

Meanwhile, local media reported that there were fears that the Lohari Gate Presbyterian Church in the Anarkali area of Lahore may be a target for terrorist attacks.

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PTI Defence Secretary Sharaf added that churches were one of the most likely targets for such attacks.

“Christianity is seen as a symbol of Western cultural imperialism, which is why, after the Shiite and Barelvi [an offshoot of Sunni Islam] worship places, churches are the third target of hardliner terrorist groups,” he said.

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## **Christians accused of blasphemy over sale of fireworks**

***Two Pakistani Christians had to flee for their lives when they were accused of blasphemy over the sale of a set of fireworks wrapped in pages containing verses from the Quran***

Barnabas Fund (12.11.2013) - Arif Masih and Tariq Masih own a store in Thatta Faqirullah, Wazirabad, that sells fireworks. On 27 October, a Muslim man bought a set for his wedding party; when some of the fireworks failed to go off, guests opened up the packets and found that the powders were wrapped in pages containing verses from the Quran.

The wedding party then destroyed the Christians' store and reported Arif and Tariq to the police. Some made threats that if the police did not take action, they would track down and kill the pair.

Fearing for their lives, Arif and Tariq fled the area along with their families. They are protesting their innocence. Tariq said that they only sell the fireworks; they do not manufacture them:

*We buy them from a factory near Gujranwala and we do not know what materials they use. Moreover, these factories are owned by Muslims and no Christian works inside there.*

*We have not even touched the pages of the Quran. The idea of using these pages for fireworks is beyond all imagination because we are well aware of the consequences.*

Under section 295-B of the [Pakistan](#) Penal Code, desecration of the Quran is punishable by life imprisonment, while section 295-C prescribes the death penalty for defiling the name of Muhammad.

Christians and other minorities are particularly vulnerable to malicious, false accusation. Those accused, however tenuously, are often subject to vigilante justice by enraged Muslims.

### ***Christian woman exonerated***

In a case with a more positive outcome, a Christian woman accused of blasphemy was exonerated with the help of a Muslim leader who came to her defence.

Asia Masih (50), who lives in Faisalabad, was seen burning some papers in her garden on 29 October by two Muslim students. They saw Arabic writing on some of the papers and assumed that they were pages from the Quran.

They knocked on her door and accused her of blasphemy, prompting her to flee with her family.

A Christian activist sought the help of a local Muslim leader, to whom he presented evidence of Asia's innocence. The Muslim examined the papers and made a public statement explaining that the pages were not from the Quran but from a school book in Arabic. The Islamic leader also called on Muslims to "properly evaluate the facts" before making accusations, saying that they end up only "fomenting hatred and division".

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## **Faisalabad: Muslims and Christians together to exonerate a woman accused of blasphemy**

***Two Muslim students report a 50 year old Christian for having burned pages of the Koran . In reality it was a text book in Arabic. Efforts of Islamic leader key to saving woman who is now in hiding for fear of retaliation. His invitation to all to "properly evaluate the facts" and not "stir up divisions."***

Asia news (05.11.2013) - The active collaboration between Muslim religious leaders and Pakistani Christian activists has allowed, once again, the peaceful resolution of an alleged case of blasphemy against a poor woman (and innocent), belonging to a religious minority. The incident occurred in recent days in Faisalabad, Punjab, the province with the largest Christian community. The case has many similarities with that of Philip Masih and his family [as recounted by AsiaNews](#), who was indicted for no reason and escaped trial thanks to the seminal contribution of Muslim leaders and police forces. The peaceful resolution of the story has prevented an escalation of tension, which often has exploded into attacks against entire communities ([Gojra, in 2009](#)). The names of the protagonists have been changed for security reasons.

Asia Masih, 50, last week moved into a rented house in Chamanzar Colony, Faisalabad. On the second day, Oct. 29, after cleaning the apartment she burned some remains in the garden. Two Muslim students, observing the scene, saw a few pages written in Arabic among the remains on fire and immediately thought they were pages of the Koran. A few minutes later they knocked on her door, accused her of having committed the crime of blasphemy which in Pakistan is punished with life imprisonment or the death penalty.

Terrified by this serious accusation, Asia fled with her family and is hidden in a secret and safe place, where she is still - for fear of retaliation - even if the story has had a positive outcome.

The intervention of a Christian activist (identified with the initials RD) and the collaboration of a Muslim religious leader were fundamental to the peaceful resolution of the case. The first, a member of the Human Rights Defender Network, collected evidence of the innocence of the woman. In a second step he approached the Islamic leader, belonging to the Peace Committee of the city, which has offered its cooperation to analyze the facts and exonerate the Christian family of the charges, proving its innocence in front of the entire city.

The Islamic expert's statement was key, according to whom the burned pages "are not from the Koran, but a school book in Arabic," and he has also called on Muslims to "properly evaluate the facts," before launching heavy accusations because they end up only "fomenting hatred and division".

Speaking to AsiaNews, Iftikhar Ahmed , coordinator of the NGO South Asia Partnership - Pakistan appreciates those who " settle such delicate issues using wisdom." He adds that religious leaders "need to promote peace and harmony in their speeches, in order to create a more prosperous society". This is echoed by the Christian activist Naseem Anthony who calls for constitutional reforms and amendments to the laws, together with a culture that promotes tolerance towards other religions and faiths.

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## Persecution of Ahmadis in September 2013

Asian Human Rights Commission (17.10.2013) - Following are excerpts from the press release of the Ahmadyya Jamat Report on the Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan, September 2013. The full report may be seen at <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/forwarded-news/pdf/AHRC-FPR-047-2013.pdf/view>.

In the month of September persecution against Ahmadis continued in Pakistan. In Orangi Town on September 18, Mr. Ijaz Ahmad Kiyani was shot dead by unknown assailants at 7:30 a.m. He had left home for work but had not gone far when two men coming from the opposite side on a motorcycle fired several shots at him. He was hit six times; one bullet caught him in his left hand; four hit him in the chest and one in the head. He is believed to have died instantly.

Mr. Kiyani was 27 and worked as a driver in an army establishment. He is survived by his parents, a wife, five-year old daughter and a two-year old son.

Spokesmen for Jamaat Ahmadiya, Mr. Saleemuddin, expressed his grief and anguish over this incident and said that despite such target-killings happening in Karachi for a long time the authorities have failed to put a stop to them. "Four Ahmadis have been killed in Karachi for their faith during the past month. We refuse to be intimidated by the killing of innocent Ahmadis because we have faith in Allah", he said. He went on to say that, ".....our adversaries are wrong to assume that their barbarous activities would make any Ahmadi lose faith. The government should be mindful of its duty and should stop the proliferation of hate literature that incites the public to kill Ahmadis". In the recent past conferences were held in the sacred name of Khatme Nabuwat throughout the country in which hatred and violence against Ahmadis was preached and the audience were incited against Ahmadis through edicts of *Wajibul Qatl* (must be killed).

A fortnight earlier, another Ahmadi Malik Ejaz Ahmad, was target-killed in Karachi on September 4, 2013. Mr. Kiyani's was the fourth such murder in four weeks.

In Gowalmandi on September 12, Dr. Qazi Munawwar was leaving his clinic for home when he was approached by a youth who threw acid on him before escaping. Dr. Munawwar's clothes were burnt and he was injured. The nearby shop-keepers shifted him to the emergency ward in Meo Hospital. Fortunately his face escaped harm, and the injury was not grave. Dr. Munawwar is an active member of the Ahmadiyya community in Lahore.

The desecration of Ahmadiyya mosques by state authorities continues.

**Ahmadi Persecution: Police bow to clerics to tear down minarets  
Group demands further demolitions at Ahmadi places of worship**

By Rana Tanveer -- published September 22, 2013

**Lahore:** Police demolished minarets at an Ahmadi place of worship in Sialkot on Saturday, after a group of protesters threatened to do so themselves, The Express Tribune has learnt.

The police approached the community on Friday after a local cleric complained that three worship places for Ahmadis had features that resembled mosques, namely minarets and verses from the Quran written on the walls.

The minarets and verses were covered up, apparently to the police's satisfaction, but a baying mob gathered at one worship place the next day and demanded that the minarets be torn down. The police did so. The group of protesters is now demanding that similar action be taken against two other worship places within a couple of days.

The cleric whose complaint led to the action told The Express Tribune that he had approached the police after he attended a Khatm-i-Nabuwwat Conference on September 7, marking the anniversary of the passage of anti-Ahmadi laws, where a speaker said that Ahmadis were not allowed to build minarets or use verses from the Quran at their places of worship.

Sections 298-B and 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code outlaw Ahmadis from calling their place of worship a masjid, claiming to be Muslims or preaching their faith to others.

The police are employed and paid to enforce the law but instead acted blatantly to violate the law they are sworn to protect. Of course the officers enjoy full support of their departmental and political superiors at the highest level who were also guilty under the provisions of the following clause of the Pakistan Penal Code:

PPC-295. Injuring or defiling places of worship, with intent to insult the religion of any class. Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion or any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

In Chak no. 43, also in the month of September some miscreants hurled abuse at Ms. Saadia Tabassum, a teacher in Sargodha, Punjab. They shouted slogans against her and stopped her from going to the school. She is a teacher in the local Government Elementary School and was falsely accused of preaching Ahmadiyyat to students. This agitation was immediately reported to the authorities who arrived at the scene and rescued her.

It is learnt that the miscreants wanted to have one of their relatives appointed in place of Ms. Tabassum. They co-opted the Mullas of the Khatme Nabuwwat faction and planned a procession. They were unable to succeed as some elders of the area intervened. The students and principal of the school refused to testify against her. The miscreants used the services of a peon of the school in their support.

Ms. Tabassum has been temporarily suspended from the school under the circumstances. She has been advised not to go to the school until the situation improves.

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## **Resolution of the European Parliament on persecution against Christians**

European Parliament (10.10.2013) -

European Parliament resolution of 10 October 2013 on recent cases of violence and persecution against Christians, notably in Maaloula (Syria) and Peshawar (Pakistan) and the case of Pastor Saeed Abedini (Iran) (2013/2872(RSP))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its resolutions of 15 November 2007 on serious events which compromise Christian communities' existence and those of other religious communities<sup>(1)</sup>, of 21 January 2010 on recent attacks on Christian communities<sup>(2)</sup>, of 6 May 2010 on the mass atrocities in Jos, Nigeria<sup>(3)</sup>, of 20 May 2010 on religious freedom in Pakistan<sup>(4)</sup>, of 25 November 2010 on Iraq: the death penalty (notably the case of Tariq Aziz) and attacks against Christian communities<sup>(5)</sup>, of 20 January 2011 on the situation of Christians in the context of freedom of religion<sup>(6)</sup>, of 27 October 2011 on the situation in Egypt and Syria, in particular of Christian communities<sup>(7)</sup>, and of 13 December 2012 on the annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2011 and the European Union's policy on the matter<sup>(8)</sup>,
- having regard to its recommendation to the Council of 13 June 2013 on the draft EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief<sup>(9)</sup>,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief,
- having regard to the statement of 23 September 2013 by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission, condemning the attack on the Christian community in Peshawar, Pakistan,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 21 February 2011 on intolerance, discrimination and violence on the basis of religion or belief, as well as the Council conclusions of 16 November 2009 underlining the strategic importance of freedom of religion or belief and of countering religious intolerance,
- having regard to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief of 1981,
- having regard to the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,
- having regard to Rules 122(5) and 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the European Union has repeatedly expressed its commitment to freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and freedom of thought, and has stressed that governments have a duty to guarantee these freedoms throughout the world; whereas political and religious leaders have a duty at all levels to combat extremism and promote

mutual respect among individuals and religious groups; whereas the development of human rights, democracy and civil liberties is the common base on which the European Union builds its relations with third countries and has been provided for by the democracy clause in the agreements between the EU and third countries;

B. whereas, according to international human rights law and Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in particular, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; whereas this right includes freedom to change one's religion or belief, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest one's religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching; whereas, according to the UN Human Rights Committee, the freedom of religion or belief protects all beliefs, including theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs;

C. whereas several UNHRC resolutions call on 'all States, within their national legal framework, in conformity with international human rights instruments, to take all appropriate measures to combat hatred, discrimination, intolerance and acts of violence, intimidation and coercion motivated by religious intolerance, including attacks on religious places, and to encourage understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of belief or religion';

D. whereas according to various reports, government repression and social hostility against individuals and groups from various religious or belief backgrounds are on the increase, in particular in Pakistan, Arab Spring countries and parts of Africa; whereas in some cases the situation facing Christian communities is such as to endanger their future existence and, if they were to disappear, this would entail the loss of a significant part of the religious heritage of the countries concerned;

(...)

### ***Peshawar, Pakistan***

I. whereas on 22 September 2013, in a double suicide bomb attack on the All Saints Church in Kohati Gate, a suburb of Peshawar, at least 82 people were killed and over 120 injured;

J. whereas the Islamist group Jundullah with links to Tehrik-i-Talibaan Pakistan claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it would continue with attacks on Christians and non-Muslims because they are enemies of Islam and would not stop until US drone attacks in Pakistan cease; whereas Tehrik-i-Talibaan Pakistan denied any involvement in the blast and having any links with Jundullah;

K. whereas Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, condemned the attack, saying that targeting innocent people is against the teachings of Islam;

L. whereas Christians, who represent about 1,6 % of the population in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, suffer from prejudice and sporadic bouts of mob violence;

M. whereas the majority of Pakistani Christians lead a precarious existence, often fearful of allegations of blasphemy, a subject which can provoke outbursts of public violence;

N. whereas on 9 March 2013, Muslims in Lahore torched more than 150 Christian homes and two churches in response to an allegation of blasphemy;

O. whereas Pakistan's blasphemy laws make it dangerous for religious minorities to express themselves freely or engage openly in religious activities;

(...)

### ***Peshawar, Pakistan***

9. Strongly condemns the attack on the All Saints Church in Peshawar and the other recent terrorist attacks;

10. Welcomes the widespread condemnation of the attacks by political players and sections of Pakistan's civil society;

11. Urges the Government of Pakistan to do everything in its power to bring the perpetrators of the attack on the All Saints Church in Peshawar to justice; calls for stronger action to ensure the protection of all Pakistani citizens – regardless of their religion or belief – and to bring to justice all groups and individuals responsible for inciting and carrying out acts of terror;

12. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to take action to protect victims of religiously motivated mob violence, to actively address religious hostility by societal actors, to combat religious intolerance, acts of violence and intimidation, and to act against the perception of impunity;

13. Is deeply worried about the growing danger for Christians in Pakistan, given the recent rise in attacks on this minority, such as the persecution of hundreds of Christians by Islamic zealots in March in Lahore over allegations of blasphemy against Islam;

14. Is deeply concerned about the general situation facing religious minorities in Pakistan, and especially the Christian churches, which have received threats from the Taliban and other extremist groups;

15. Expresses its deep concern that the controversial blasphemy laws are open to misuse that can affect people of all faiths in Pakistan; expresses its particular concern that use of the blasphemy laws, which were publicly opposed by the late Minister Shahbaz Bhatti and by the late Governor Salman Taseer, is currently on the rise to target Christians in Pakistan;

16. Calls on the Government of Pakistan to carry out a thorough review of the blasphemy laws and their current application, in particular Sections 295 B and C of the Penal Code, which prescribe mandatory life sentences (295 B and C) or even the death penalty (295 C) for alleged acts of blasphemy;

17. Recalls that freedom of religion and minority rights are guaranteed by Pakistan's constitution; encourages all Pakistanis to work together to promote and ensure tolerance and mutual understanding;

18. Welcomes the measures taken in the interest of religious minorities by the Government of Pakistan since November 2008, such as establishing a five per cent quota for minorities in the federal job sector, recognising non-Muslim public holidays and declaring a National Minorities Day;

(...)

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## **Religious tension in Pakistan as Muslims dig up Hindu grave**

Reuters (08.10.2013) - A crowd of Islamic fundamentalists dug up the grave of a Hindu man in Pakistan, police said on Tuesday, in the latest sign of growing religious tension in the increasingly unstable province of Sindh.

Shouting "Allahu Akbar", or "God is greatest", the crowd dug out the body and dragged it through the streets of the southern town of Pangrio in a dispute over the location of the grave.

"Tensions are still running high, but we are in control of the situation," district police chief Shaukat Ali Khatian said. "The incident was caused by some clerics of the extremist outfit of Ahle Sunaat Wal Jamaat, but later other Muslims joined in and dug up the body and threw it away."

Hindus and Muslims have lived side by side and shared graveyards in Sindh for centuries, but tension has been on the rise recently as extremists make increasingly aggressive inroads into the rural parts of the province. Sindh is home to most of Pakistan's small Hindu community, which numbers about 2 million among a population of roughly 180 million.

Pakistan's rocky relationship with neighboring India, a predominantly Hindu country, has fed tension between the two communities in smaller towns, such as Pangrio. The Hindu man, Bhoro Bheel, 30, had died in a road accident and was buried on Saturday, in line with caste tradition. The subsequent desecration sparked demonstrations and forced police to step up street patrols.

"Even our dead are not safe anymore in their graves," Narayan Das Bheel, a member of the Hindu community, told Reuters.

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## **European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief strongly condemns attack on the All Saints Church in Pakistan**

EPWG on FoRB (23.09.2013) - The European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief, co-chaired by Dennis de Jong (SP) and Peter van Dalen (ChristenUnie), strongly condemns the suicide attack on the All Saints church in Peshawar, Pakistan on Sunday. The suicide attack was targeted to attack Christians as an estimated 500 people were attending Sunday mass. The attack killed 81 and wounded 140 and was the worst attack in the history of Pakistan's Christian community. Following the attacks protestors gathered outside the church to protest against the provincial government's failure to provide security to worshipers. The Jundullah wing of the Pakistani Taliban have claimed responsibility.

There has been an increase in social hostility against Pakistan's religious minorities with this bombing following a series of other attacks against religious minorities in Pakistan. In recent months, there have been suicide attacks against Pakistan's Shia minorities resulting in many deaths and people injured. Furthermore there have also been a lot individual cases of religious minorities being threatened or killed. Religious violence in Pakistan is rooted in deep antagonism in the country that exists toward minorities.

The European Parliament Working Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief calls on the Pakistani government and the provincial government to find the culprits of the attack and bring them to justice. The Working Group also call upon the government to tackle social

hostility against religious minorities and to make sure that crimes are punished and that the government provide security to religious minorities so that they can practise their faith openly and safely.

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## **Suicide bombing at Peshawar church**

### ***Two suicide bombers blow themselves up as hundreds leave a church in Peshawar - in Pakistan's deadliest ever attack on Christians.***

Sky news (22.09.2013) - At least 78 people have been killed in a double suicide bomb attack on a Christian church in northwest Pakistan, officials say.

Another 120 people were wounded when the two bombers blew themselves up as worshippers left the church in the city of Peshawar, which had been offering a free meal of rice.

At least 34 women and seven children were among the dead, said Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan.

Nazir John, one of those at the church, said: "There were blasts and there was hell for all of us.

"When I got my senses back, I found nothing but smoke, dust, blood and screaming people.

"I saw severed body parts and blood all around."

Peshawar commissioner Sahibzada Anees told reporters the bombers struck when the service had just ended.

"Most of the wounded are in critical condition," he said, adding that special security had been in force to protect the church.

"We are in an area which is a target of terrorism and within that area there was a special security arrangement for the church.

"We are in a rescue phase and once it is over we will investigate what went wrong."

Witnesses said they heard two blasts, the second more powerful than the first.

Najeeb Bogvi, a senior police officer, said: "After the service ended, people started to come out and the suicide bomber rushed towards them."

Schoolteacher Nazir Khan, 50, said: "A huge blast threw me on the floor and as soon as I regained my senses, a second blast took place and I saw wounded people everywhere." It is the country's deadliest ever assault on Christians.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's office said in a statement: "The prime minister said that terrorists have no religion and targeting innocent people is against the teachings of Islam and all religions.

"He added that such cruel acts of terrorism reflect the brutality and inhumane mindset of the terrorists."

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, but suspicion will most likely fall on one of the country's many Islamic militant groups.

Islamic militants have been blamed for previous attacks on the Muslim country's Christian minority, and other Muslim groups they consider heretics.

Christians make up about 4% of Pakistan's population of 180 million.

To watch a video, click on the link at the side of the page:  
<http://news.sky.com/story/1144982/pakistan-suicide-bombing-at-peshawar-church>

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## **Innocent Ahmadis continue to be harassed persecuted and murdered while the government looks on**

AHRC (11.09.2013) - Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan continue to be persecuted, prosecuted, humiliated, harassed, tortured and subjected to target killings. In the very recent past hundreds of Ahmadis have been murdered for their faith and belief and this horrifying brutality continues under the very eyes of the Government who take no notice or action and blatantly allow the culprits to go scot-free.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community keeps the world aware of such atrocities in the hope that the international community will raise their voices against such inhumane, cruel practices and pressurise Pakistan to honour its commitments to the International Code of Conduct, the UNDHR, the values and principles of democracy and the promises made in its very own Constitution.

Once again the Asian Human Rights Commission is sharing with our readers the murder of three more innocent Ahmadis during the past weeks.

The details of these murders are as follows -

On September 4 Ijaz Ahmad, was killed for his faith in Orangi Town, Karachi. He was 36 years old. He left his house for work as usual in the morning and on the way two unidentified motorcyclists came close to him and shot him at point blank range; the bullet struck him in the head and he died while being transported to the hospital.

Ahmad is survived by his wife and three children.

He had a good reputation in the area and did not have any vendetta with anyone. He was targeted purely for his faith and for being an Ahmadi. His brother-in-law, Mr Muhammad Nawaz, was also killed in Orangi Town last year for the same reason.

On August 31 an Ahmadi doctor was murdered in his clinic. On the basis of religious hatred, homeopathy doctor, Syed Tahir Ahmad was shot inside his clinic in Landhi, Karachi, even as he was seeing patients. He was 55 years-of-age. The murderers came in the guise of patients and shot at him in full view of his actual patients. He succumbed to his wounds while being taken to hospital.

Dr. Syed Tahir Ahmad is survived by his wife and five children. He was highly respected for his conduct in the area and had no personal vendetta with anyone -- he was also killed simply for his faith.

On August 21 another Ahmadi, Zahoor Ahmad Kiyani, was the victim of a target killing on the grounds of religious hatred in Karachi. He was 40-years-old and a resident of Mujahid Colony, Karachi. He was gunned down outside his house by two unidentified motorcyclists at 11.30 in the morning. He is survived by his wife and seven children. Like the other victims, he had a good reputation in the area and had no enmity with anyone.

These are the latest tragic incidents which have become the fate of Ahmadis in Pakistan. The Government authorities intentionally deny Ahmadis any protection or security. The judiciary too takes no notice of Ahmadi cases and Ahmadis are discriminated against in every sector of life.

The Worldwide Ahmadiyya Community once again pleads with the international community to do whatever can be done to bring to an end this barbarity and stop those who freely publish and distribute hate material against Ahmadis publically inciting people to kill them.

There will be no democracy, peace or prosperity in Pakistan until it honours the very founding values of human dignity and fundamental freedoms of all without any discrimination of faith or belief.

The Asian Human Rights Commission calls on President Mamnoon Hussain to honour the commitments Pakistan has made to the international community and the promises contained in the Constitution of Pakistan to protect freedom of religion and the minorities of his country. Freedom of religion in Pakistan is guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan for individuals and religious sects. However this freedom is declared subject to "reasonable restrictions". In no way can "reasonable restrictions" justify murder!

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## **Pakistani Christians ensure police arrest key murder suspect**

### ***Refusal to bury body until criminal case 'due process' starts***

World Watch Monitor (12.08.2013) - Hundreds of Pakistani Christians braved scorching summer heat for three days and two nights in agricultural fields to ensure that police would register the alleged murder of a Punjabi agricultural smallholder in front of his two children.

45-year-old Ishaq Masih, a resident of a village in the Okara district, near Lahore, was shot dead on July 27, his children say, by a man named Muhammad Luqman (alias Ranjha) who, accompanied by others, had illegally occupied Masih's land.

Fearing the police would not follow "due process" as a minority Christian was involved, local Christians rushed to the scene. They then refused to bury the body for three days (contrary to Pakistani practice of burial the next day) until police had agreed to register the murder, arrest two of the suspects and conduct an autopsy.

On July 29, police promised that they would arrest all other suspects (including Ranjha) within a week, but only if the Christians would bury Masih, and then disperse peacefully. The protesters agreed, and Catholic Father James Bahadur buried Masih that night.

Police, however failed to arrest prime suspect Ranjha by their self-imposed deadline of August 5, the outcome Bahadur and others had feared. (Meanwhile seven suspected accomplices were released on bail).

According to Masih's children, events leading up to his death went as follows.

On the morning of July 27, Masih learned that Ranjha had illegally occupied one acre of his agricultural land and was sowing sweetcorn seeds. Masih went with his 12-year-old daughter Saima and 15-year-old son Irshad to see for himself.

Saima told World Watch Monitor: "As we reached [the field], suddenly about eight men on motorbikes encircled us."

Irshad added: "About four men started beating my father and dragged him around. They threw him on the ground and then Ranjha fired a shot at my father, which hit the right side of his chest."

The teenage boy said that as soon as his father had been shot, about four of the assailants led him to a nearby farmhouse. "They beat me and pressured me to confess to the police that I killed my father, or else they would kill me," he said.

Only 12-year-old Saima was left with her father gasping in agony. "We were carrying some food and water. When my father asked for water in his pain I hurried to give it to him, but Ranjha slapped me and slopped the water on the ground."

While Masih was dying, she says one of his assailants called the emergency services and urged them to attend. She says he told them that Irshad had killed his father in a family fight, after which the men had held the boy.

People had already gathered by the time the police arrived. Onlookers told the police that Ranjha had taken Irshad hostage after Ranjha had shot Masih. The police then set Irshad free, but did not arrest Ranjha or any of his alleged accomplices at that time.

Soon Christians from nearby villages gathered and decided not to bury Masih's body until the police arrested the alleged assailants.

Okara is the main district in Pakistani Punjab where the peasants' movement for land rights is very strong, and mainly organised by Christian leaders. This alleged murder of a landowner therefore has larger implications for that movement, as well as the local Christian community.

The Chairman of Anjuman Muzareen Punjab (Tenants' Association of Punjab) Younus Iqbal, citing local political and criminal 'undue influence', alleged that the police "never arrested killers of Christians".

In 2008 Javed Masih (a Christian politician) and in 2012 Akram Masih were both killed in Okara; in both cases police let the suspects go with impunity, Iqbal said.

"The killing of Christians will stop when culprits will be brought to justice. So, this time we decided not to bury the dead until the suspects were arrested," he said.

Local sources told World Watch Monitor that the local police station registered a First Information Report (FIR) after yielding to the adamant stance of the Christians. The police then conducted raids and initially arrested Muhammad Sultan (alias Kali) and Muhammad Ramzan, Ranjha's brothers.

Deputy Superintendent Saadullah Khan told World Watch Monitor the police had pledged in writing to arrest all the remaining suspects by August 5.

Such assurances, according to Aneeqa Maria Akhtar, Coordinator for The Voice, an organisation working for religious freedom through litigation, are "unique", but have now proved to be false.

Akhtar said her legal team would contest the bail petitions, to be heard on August 24.

An autopsy carried out at the Okara District Headquarters Hospital confirmed that the death was caused by a wound inflicted by a "firearm weapon".

Akhtar said that while the autopsy report agreed with the FIR, she had little hope the police would be impartial. "If the police station will not be impartial, then we will get the investigation changed," she said.

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## **Statistics on targeted violence against religious communities**

USCIRF (07.08.2013) - Pakistan is a diverse society with various ethnic and religious minorities. According to Western religious freedom and human rights monitoring groups, religious minorities in Pakistan face severe discrimination. There are so many surveys taken by so many groups and one of these surveys taken on January 2012 to June 2013.

The Pakistan Religious Violence Project, an undertaking of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, tracked over the past 18 months publicly-reported attacks against religious communities in Pakistan. The findings are sobering: 203 incidents of sectarian violence resulting in more than 1,800 casualties, including over 700 deaths. The Shi'a community bore the brunt of attacks from militants and terrorist organizations, with some of the deadliest attacks occurring during holy months and pilgrimages.

While Shi'a are more at risk of becoming victims of suicide bombings and targeted shootings, the already poor religious freedom environment for Christians, Ahmadis, and Hindus continued to deteriorate, with a number of violent incidents occurring against members of these communities. The information the Project gathered is based on reports and news articles available in the public domain.

The Project seeks to be inclusive, tracking all reported incidents involving physical attacks targeting a member of a religious community or a major religious gathering place (church, shrine, or mosque).

However, it is not exhaustive and some acts of violence are certain to have been overlooked. While each incident has not been independently verified, the accompanying Factsheet provides a hyperlink to the supporting documents.

The Project's findings paint a grim and challenging picture for the new government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. It was positive that the Prime Minister raised concerns about religious minorities

during his maiden speech before the National Assembly, as well as travelled to Quetta after a recent bombing targeting Shi'a and tasked his government to act. However, concrete, resolute action is needed to ensure that perpetrators of violence are arrested, prosecuted and jailed. To stem the rising tide of violent religious extremism, groups and individuals responsible for attacks on religious communities must be punished. In addition, while banned militant groups and private citizens are responsible for the majority of attacks on religious communities, government actors are not blameless; police officers have turned a blind eye to mob attacks or have refused to file police reports when victims are religious minorities. The climate of impunity threatening all Pakistanis, regardless of their faith, also is exacerbated by the much-abused blasphemy and anti-Ahmadi laws.

See full statistics at

<http://www.uscirf.gov/images/Pakistan%20Factsheet%20July%202013%20FINAL.pdf>

## **Statistics on Targeted Violence against Religious Communities in Pakistan: January 2012 - June 2013**

### **OVERALL ATTACKS**

#### **Number of attacks : 203**

Shi'a	77
Christians	37
Ahmadis	54
Hindus	16
Sikhs	3
Other groups	16

### **CASUALTIES**

#### **Number killed: 717**

Shi'a	635
Christians	11
Ahmadis	22
Hindus	2
Sikhs	1
Other groups	46

#### **Number injured: 1108**

Shi'a	834
Christians	36
Ahmadis	39
Hindus	4
Sikhs	0
Other groups	195

### **EXAMPLES OF TYPES/METHODS OF ATTACKS**

#### **Targeted bombings: 25**

Shi'a	18
Christians	0
Ahmadis	1
Hindus	0
Sikhs	0
Other groups	6

#### **Targeted shootings: 83**

Shi'a	46
Christians	3
Ahmadis	26
Hindus	3
Sikhs	0
Other groups	5

#### **Rapes: 12**

Shi'a	0
Christians	5
Ahmadis	0
Hindus	7

Sikhs 0  
Other groups 0

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## **Ahmedis banished from place of worship**

Express Tribune (31.07.2013) - Ahmedis in Fatehpur, Gujrat district, have been banished from their own place of worship in Ramazan and fear that they will be deprived of the property by the local government and clerics.

On July 11, the first day of Ramazan, a group of Sunnis beat up the Ahmedis and kicked them out of the place of worship, telling them not to return, according to members of the Ahmedi community.

The Ahmedis filed a complaint with the police for the registration of an FIR against the assailants. The police did not register a case, nor heeded their request for protection. Instead, they sealed the place of worship, which is located on a four-marla plot, "because of concerns of a clash," Dolatnagar SHO Riaz Qadir told The Express Tribune. He said that previously, both Sunnis and Ahmedis had prayed there.

In fact, the members of the two communities are related. The place of worship is located on four marlas within an eight-kanal property owned by an Ahmedi family which they were allotted when the Revenue Department conducted a consolidation exercise, known as 'ishtimal', some 20 years ago. Such land consolidation exercises are carried out every so often when inheritance laws result in the non-contiguous division of land holdings between heirs.

### **Police and revenue**

The SHO said that according to the Revenue Department record, the building had been a Sunni mosque, but had been transferred to Ahmedis around 20 years ago. He said that the Sunnis were now claiming ownership of the place as a Sunni mosque.

The SHO said that he had seen the Jamat-i-Ahmadiya's ownership document for a four-marla property within that eight-kanal parcel, but the document did not specify where exactly within that eight kanals the four-marla property was located.

He said that the question of ownership had been referred to the National Interfaith Peace and Harmony Committee and the property sealed in the meantime, with the approval of the district coordination officer. He said that the Sunnis had agreed to this, but the Ahmedis had not.

Asked why no assault case had been registered on the Ahmedis' complaint after members of the community were beaten up and thrown out of the place of worship on the first day of Ramazan, the SHO said that since no blood had been spilt, there could be no FIR.

### **Land record**

The eight kanals within which the four-marla property is located is owned by Tahir Hameed, who inherited the land from his father. Hameed, 18, said that his father had donated the four-marla property to the Jamat-i-Ahmadiya to build a place of worship, which they named Baitul Zikr. "Ahmedis have been praying there since before I was born," he said.

He said that on the first of Ramazan, Munir Shah, Ahmed Raza, Maulvi Shabbir and others had attacked his brother Qamar Hameed and his cousin Adnan Ahmed and forced them out of the worship place. He said his brother and cousin had been beaten up. He said they were under severe threat from locals and had been told to disown the property. "Some extremist clerics have turned the locals against us and are trying to dislodge us," he said.

Hameed said that the community had no faith in the Interfaith Peace and Harmony Committee, which is why they did not accept its role in arbitration.

When contacted by The Express Tribune, Asim Imtiaz, the vice president of the committee, said that he was at the patwari's office and trying to establish the ownership of the disputed land.

He said that the four-marla property appeared to have been transferred to the Jamat-i-Ahmadiya by the patwari "by mistake". He added that he was hopeful the dispute would be resolved and the property "would be given to Muslims".

Tanveer Ahmed, another member of the Ahmedi community in Fatehpur, said that local clerics had been making worrying announcements in the mosques of nearby villages and he feared that there would be mob attacks on Ahmedis. He said that Ahmedis did not trust the committee to remain impartial on the matter.

"The Jamat-i-Ahmadiya has ownership documents for the property," he said. "It is the responsibility of the police and the state to follow the law in settling the matter."

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## **Christian jailed for text messages in Gojra**

### ***Islamists demand death penalty for 'blasphemy' as another couple awaits trial***

World Watch Monitor (26.07.2013) - Tensions are high in the Punjabi city of Gojra after a court sentenced a Christian man, Sajjad Masih, to life imprisonment for blasphemy, only weeks before the fourth anniversary of an outbreak of extreme violence against Christians in the same city.

In August 2009, seven Christians from the same family were killed – six burned to death – and more than 100 Christian homes set alight by angry Muslims, again over an accusation of blasphemy.

Now, even as local Islamists demanded that Masih's life imprisonment sentence be exchanged for the death penalty, a further blasphemy case was lodged on July 20; police arrested a Christian couple who were sent to jail the next day.

On July 13, the Gojra Additional Sessions Court convicted Masih of committing blasphemy under Section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code; for insulting Muhammad, which carries the death penalty.

Masih had been accused of sending blasphemous text messages in a case first lodged in December 2011. Despite an absence of evidence, the court sentenced Masih to life imprisonment (25 years in Pakistan).

The alleged text messages were sent from a SIM card registered in the name of Masih's former fiancée, Roma. Neither the cell phone nor the SIM was recovered from Masih during police investigation. Nor was there any eyewitness or forensic evidence available.

Analysts say lower court judges, who are provided little security in Pakistan, often concede to pressure from religious groups in blasphemy cases and convict the accused even if little evidence is available.

Some say this is the reason the judge awarded Masih life imprisonment (though not the death penalty) rather than acquitting him.

The day after the verdict, hard-line Islamists staged a sit-in on Mankanwala Crossing in Gojra and condemned the court's decision.

The protestors demanded Masih's death, chanting that nothing less than the death of a 'blasphemer' was acceptable.

Banners were hung across the city which read: "Only one punishment for the blasphemer; sever his head from the body... Life imprisonment not acceptable, not acceptable and not acceptable."

This slogan has been promoted in recent years by Lashkar-e-Taiba (currently known as Jammāt-ud-Dawā after the US State Department branded Lashkar-e-Taiba a "foreign terrorist organisation" in 2001).

Inter-communal relations in Gojra are tense, especially with the approach of the fourth anniversary of the 2009 attacks. Christians told World Watch Monitor the area's radical Muslims were again seeking a pretext to attack Christians.

### ***Shafqat & Shaguftah***

Catholic couple Shafqat (43) and Shaguftah (40) Masih\* have also been accused of texting blasphemous messages to Islamic clerics.

Complainant Muhammad Hussein says he was offering tarawih (special prayers offered in Ramadan after the breaking of the fast) on July 18 in Talabwali mosque at around 10pm when his cell phone vibrated. He states that after finishing prayer, he checked his cell phone and found blasphemous text messages insulting both Muhammad and the Qur'an.

Gojra City Police Station House Officer Muhammad Nisar told World Watch Monitor that Hussein's call data revealed the messages were sent from Shaguftah's cell phone number.

However, she told them that the cell phone had been lost for a month, and that she did not know who might have sent the alleged messages. Nevertheless, the Gojra City Police detained the couple, along with their four children, and pressured them to name someone who could have sent the messages.

Nisar told World Watch Monitor that a large number of Islamic clerics had been enraged when they heard of these text messages, and that they remained in the police station until the First Investigative Report (FIR) was lodged.

In what some say was an attempt to show that progress had been made, the police formally arrested the couple on July 20 and sent them to Toba Tek Singh District Jail the next day.

"Shafqat has admitted to the police he sent the blasphemous messages and gave this statement to the judicial magistrate," Nisar said.

Riaz Anjum, who is representing the couple, said the police have lodged the case under Section 295-B and 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, which recommend life imprisonment and the death penalty, respectively, for blasphemy.

Anjum said the police had made stronger the case against the couple by recording Shafqat Masih's judicial confession. "Investigation should have been done by the senior superintendent before lodging the case, but here the police have extracted a confession from Shafqat which is illegal," he said.

He said the police have also charged the couple under 25-D of The Telegraph Act of 1985 which recommends a maximum of three years for intentionally "causing annoyance".

Islamists again staged a sit-in on Mankanwala Crossing on July 23 and demanded death for the couple.

Shafqat Masih's backbone was fractured in an accident in 2004. Since then he has been restricted to a wheelchair due to the paralysis of his lower body. He is also fitted with a catheter.

Since his accident, Shaguftah Masih has been the only breadwinner for the family's four children, Ambrose (13), Danish (10), Sarah (7), and Amir (5).

Her brother Joseph told World Watch Monitor she is the eldest of six siblings.

### ***Background***

Previously, at least three other cases have been registered against Christians based on blasphemous text messages.

In May 2006, Qamar David was accused of sending blasphemous text messages to various Islamic clerics in the city of Karachi. He was convicted in February 2010 and died in prison on March 15, 2011.

In January 2009 Hector Aleem and Basharat Khokhar were accused of sending text messages that hurt Muslims' religious sentiment. They were acquitted of the charge on May 31, 2011.

Sixteen-year-old Ryan Stanton was charged with sending blasphemous text messages on October 10, 2012. He fled the country for refugee status in Sri Lanka.

Pastor Zafar Bhatti was accused of the same crime on November 11, 2012.

At least two Muslims, Abdul Sattar and Irfan Rafique, have also been charged for sending text messages.

Pakistani minorities and international bodies have long demanded an amendment or repeal of the blasphemy laws to avoid their misuse.

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## **Sikh holy book desecrated again in Sindh**

Daily Times (20.07.2013) - Before police could arrest culprits who desecrated Sikh holy book Guru Granth Sahib in Pano Aqil, a similar incident happened in Shikarpur, in which unknown people tore 24 pages of the sacred book.

The incident has caused annoyance and fears among the Sindhi Sikhs, who are already a minority within Pakistani religious minorities.

Sardar Jai Singh, a local Sindhi speaking Sikh of Shikarpur told Daily Times over telephone that some unknown people entered the local Gurdwara Khat Wari Darbar at Store Ganj and not only tore 24 pages of the sacred book, but also took the pages away with them.

Shikarpur police registered the case (FIR No-74/2013) under section 295 Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) against unknown persons.

"Police is investigating and we are sure that soon they will arrest the actual culprits. Though we are not sure, but we have a suspicion some local extremist Hindus are involved. There already is a tussle with local Hindus in which Sikhs asked their religious leader to apologise for disrespecting the holy book," said Singh.

ASP Shikarpur Tariq Wilayat, who is officially investigating the case, said that the police still does not know who is the actual culprit, but a case has been registered. "We have registered the case and are investigating. We still do not know who actually desecrated the holy book, however, the recent tussle between the Sikh and Hindu community creates doubts if some local Hindus are involved. We will soon find the actual culprits and the motives behind such happenings," ASP Wilayat said.

Just last month, a similar incident took place in Pano Aqil, and some extremists tore the pages of the Sikh holy book. Despite protests, Sukkur police was not ready to register case due to pressure from Hindu parliamentarians, and had only arrested a poor man after massive protests. The incident case filed (FIR No-205/2013) under section 295-A was also registered against unknown persons.

On contact SSP Sukkur Irfan Baloch had said that it was not a big incident as Hindus and Sikhs belong to the same community and will resolve the issue at community level very soon.

Chairman Pakistan Sikh Council Sardar Ramesh Singh said that inter-religious harmony among minorities of Sindh has always remained exemplary, for which Sindh remains less extremist. "We are shocked that in a month two such incidents occurred and it is painful to see that we are being targeted. I think a group with an ulterior motive is responsible for such incidents. Now it is up to the police to conduct a transparent investigation and find the actual culprits and punish them," he said.

Denying prior reports, Ramesh said, "Earlier, some Sikhs blamed Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MPA Lalchand Ukrani of pressurising police authorities, it was incorrect and I personally deny such allegations, that he was supporting local Hindus in this case."

Pakistani Sikhs are a tiny community compared to Hindus who make up 5.5 million officially with several parliamentary, provincial and national assembly representatives as well as members in the senate.

However, Sikhs have a population of only 6000 in Pakistan without any representation in Sindh Assembly.

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## **Police acquit themselves over death of 18-year-old Christian**

UCA (18.07.2013) - Pakistani police officials involved in the alleged torture and death of an 18-year-old Christian during an illegal detention, have been exonerated by an internal inquiry. The decision, announced on Wednesday, sparked angry reactions from activists, lawyers and the boy's family.

Adnan Masih, a resident of Sheikhpura in Punjab province, was arrested on June 2 in connection with a missing Muslim girl. Although Adnan pleaded innocence, he was kept in police custody for over a week at Sharaqpur Sharif police station. His family claim he was frequently tortured.

He died of his wounds on June 10. The police maintain that he committed suicide.

The death prompted hundreds of Christians to stage a protest and call for the arrest of those responsible. In response, senior officials suspended prime suspect Station House Officer Riaz ud-Din, along with other police officers, and launched an inquiry.

But a statement on the Asian Human Rights Commission website on Wednesday said that "police officers have been exonerated [by their own internal inquiry] from charges of killing the young Christian."

The Centre for Legal Aid Assistance & Settlement (CLAAS) commented: "We reject the police inquiry, which was conducted by a junior officer." The director of CLAAS said they will be requesting exhumation of the body so the exact cause of death can be established.

The findings of the police probe are to be passed to a magistrate, who will be expected to instigate a judicial inquiry. Adnan's family say they hope justice will be served.

"I want justice. I want to see all those responsible for the death of my son punished," Riaz Masih, 60, a retired schoolteacher, told ucanews.com.

"My son was subjected to brutal torture because of his Christian faith."

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## **Pakistani Christian gets life in prison for blasphemous text messages**

The Christian Post (15.07. 2013) - A court in Pakistan's Punjab province has sentenced a Christian man to life imprisonment and a fine of \$2,000 for sending blasphemous text messages to Muslim clerics to seek revenge from his ex-fiancée.

A court in Punjab's Toba Tek Singh district sentenced the Christian man, Sajjad Masih, for sending blasphemous text messages from a mobile phone to Muslim clerics and others in Gojra town in that district, according to Pakistan's Dawn newspaper.

Masih, a resident of Punjab's Pakpattan district, was arrested in December 2011.

Police say Masih was engaged to Ruma Masih of Gojra town but she contracted marriage with another Christian man in the U.K. To teach her a lesson, Masih used her SIM to send blasphemous messages to clerics.

Gojra is religiously sensitive, having witnessed massive attacks on Christians triggered by reports of desecration of the Quran in 2002.

Police initially refrained from charging Masih under the blasphemy law, but added it to the complaint later on the demand of Muslim clerics. The clerics also pressured police to include his ex-fiancée in the case.

Consequently, Pakistan's interior ministry sought a red corner notice from Interpol for Ruma's arrest in the U.K., but she could not be traced.

The blasphemy law, embedded in Sections 295 and 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code, is frequently misused for personal revenge. It carries no provision to punish a false accuser or a false witness of blasphemy.

The law is also used by Islamist extremists to target religious minorities – Christians, Shi'as, Ahmadiyyas and Hindus. The government of Canada recently helped a Christian girl, Rimsha Masih, who was falsely accused of burning the Quran last year and forced into hiding, to flee her country and settle with her parents in the North American nation due to concerns for her safety.

Efforts by some of the country's prominent leaders to repeal or amend the law have gone in vain.

A Pakistani Christian, Shahbaz Bhatti, who was elected member of the National Assembly, was assassinated in March 2011 for his efforts to repeal the law. Minister of Minority Affairs, Bhatti was killed two months after Punjab's Governor Salman Taseer was assassinated for his advocacy for Pakistani Christian woman Asia Bibi, who had been convicted by a trial court for blasphemy.

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## **Police officials accused of killing a young Christian exonerated by internal inquiry**

**AHRC (10.07.2013) - The Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has received information that police officers have been exonerated (by their own internal inquiry) from charges of killing a young Christian, who was tortured to death while being kept in illegal detention. After the killing, in a bid to fool the Christian community, senior police officials announced that all police officers involved in the matter, including the Station Head Officer (SHO), had been arrested and suspended, and that an inquiry would be conducted. However, the officers were never arrested and, after an internal inquiry, all of the perpetrators were exonerated from the charges of torture and death in police custody.**

**A member of the Punjab assembly, Mr. Asghar Munda (who is from the ruling party) urged the police to release a Muslim man who allegedly abducted a Muslim girl, telling the police to punish someone from the Christian community instead.**

**Senior police officers are continuously intimidating the family members of the victim, telling them to withdraw the charges against the police. The senior officers have threatened that, if charges are not withdrawn, the family will face severe consequences.**

**The police officers demonstrated their hate against Christians during the boy's illegal detention. They said that such young people need exemplary punishment when they dare to have friendships with Muslim girls.**

**CASE NARRATIVE:** (Information received from Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement, Forum for Minorities)

Adnan Masih, 18 years old, a resident of Sharaqpur Sharif District Sheikhpura, Punjab province, was tortured to death in police custody after ten days of illegal imprisonment. Adnan, son of Mr. Riaz Masih (a retired headmaster), was working in the electrical services shop of Mr. Muhammad Imran as an assistant.

Adnan Masih was taken into custody at the Sharaqpur Sharif police station, on 2 June 2013, in connection with the case of a young Muslim woman who had gone missing. The police had also rounded up local Muslim youths to question them over the matter, but they were all released.

Adnan insisted that he knew nothing of the woman in question; she had apparently had an affair with a Muslim man, Imran, the owner of the shop where Adnan was working, and left her husband, but her parents claimed that she had been kidnapped.

Officers obtained call records from Adnan and the woman's network providers. They found no record of any communication between them. They did, however, discover calls between the woman and three young Muslim men from the area. The Muslims were summoned to the police station but later set free, seemingly after the payment of a bribe. Officers then tried to force Adnan to confess to being involved in the woman's disappearance, allegedly subjecting him to severe torture: they beat him on the head with an iron rod, cut him with a sharp knife, broke his legs and pulled the nails out of his fingers and toes. After six days of torture, when Adnan was almost dead, his neck was broken. The Christian's body was hung up in the bathroom. Police claimed that he had committed suicide. He died on 10 June 2013.

Over 4,000 local Christians blocked the road in protest, demanding justice and the arrest of those responsible for his death.

The Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) team succeeded in persuading senior officers to register a First Information Report (FIR), which launches a criminal investigation in Pakistan, against three officers.

On 30 May 2013, Ms. Nusrat Bibi claimed that Adnan Masih abducted her daughter Ms. Saima, who had married another man, Mr. Mohsin, four months before. Adnan denied having a relationship with her daughter and disclosed her daughter's love affair with Mr. Imran, the man who owned the shop where Adnan worked as a mechanic.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

On 10 June, First Information Report (FIR) number 332/13 was lodged against the Masih family in relation to the kidnapping of the girl. It was lodged against seven people including Mr. Riaz Masih (Adnan's father), Ms. Kaniz Bibi (Adnan's mother), Mr. Billo

Mashi (brother), Ms. Naila (sister), Mr. Barkat Masih (uncle), Mr. Arshad Soroya (cousin) and Mr. Zaheer Barber (cousin).

Police approached Adnan Masih's family during their investigations in to this case. On 2 June, Mr. Barkat Masih, who is well known person from the Christian community in the area and works as a community resource person, went to Station House Officer (SHO) Mr. Riaz-U-Din with Riaz Masih and Adnan Masih to talk with the police and to prove that Adnan is innocent. When they went to Sharaqpur police station, the SHO told them to leave Adnan for few days, saying they would conduct a normal and non-violent investigation into the kidnapping allegations. Riaz and Barkat agreed. They left Adnan in the custody of SHO for the promised normal investigation.

SHO Riaz-u-Din kept the Christian boy in detention and tortured him for two to three days. Riaz Masih requested police to release his son but SHO Riaz-u-Din demanded money and took Rs. 20,000 (US \$: 200) as a bribe. When he saw that there was no claim provable against the Masih boy, he transferred the inquiry duty to Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Mr. Waryam Ali, who tortured the boy on the demand of the girl's father and uncle. Waryam took rupees Rs. 17,000 (US \$: 170) from the family of the victim.

On 9 June, Member Of Parliament Assembly (MPA) Mr. Ali Asghar Munda of political party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) visited Sharaqpur police station and he called Muhammad Imran (owner of the electronic shop) to come to the police station. He ordered the police to recover the missing Muslim girl and, at the same time, he gave a guarantee for Imran and declared him innocent. Mr. Asghar is elected from his area as MPA because of Muslim majority votes, so he is supporting the Muslims of the area. That seems to be why he supported Imran and gave his guarantee. A few boys were also arrested and released after investigation, but police officials didn't allow Mr. Adnan to go home as the police were planning to make Adnan Masih an example for the whole Christian community. Their stated aim was to make sure no other Christian boy should dare to fall in love with a Muslim girl.

On the morning of 10 June, Adnan's aunt went to the police station to see her nephew and to give him breakfast. She was shocked to see Adnan severely injured. He was unable to walk and barely able to talk. Adnan told his aunt that approximately four to six police officers tortured and abused him through the whole night. They severely tortured him by fixing jacks (an implement used to spread his legs), using iron rods, pulling his nails out and breaking his teeth. He was in severe pain. Police officials treated him in an inhuman way and abused him. While torturing him, they demanded to know why he started his love liaison with a Muslim girl, how dare a Christian boy have an affair with a Muslim girl, and they would teach him a lesson so no Christian boy would have the courage to have a love affair with a Muslim girl in the future. During torture they also abused him by saying that the police are faithful and have a holy Quran, what did he have? Today they would make him an example for his dirty Christianity.

During torture they tried to force him to change his faith. If he did so they would release him; otherwise, they would kill him. On learning this, Adnan's aunt went home in shock and shared the incident with his immediate family, who rushed to the police station. Riaz Masih and Asher Masih went to police station to see Adnan but police refused to let them see him.

On the evening of 10 June, police informed the family about Adnan's murder, claiming that it was a suicide. The victim's family was aware of the severe torture in police detention, which was clearly the cause of his death. Police announced his death and said that he had committed suicide in the washroom of the police station. This was to hide the fact that the police broke his neck and hanged him in the washroom. To hide their sin, they declared that the boy had committed suicide.

There was no FIR lodged by the family of the girl until June 10. Before the custodial death of Adnan Masih, a FIR was lodged against the Masih family members. After the death of the boy, the Masih family lodged FIR number 149, 302,147 at Sharaqpur police station against the Station House Officer (SHO) Riaz-u-din, Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Waryam Ali, Sub Inspector (SI) Mr. Shahbaz, Mr. Tariq (the girl's father) and Imran (her uncle). Both FIRS were lodged on the same day and the girl is still missing.

Adnan's autopsy was conducted by the Government of Punjab's Health Department. The report showed that Adnan had severe injuries on his face, severe injuries on his neck and a split in his chin due to torture. His nails were removed from his hands and he had injuries on his thighs, bottom and arms. He had been bleeding from his mouth. The injuries showed severe torture but the police didn't take any action against the murder of this Christian boy.

On 2 July 2013, the perpetrators, along with a large mob consisting of around 100 people, entered the house of Riaz Masih and told them to withdraw the case and forgive the police officials. They warned Mr. Masih that the SHO and other police would be released on bail – in the future, they warned, “You will be here and we will be here”. In essence, they were warning him that, if he did not give up the FIR, they would create trouble for them if they stayed in the area. The police have the power to do whatever they want.

#### **SUGGESTED ACTION:**

Please write a letter to the following authorities, calling on them to initiate a judicial inquiry into the murder of this Christian boy in police detention. Please also urge them to prosecute the high-ranking police officials from Sharaqpur police station for killing this person by torture in police custody. The government must also ensure the security and safety of the victim's family members, who are receiving threats on their lives from the perpetrators, as well as provide compensation to the family.

The AHRC is writing a separate letter to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and extra judicial killing, calling for her intervention into this matter

#### **SAMPLE LETTER:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

#### **PAKISTAN: Police officials accused of killing a young Christian exonerated by internal inquiry**

##### **Name of victim:**

Mr. Adnan Masih, son of Riaz Masih and resident of Mohalla Nabi Pura, Sharaqpur Sharif District Sheikhupura, Punjab province

##### **Name of perpetrators:**

1. Mr. Riaz –u-Din Station House Officer (SHO), Sharaqpur Sharif Police Station, Sheikhupura district, Punjab province
2. Mr. Shahbaz Sub Inspector (SI) Sharaqpur Sharif Police Station, Sheikhupura district, Punjab Province
3. Mr. Waryam Ali Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI), Sharaqpur Sharif Police Station, Sheikhupura district, Punjab Province

4. Mr. Tariq son of Mr.Nawab (Father), Sharaqpur Sharif, Sheikhpura district Punjab Province
5. Mr. Imran, Sharaqpur Sharif, Sheikhpura distict Punjab Province
6. District Police Officer (DPO), Sheikhpura district, Punjab Province

**Date of incident:** 2-10 June 2013

**Place of incident:** Sharaqpur Sharif police station, Sheikhpura District, Punjab Province-Pakistan.

I am writing to voice my deep concern regarding the extra judicial killing of a young Christian by torture in the custody of Sharaqpur Sharif police station. The victim was tortured to death purely on the basis of hate against the Christian community.

I am appalled about the impunity provided to police officials, exonerating them from the case of torture and murder that took place in the presence of several persons. During torture they forced him to change his faith, saying that, if he did so, they would release him. Otherwise they would kill him.

It is also shocking to me that police officers - including the District Police Officer (DPO), the highest-ranking police officer of the district - are trying to force the parents of the victim to withdraw the case against the concerned police officers by sending a Muslim mob to their house and coercing them to withdraw the FIR.

I received information that Adnan Masih, 18 years old, a resident of Sharaqpur Sharif District Sheikhpura, Punjab province, was tortured to death in police custody after ten days of illegal imprisonment. Adnan Masih, son of Mr. Riaz Masih (a retired headmaster), was working in the electrical services shop of Mr. Muhammad Imran as an assistant. Adnan had six siblings.

Adnan Masih was taken into custody by the Sharaqpur Sharif police station on 2 June in connection with the case of a young Muslim woman who had gone missing. The police had also rounded up local Muslim youths to question them over the matter, but they were all released.

Adnan insisted that he knew nothing of the woman in question; she had apparently had an affair with a Muslim man, Imran, the owner of the electrical shop where Adnan was working, and left her husband, but her parents claimed that she had been kidnapped.

Officers obtained Adnan and the woman's call records from their respective network providers. They found no record of any communication between them. They did, however, discover calls between the woman and three young Muslim men from the area. The Muslims were summoned to the police station but later set free, seemingly after the payment of a bribe. Officers then tried to force Adnan to confess to being involved in the woman's disappearance, allegedly subjecting him to severe torture: they beat him on the head with an iron rod, cut him with a sharp knife, broke his legs and pulled the nails out of his fingers and toes. After six days of torture, when Adnan was almost dead, his neck was broken. The Christian's body was hung up in the bathroom. Police claimed that he had committed suicide. He died on June 10.

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The Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS) team succeeded in persuading senior officers to register a First Information Report (FIR), which launches a criminal investigation in Pakistan, against three officers.

On 30 May, Ms. Nusrat Bibi claimed that Adnan Masih abducted her daughter Ms. Saima, who had married another man, Mr. Mohsin, four months before. Adnan denied having a relationship with her daughter and disclosed her daughter's love affair with Mr. Imran, the man who owned the shop where Adnan worked as a mechanic.

Police approached Adnan Masih's family during their investigations in to this case. On 2 June, Mr. Barkat Masih, who is well known person from the Christian community in the area and works as a community resource person, went to Station House Officer (SHO) Mr. Riaz-U-Din with Riaz Masih and Adnan Masih to talk with the police and to prove that Adnan is innocent. When they went to Sharaqpur police station, the SHO told them to leave Adnan for few days, saying they would conduct a normal and non-violent investigation into the kidnapping allegations. Riaz and Barkat agreed. They left Adnan in the custody of SHO for the promised normal investigation.

SHO Riaz-u-Din kept the Christian boy in detention and tortured him for two to three days. Riaz Masih requested police to release his son but SHO Riaz-u-Din demanded money and took Rs. 20,000 (US \$: 200) as a bribe. When he saw that there was no claim provable against the Masih boy, he transferred the inquiry duty to Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Mr. Waryam Ali, who tortured the boy on the demand of the girl's father and uncle. Waryam took rupees Rs. 17,000 (US \$: 170) from the family of the victim.

The actions of Member Of Parliament Assembly (MPA) Mr. Ali Asghar Munda from the political party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on June 9th when he visited Sharaqpur police station trouble me greatly. He called Muhammad Imran (owner of the electronic shop) to come to the police station. He ordered the police to recover the missing Muslim girl and, at the same time, he gave a guarantee for Imran and declared him innocent. Mr. Asghar is elected from his area as MPA because of Muslim majority votes, so he is supporting the Muslims of the area. That seems to be why he supported Imran and gave his guarantee. A few boys were also arrested and released after investigation, but police officials didn't allow Adnan to go home as the police were planning to make Adnan Masih an example for the whole Christian community. Their stated aim was to make sure no other Christian boy should dare to fall in love with a Muslim girl. In this community, many Muslim girls have relationships with Christian boys and the number of relationships is increasing day by day.

On the morning of 10 June, Adnan's aunt went to the police station to see her nephew and to give him breakfast. She was shocked to see Adnan severely injured. He was unable to walk and barely able to talk. Adnan told his aunt that approximately four to six police officers tortured and abused him through the whole night. They severely tortured him by fixing jacks (an implement used to spread his legs), using iron rods, pulling his nails out and breaking his teeth. He was in severe pain. Police officials treated him in an inhuman way and abused him. While torturing him, they demanded to know why he started his love liaison with a Muslim girl, how dare a Christian boy have an affair with a Muslim girl, and they would teach him a lesson so no Christian boy would have the courage to have a love affair with a Muslim girl in the future. During torture they also abused him by saying that the police are faithful and have a holy Quran, what did he have? Today they would make him an example for his dirty Christianity.

I am saddened that during torture they tried to force him to change his faith. If he did so they would release him; otherwise, they would kill him. On learning this, Adnan's aunt went home in shock and shared the incident with his immediate family, who rushed to

the police station. Riaz Masih and Asher Masih went to police station to see Adnan but police refused to let them see him.

On the evening of 10 June, police informed the family about Adnan's murder, claiming that it was a suicide. The victim's family was aware of the severe torture in police detention, which was clearly the cause of his death. Police announced his death and said that he had committed suicide in the washroom of the police station. This was to hide the fact that the police broke his neck and hanged him in the washroom. To hide their sin, they declared that the boy had committed suicide.

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Adnan's autopsy was conducted by the Government of Punjab's Health Department. The report showed that Adnan had severe injuries on his face, severe injuries on his neck and a split in his chin due to torture. His nails were removed from his hands and he had injuries on his thighs, bottom and arms. He had been bleeding from his mouth. The injuries showed severe torture but the police didn't take any action against the murder of this Christian boy.

On 2 July 2013, the perpetrators, along with a large mob consisting of around 100 people, entered the house of Riaz Masih and told them to withdraw the case and forgive the police officials. They warned Mr. Masih that the SHO and other police would be released on bail – in the future, they warned, "You will be here and we will be here". In essence, they were warning him that, if he did not give up the FIR, they would create trouble for them if they stayed in the area. The police have the power to do whatever they want.

I urge upon you to initiate a judicial inquiry into the murder of this Christian boy, who was tortured to death while being kept in illegal detention. Please prosecute the high-ranking police officials from Sharaqpur police station for killing this person by torture in police custody. The government must also ensure the security and safety of the victim's family members, who are receiving threats on their lives from the perpetrators, as well as provide compensation to the family.

Sincerely Yours

-----  
**PLEASE SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:**

1. Mr. Asif Ali Zardari  
President of Pakistan  
President's Secretariat  
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PAKISTAN  
Tel: +92-51-9204801-9214171  
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2. Mr. Mian Nawaz Sharif  
Prime Minister  
Prime Minister House

Islamabad  
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Fax: +92 51 922 1596  
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E-mail: [secretary@cabinet.gov.pk](mailto:secretary@cabinet.gov.pk) or [pspm@pmsectt.gov.pk](mailto:pspm@pmsectt.gov.pk)

3. Federal Minister  
Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights  
Old US Aid building  
Ata Turk Avenue  
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PAKISTAN  
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Email: [sarfraz\\_yousuf@yahoo.com](mailto:sarfraz_yousuf@yahoo.com)

4. Mr. Makhdoom Ahmed Mehmood  
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5. Mr. Justice Umar Ata Bandial  
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6. Mr. Shahbaz Sharif  
Chief Minister  
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Province Chief Minister  
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7. Dr. Faqir Hussain  
Registrar  
Supreme Court of Pakistan  
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8. Mr. Rana Sana Ullah Khan  
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9. Inspector-General of Police of Punjab  
Police Head Office  
Lahore, Punjab province  
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## The Plight of the Hazaras in Pakistan

The Diplomat (04.07.2013) - What sort of reaction would you expect from the international community if more than a thousand people belonging to a particular ethnic group were targeted for [violent attacks](#) within the span of a few months? Would it bring the international upholders of peace and harmony to the region? Would it spark a mass public awareness campaign for the rights of those targeted? Well if it were the Hazara people in Baluchistan, it apparently would do nothing of the kind.

In the most recent incident, an Imam Bargah (a place of worship for Hazara Shiite Muslims) in the Aliabad area of Hazara Town in Quetta was targeted last Sunday in an attack that left almost [28 dead and over 60 injured](#). The attack was carried out by a suicide bomber and was followed by gunfire in the nearby area. It was not the first: two horrific incidents in January and February 2013 left nearly 200 dead and over 450 injured in the Hazara Town area of Quetta, Baluchistan.

The civil war-ridden, mineral-rich province of Baluchistan – already a target for all kinds of physical and social abuse – has long been known for [military atrocities against the Baluch separatists](#). The increasing number of missing Baluch people has prompted their families to launch campaigns against the government of Pakistan on both national and international fronts. But now something more powerful and more damaging to the government has emerged: the Hazara genocide and the conspiracy theories that surround it.

The persecution of Hazaras is not a new phenomenon. Hazaras are historically [residents of Afghanistan](#), where they form almost 19 percent of the population. Nearly one million Hazaras live in Iran, while more than 650,000 reside in Pakistan, mostly in Quetta. Almost all Hazaras belong to the Shiite Muslim community. Shiites form the majority in Iran but are amongst the minorities in Sunni-majority Pakistan and Afghanistan. Now the Hazara Shiite community find themselves at the center of an extremely volatile region, where the extremist Taliban and other fundamentalist sectarian terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) and Sipah-e-Sihaba were already quite active.

Hazaras have also been a target of [ethnic cleansing](#), targeted killing and genocide in Afghanistan. The Afshar Operation, Mazar-i-Sharif massacre, the Robatak Pass massacre and the Yakawlang massacre of Hazara community in Afghanistan by the Taliban represent just a small slice of the historic ethnic grudge against the Hazara community.

Theories suggest the persecution of Hazaras in Quetta and Baluchistan are a continuation of these extremist sentiments, given that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), the group claiming responsibility for most of the attacks on Hazara community, has had strong ties with al-Qaeda. Moreover Lashkar-e- Jhangvi (LeJ), though considered a terrorist organization by

the Pakistan and U.S. governments, is believed to have some support among right-wing political parties in Pakistan. The support may also extend to Pakistan's military, which has not taken any strong action against the terrorist groups and is rather busy with its own covert operations in Baluchistan.

Yet another aspect of the issue is the regional importance of Baluchistan for India, the U.S., Iran and Afghanistan. RAND scholar Christine Fair, a leading American expert on South Asia, said in a [recent discussion](#) carried by American journal *Foreign Affairs* that Pakistan has legitimate concerns about India's involvement in initiating unrest in Baluchistan. She further contended that "Indian officials have told me privately that they are pumping money into Baluchistan. Kabul has encouraged India to engage in provocative activities such as using the Border Roads Organization to build sensitive parts of the Ring Road and use the Indo-Tibetan police force for security. It is also building schools on a sensitive part of the border in Kunar — across from Bajaur. Kabul's motivations for encouraging these activities are as obvious as India's interest in engaging in them."

India's vested interests in Baluchistan are no secret, given its historically tense relations with Pakistan. But why the sectarian tinge? The persecution or alleged genocide of Hazara people in Baluchistan has the potential to not only stir internal tensions but create international pressure on the Pakistan government. In 2012, for instance, a U.S. congressman moved for a House resolution on Baluchistan's right to self-determination, [angering](#) Pakistan's leadership.

Ultimately, any of the theories could prove correct, but what matters is the plight of the Hazara community in Baluchistan and the humanitarian crisis they face. Without appropriate action for the stakeholders, the crisis will only get worse.

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## **Three Christian women beaten and paraded naked by Muslim mob in Pakistan**

Barnabas Fund (02.07.2013) - Three Christian women were beaten and paraded naked by a Muslim mob who broke into their [Pakistan](#) home while they were sleeping.

Sisters-in-law Arshad Bibi, Sajida Bibi and Sauriya Bibi were attacked on the night of 3 June while their husbands were at work. Their elderly father and mother-in law were also asleep in the house in Lahore at the time.

The mob of 12 armed Muslim men scaled the wall and broke into the property, looking for the women's husbands. When they could not find the men, they began beating the wives, before taking them out into the street and tearing off their clothes.

As neighbours came out in response to the commotion, the women were released, but the villagers were threatened with more trouble if they complained about the incident.

The provocation for the attack was apparently that goats belonging to the Christian family had twice entered the fields of a Muslim landlord, who claimed that they had damaged his crops. He confiscated the animals, prompting one of the Christian husbands, Shaukat Masih, to request their return. The landlord refused and beat Shaukat along with his father, Sadiq Masih. The landlord later led the attack against the women.

A First Information Report, which launches a criminal investigation in [Pakistan](#), was registered against the landlord and his men, but the police have not taken any action against them. Instead, they filed a case against the Christians.

The landlord apparently has the support of the ruling party, the PML-N; a member of the National Assembly is allegedly pressuring the police not to act against the perpetrators.

This does not bode well for Pakistani Christians, who have long suffered abuse and injustice at the hands of the country's Muslim majority.

The PML-N won the May general elections, returning [Nawaz Sharif](#) to the office of Prime Minister for the third time. During election rallies, he promised that his party would give equal rights to minorities, including Christians. But the party has previously been implicated in acts of violence against Christians, such as the attack in Gojra, where eight Christians were killed and at least 50 homes burnt down in August 2009.

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## **Pakistan Christian girl accused of blasphemy moved to Canada over security fears**

The Globe and Mail/ AP (01.07.2013) - A Christian family has been spirited out of Pakistan and into Canada after spending months in hiding following false accusations that their daughter had burned Islam's holy book.

Rimsha Masih's case attracted international attention on Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws following her arrest in August in Islamabad.

She was accused of burning pages of the Qur'an as fuel for cooking, but a Muslim cleric was later accused of fabricating evidence.

Masih, who had been held in jail, was acquitted but her family was forced into hiding fearing vigilante justice.

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney said he'd been following the case and was prompted to act when a Pakistani contact asked him in January whether the family could come to Canada.

"I said absolutely, if they could get her out," Kenney said in an interview with The Canadian Press on Sunday.

"So a number of people did some very dangerous, delicate work to extricate her and her family from Pakistan and we provided the necessary visas."

Kenney issued what's known as a ministerial permit in order to facilitate their arrival.

He said he has now instructed immigration officials to process their applications for permanent residency under humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

The girl had been facing threats and was moving constantly, said a Muslim cleric who lobbied on the girl's behalf.

"I am sad that this innocent girl had to leave Pakistan. She had been acquitted by the court, and despite that it was not possible for her to live freely," Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said.

It's rare for Kenney to comment on individual immigration cases and his department had previously refused to confirm whether the family was in Canada, citing privacy concerns.

But he said family members gave their consent to have their story made public after a blog post reporting on their arrival subsequently drew international media attention.

Kenney said he met with the family in Toronto in April, a few weeks after they arrived.

The case had been under scrutiny in part because of the girl's young age and questions about her mental abilities.

An official medical report at the time put her age at 14 although some of her supporters said she was as young as 11. The medical report also said her mental state did not correspond with her age.

Kenney said it was clear the girl does have some intellectual disabilities but her siblings are quickly adapting to their new life in Canada.

"There's a language barrier, but in any event, I could clearly see their profound gratitude for having received Canada's protection," he said.

Kenney said the cost of bringing the family over and resettling them was taken on by the International Christian Voice, a Toronto-based rights organization.

The group is run by Peter Bhatti, whose older brother Shahbaz was Pakistan's minister of minorities before being assassinated in March 2011.

Bhatti's death is often cited as a key influence on the Conservative government's decision to set up an office for religious freedom under the auspices of the Foreign Affairs department.

Kenney said, however, that Canada's ambassador for religious freedom was not involved in the family's case as he was appointed after the wheels had been set in motion.

Rescuing those facing religious persecution around the world has become a major theme of the government's efforts to resettle large groups of refugees.

Among them are Christians fleeing Iran and Iraq; a program to take-in some 20,000 Iraqis by 2015 is the largest single commitment to resettle a refugee population in more than 25 years.

But Kenney said resettlement efforts aren't limited to a single faith and are reflective of a broader government commitment to religious freedom.

"When states or unruly mobs seek to persecute or even kill people simply on the grounds of their fundamental beliefs, I can't think of a more obvious reason why a country like Canada should be available as a land of protection and a voice for the voiceless," said Kenney.

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## **Blasphemy convict: Aasia Bibi's appeal at least two years away**

Express Tribune (29.06.2013) - Aasia Bibi, the Christian woman on death row whose blasphemy conviction was decried as unjust by slain former governor Salmaan Taseer, faces a wait of at least another two years behind bars before her appeal is likely to come up before the Lahore High Court.

Bibi, 45, has been jailed since June 19, 2009, when her neighbours in a village near Nankana Sahib accused her of making derogatory remarks about the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). An additional district and sessions judge convicted and sentenced her to death in November 2010, pending confirmation of the decision by the LHC.

The case attracted the attention of then Punjab Governor Salmaan Taseer, who visited Bibi in jail and denounced her conviction as well as the blasphemy law. A couple of months later, Taseer – and any hope Aasia Bibi had of a quick release – was killed in a hail of bullets fired by his own bodyguard.

Some two-and-a-half years later, Bibi is waiting for a date to be fixed for the hearing of her appeal. The court has a large backlog of cases and is currently hearing appeals filed at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009. Appeals filed at the end of 2010 are due to come up in 2015.

A court staffer told *The Express Tribune* that the LHC, for the last 10 months, has prioritised the disposal of murder cases and capital sentence cases, fixing them before eight division benches. He said that there was a large backlog of such cases because of a shortage of judges.

The head of the court does have the power to hear cases out of turn. Under Article 561-A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the chief justice of the LHC can fix any case before a bench out of turn upon an application from an aggrieved party, according to Advocate Aftab Ahmed Bajwa.

The LHC cause list shows that some cases from 2010, 2011 and 2012 are being heard out of turn by the court. The converse is also true: some murder and capital sentence cases from 2005 are still pending.

Aslam Pervez Sahotra, the chairman of the Human Liberation Commission Pakistan, a group that lobbies for greater awareness of human rights, said that he had sent a request to the chief justice of Pakistan that Bibi's appeal be heard as soon as possible, but had received no response.

He said that Aasia Bibi faced threats from fellow inmates and her jailers at Sheikhpura Jail. She was reported to have been badly beaten by a jail staffer in October 2011. "For her safety, and because of the many lacunae in her conviction, her appeal should be heard immediately. We are hopeful she would be acquitted by the High Court," he said.

According to the FIR of the case, registered at Saddar Nankana Sahib police station on June 19, 2009, on the complaint of Qari Muhammad Salam, Aasia Bibi had made blasphemous remarks after getting into an argument with Asma Bibi, her sister Mafia Bibi, and Yasmin on June 14.

The complainant said that he had summoned the witnesses and the accused and heard their stories, after which Aasia Bibi had apologised.

Nankana Sahib Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal presided over her trial, hearing eight prosecution witnesses, but none in defence of Aasia Bibi. On November 8, 2010, he sentenced her to hang to death.

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## **Pakistan court throws out blasphemy charge against pastor**

World Watch Monitor (27.06.2013) - A Pakistan court has acquitted a pastor accused of insulting Islam because the pastor's accuser has told the court he was mistaken.

Karma Patras, 56, already had been released on bail from Sheikhpura District Jail in February after the man who filed the complaint, Syed Zulqarnain Shah, told the court his accusation had been lodged mistakenly.

The formal withdrawal of charges on June 14 makes Patras at least the fourth Christian this year to be released after being charged with blasphemy, which is illegal in Pakistan. Local sources told World Watch Monitor they know of no other case in which the complainant had retracted an accusation of blasphemy.

The removal of charges against Patras, who spent about four months in jail before his February release, comes as Aasiya Noreen, widely known as Asia Bibi, marks her fourth year since she was accused of blasphemy. The only woman in Pakistan convicted of the charge, Noreen was sentenced to death in November 2010. She remains in Pakistan's Sheikhpura prison, 75 kilometres from Lahore, awaiting her appeal to a higher court.

The Noreen case drew sharp international criticism, and intensified the debate in Pakistan over its blasphemy laws. The governor of Punjab province was murdered by a member of his security detail after he publicly defended Noreen and criticised the laws.

By contrast, the Patras case was low profile. The court's dismissal of charges drew little attention beyond the Christian media.

The pastor's troubles began on Oct. 13, when he was invited to address a funeral gathering by a bereaved family in a neighbouring village in the Nankana Sahib District of Punjab province. In his sermon, Patras described the death of Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice, superseding the need for any further animal sacrifices required by any other traditions.

The sermon was delivered only days before the Islamic festival of Eid-ul-Adha, on which Muslims offer a cow or bull, a ram, or a camel to commemorate Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. Several Muslims were in attendance at the funeral, and no one raised any objections at the time, Patras told World Watch Monitor.

A few hours later, the pastor received a phone call that the Muslims of the village wanted to meet him to discuss the sermon he had given in their village.

"I had come back home when someone informed me on the phone that the Muslims were angry over the sermon," Patras said. "I asked a few Christians to accompany me and we were just about to leave when the police arrived and arrested me."

Patras was charged under a section of Pakistan's blasphemy laws that carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison, according to the European Centre for Law and Justice, a France-based attorney group that uses litigation to press for religious freedom.

Syed Zulqarnain Shah did not attend the sermon, but in the complaint he filed with police he said that when he approached the religious gathering at the house of the bereaved family, he heard Patras say that the meat eaten by the Muslims on Eid-ul-Adha was like that of a dog. Patras denied the allegation completely.

The pastor said he drew his remarks from a passage in the Book of Isaiah: "But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a person, and whoever offers a lamb is like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense is like one who worships an idol."

"I did not have the Islamic feast in mind when I was referring to Isaiah 66 and saying that no animal sacrifice was needed anymore," Patras told World Watch Monitor.

After Patras had been arrested, a large number of Muslims gathered outside the police station, demanding that Patras be handed over to them. But the pastor already had been transferred to another location.

The protesters turned their attention to Patras' five sons, telling them to leave the village along with their families or else they would be captured and set on fire. That evening the five sons and their families loaded their belongings and left the village.

Patras' sons and other Christians later contacted Shah and explained to him that nothing offensive was said about the Islamic ritual of sacrifice. Shah told the Sangla Hill Judicial Magisterial Court on Feb. 22 that he had mistakenly accused Patras of committing blasphemy.

On June 10 a Pakistani lawyer for the European Centre for Law and Justice asked the court to drop the charges against Patras. On June 14 the judge called Shah into the court, where he "testified that he had mistakenly accused Pastor Karma Patras of speaking against Islam," the centre said.

Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws date to the British colonial era, and were mostly dormant until the 1980s rule of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. Critics of the laws say they have been used to settle scores, seize property and instigate communal violence against Christians. The laws are widely popular among voters, and public pressure to enforce them can be intense.

In January, however, the Pakistan Supreme Court agreed with a lower court that Rimsha Masih, a teen-aged girl accused in 2012 of burning Islamic texts, had been framed by a local imam. Shortly afterward, a Punjab state trial court tossed out a blasphemy case against a high school custodian, ruling that the charge was a pretext to an attempt to take his family's land. In April, an appeals court released a Christian man after his lawyers argued the blasphemy charge against him was based on hearsay.

Pakistan is No. 14 on the 2013 World Watch List, an annual ranking of the 50 countries where life as a Christian is most difficult. It is published by Open Doors International, a ministry to Christians living under pressure for their faith. Pakistan's "Christians are caught between Islamic militant organizations, an Islamizing culture and a weak government with a military complicit in fuelling Islamic militants," according to the list.

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## **Acts of vandalism and insults against a church: a Muslim man forgiven**

Agenzia Fides (27.06.2013) - Forgiveness, reconciliation, trust: with this attitude, the community of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in the Apostolic Vicariate in Quetta, Baluchistan province, handled a tricky issue. On the evening of June 23, a

young Muslim, Muhammad Naeem, entered the complex of the Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception in Quetta, reached the top of the roof with a hammer and damaged the cross of the church. The caretaker and other faithful Catholics were able to stop him and the police arrested him. Days before Muhammad Naeem had entered the church, had threatened the Christians present and used insulting words towards Jesus Christ.

The Oblate missionaries, members of a local "Peace Committee", in agreement with the youth's family and the police, did not want to "exaggerate" by denouncing him, but forgave him. As explained to Fides by Fr. Abid Saleem OMI, the next day an agreement was written between church leaders, police officers and Naeem's family members, according to which the young man was released. "We have forgiven him. Naeem and his family have signed a written obligation stating that such acts against Christians will not be repeated." The police accepted the agreement and the young person was released. Fr. Saleem told Fides that "the young man was manipulated by fundamentalists. We thought keeping him in prison was not the solution: Our revenge is forgiveness that makes him know who Lord Jesus Christ is, through an act of love and trust." The missionary says he is happy that "the representatives of religious minorities in the Provincial Assembly worked with us." Mgr. Victor Gnanapragasm OMI, Vicar Apostolic of Quetta, visited the Church of the Immaculate Conception, expressing his invitation to "keep calm and resolve the issue peacefully." (AG-PA)

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## **From social conflict to religious violence: fear of Christians in Punjab**

Agenzia Fides (26.06.2013) - Interfaith tension in Rahim Yar Khan, a town in Punjab. An episode of conflict between Christians and Muslims has generated mass protests of Christians and could escalate into open anti-Christian religious violence, partly because some would like to turn it into a case of blasphemy. This is what Gulshan Barkat, a Pakistani priest and missionary of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate told Fides Agency, "the situation remains tense and uncertain" in the area of Bheel Nagar, called by Christians "Nazareth Colony", in Rahim Yar Khan, where 250 Christian, 70 Hindu, 200 Muslim families live.

On 21 June a Catholic boy named Sam, 8 years old, was accused by a Muslim man of having insulted his daughter. The Muslim has relatives in the extremist group "Sipah-e-Sahaba" (banned by the government for terrorism) who went to Patras Sadeeq's home, Sam's father, to protest. The heated conversation degenerated into a scuffle. The Muslims called the police who arrested Sam's brother, Ashley, 12 years old. Following this unprovoked act, the Christian community in the area blocked the main road of the city. Thanks to the Catholic lawyer Qamar Iqbal, Ashley was released.

At that point the Christians decided to denounce Muslims for the attacks suffered before "these could invert the incident in a false case of blasphemy." In the meantime, the extremists belonging to the group "Sipa-e-Sahaba", about 100 armed men, took to the streets to put pressure on the police. Two faithful, Maqsood Barkat and Illyas Masih, while they were on their way to the police, they found themselves surrounded by 40 armed men, they were beaten and seriously injured. After the beating, Christians again took the streets, blocking traffic and freeing the circulation only after receiving guarantees of protection by the police. Also Fr. Francis Akuve, Catholic pastor of the Church of Santa Croce in Rahim Yar Khan, met the local chief police, presenting a letter and asking for a formal commitment from the police to ensure the safety of the Christians in Bheel Nagar. The next day there was a meeting between Christian and Muslim representatives of the community to try to pacify the situation. According to local

sources of Fides, there is fear of violent reactions or demonstrations by the extremist group "Sipah-e-Sahaba" against Christians.

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## **Illegal confiscation of Church property in Pakistan**

Aid to the church in need (12.06.2013) - A local Catholic leader in Pakistan has spoken out against the illegal confiscation of Church property by the government.

The Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Lahore in northern Pakistan, Bishop Sebastian Francis Shaw, deplored the illegal transfer into state ownership of a piece of land belonging to the Church.

He reported that the transfer has now also been formalized in the land register.

A Caritas center had previously stood on the confiscated land, which was torn down with heavy equipment under police protection on January 9, 2012.

The complex of buildings had included a day care center for old people, a sewing school for girls, a chapel and a convent for sisters, as well as further Catholic Church institutions.

The center has been in the possession of the Church since at least 1887.

"The provincial government had promised on many occasions to give the confiscated land back to us. But not only were these promises not kept, but meanwhile the property has even been transferred into state ownership in the relevant documents," Bishop Shaw said.

He made his report to international Catholic pastoral charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), saying that a court has already ruled that the transfer of the land to state property took place illegally.

Shaw further stated that, in his opinion, in the case of the severe unrest that occurred on March 9 in a Christian district of Lahore, some government representatives had "had an eye on the land" and wanted to drive out the inhabitants.

The police stood by and did nothing when, two days after accusations of blasphemy made against the Christian Sawan Masih on March 7, some 3,000 men attacked St. Joseph's Colony and set fire to 178 houses as well as two Christian churches.

In the Bishop's view, however, it is gratifying that expressions of solidarity with the victims have come from numerous Muslims, along with spontaneous offers of aid.

"A growing consciousness is developing among the population that we are all Pakistanis," the bishop said.

Bishop Shaw described how representatives of the government, Muslim scholars and a high-ranking Imam came together to visit the scene, give comfort to those affected and express their deep regret. This is the first time that such a thing has happened in this form, said Shaw.

"More and more voices are being raised saying that the whole congregation should not be punished when one of its members unconsciously or even consciously does wrong. This is a good sign."

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## **Victory in a blasphemy case in Pakistan**

ECLJ (10.06.2013) - The ECLJ is happy to inform you that our affiliate in Pakistan has successfully obtained a judgment of acquittal for our client, Pastor Karma Patras, who was falsely accused of blasphemy against Islam.

We have been representing Pastor Karma Patras, a resident of Sangla Hill in Pakistan since October 2012 when he was arrested and charged with Section 295-A of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). Section 295-A is part of Chapter XV of the PPC that covers offenses relating to religion or, commonly known as, blasphemy laws. Section 295-A punishes up to ten years in prison for "[d]eliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs."

Fifty-five-year old Pastor Patras was arrested in October 2012, for allegedly speaking out against the Islamic ritual of sacrifice. On the day of his arrest, Pastor Patras was invited to address a funeral gathering in a nearby village in Sheikhpura. He addressed the gathering at the bereaved family's home by sharing Jesus Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. After delivering the sermon, Pastor Patras went back to his home. A few hours later, the police arrived and arrested him. The pastor did not understand why he had been arrested. He was told that a Muslim man had accused him of speaking against Islam, specifically the Islamic ritual of sacrifice, during his sermon at the funeral. After Pastor Patras' arrest, a mob of Muslim men surrounded the police station and demanded that he be handed over to them, but Pastor Patras had already been transferred to another location by that time. When the mob could not take hold of the pastor, the local Muslims told his family to leave the village or they would be set on fire.

Pastor Patras was released on bail in February 2012. On June 10, 2013, Khurram Shahzad Maan, an attorney and the Director of ECLJ's affiliate in Pakistan, filed a petition of acquittal with the Judicial Magistrate's court. The court summoned the Muslim complainant today, and he testified that he had mistakenly accused Pastor Karma Patras of speaking against Islam. Attorney Maan argued for Pastor Patras' acquittal for lack of evidence. After hearing the testimony and the argument, the court accepted our petition and acquitted Pastor Karma of the charge.

Pastor Patras is very thankful for the support and prayers of all ECLJ members and the hard work of the team in Pakistan.

(Written by Shaheryar Gill who is an Associate Counsel with the ACLJ in Virginia and oversees ECLJ's work in Pakistan)

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## **Joseph Colony affected move LHC against governor**

The Express Tribune (08.06.2013) - **The Lahore High Court on Friday issued notices to the federal government and the Punjab governor regarding petitions by 28 Joseph Colony residents affected by the March 9 arson and rioting.**

They claimed that they had not received the compensation announced by the federal government. Justice Khalid Mahmood Khan of the LHC asked the respondents to file replies on the petitions within three weeks.

The petitions filed by Khurram Shehzad and others say that the Punjab government had announced compensation for those affected in the incident and instructed the city government to assess the damage to the houses.

City government officials investigated the losses and recommended compensation for 150 persons. The petitioners' counsel said that based on the city government's recommendation, the Punjab government paid compensation to those affected.

The federal government too had announced Rs500,000 compensation for each person affected in the incident. This money was to be distributed by the governor.

The petitioners said the governor gave the compensation to only 112 victims, while 38 were ignored. They accused the governor of discriminating on the basis of political affiliation. The petitioners said they had tried to contact the authorities concerned but were still not given the money. The petitioners claimed that their losses could not be covered with the amount paid by the Punjab government.

They submitted that the governor's action was discriminatory and thus a violation of the provisions in Article-124 of the Constitution. As citizens, they deserved to be treated on equal footing as they had faced similar losses, the petitioners submitted.

They prayed to the court to direct the federal government to give them the compensation awarded to them. The court heard the initial arguments and sought a reply from the government and governor in three weeks.

On March 10, President Asif Ali Zardari had announced Rs 0.5 million compensation for each of the affected. President Zardari had also met with former prime minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf regarding the incident and summoned Governor Ahmed Mehmood to Karachi to brief him. The president had then directed the governor to report the developments regarding the incident on a daily basis. He also asked him to distribute compensation cheques among those affected.

A 3,000-strong mob had torched more than 150 houses in Joseph Colony over alleged blasphemous remarks against Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by Sawan Masih, a 28-year-old Christian sanitation worker.

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## **Pressures of the police to save the rapists of a young Christian**

Agencia Fides (04.06.2013) - Sectors of the police have moved to save the rapists of a Christian girl, Fouzia Bibi, a 15-year-old in the district of Kasur in Punjab, brutally raped by two Muslim men Shabir Ali and Sher Mohammed, workers in the same agricultural farm where Fouzia's family works (see Fides 7/2 and 12/02/2013). Fouzia Bibi was abducted and raped repeatedly. After the the family had denounced what had happened, Shabir Ali was arrested for violence (Sher Mohammed remains on the loose), but the police had tried to close the case, declaring him innocent for lack of evidence.

The man's lawyers have now filed a bail application to the High Court of Lahore. Meanwhile, Fouzia Bibi's cousin, Ashiq Alam, who is helping Fouzia's family in the legal case, was in turn falsely accused of rape, with the help of some Police officials of the city of Muridkey. As reported to Fides by the Christian lawyer Mushtaq Gill, who is following

the case, it is an act of transverse intimidation to push Fouzia's father to withdraw the complaint.

Sexual violence against Christian girls is a practice that hundreds of girls suffer each year in Pakistan: in the general condition of subordination of women in the country, Christian girls are the most vulnerable and defenseless, as they belong to religious minorities. As Fides sources say, "they are often considered 'goods' by the powerful Muslim". (PA)

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## **Anti-blasphemy law creates a tinderbox in Pakistan**

The Globe and Mail (06.2013) - Tucked in a corner of old industrial Lahore – Pakistan's second-largest city of 10 million and the capital of Punjab province – is the Christian neighbourhood of Joseph Colony, home to more than 100 families and the latest example of the country's ongoing struggle with blasphemy laws.

In early March, a mob protesting against an alleged incident of blasphemy by a Christian resident of Joseph Colony started rampaging through the area's narrow footpaths and setting homes on fire.

The police had already evacuated the neighbourhood but did nothing to stop the mob from destroying property. Pakistan has witnessed historic elections – the first-ever civilian government completing a full five-year term and transferring power peacefully. But its anti-blasphemy laws continue to contribute to a tinderbox environment in which minorities bear the brunt of a culture quick to explode over perceived insults to Islam.

Amending the anti-blasphemy law would go a long way in protecting minorities who make up less than 5 per cent of the population and more than 50 per cent of anti-blasphemy cases.

"Whenever there is talk of amending the law ... those people who are suggesting the amendment are accused of blasphemy," said Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, executive director of the Islamabad-based Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency.

### ***A dictator's decree***

In the 1980s, the country's anti-blasphemy laws were amended to specify offences including the intentional desecration of the Koran, which carried a life sentence, and defaming the Prophet Mohammed, which carries either a death sentence or life in prison. The new laws were part of a wave of Islamization carried out by military dictator Zia-ul-Haq. What ailed Pakistan, according to the dictator, was that it had drifted from its Islamic roots.

Mr. Haq introduced reforms to the penal code and the courts – looking to sharia law for inspiration – and he helped foster the rise of the madrasa school system and a culture of jihad during an era when Pakistan funnelled U.S. money to Afghan fighters against the Soviet Union.

According to data compiled by Pakistani Christian and human-rights organizations, 1,122 people have been implicated in blasphemy cases from the 1980s until 2012.

Just over half of all cases belong to minority communities: Christian, Hindu and Ahmadi – a Muslim sect that is described by the Pakistan constitution as being non-Muslim and among the most persecuted communities in Pakistan. The remaining cases involve Muslims.

The 2011 murders of prominent opponents of the law – Punjab governor Salman Taseer, killed by his own bodyguard, and federal minorities minister Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian, killed on his way to work – led to international condemnation by human-rights groups. The Canadian government announced a posthumous award to Mr. Bhatti for his human-rights work.

The number of high-profile Pakistani politicians who have dared to speak up against the law can be counted on one hand.

By avoiding the issue, politicians continue to allow a law on the books that is used to make false allegations, settle scores and persecute minorities, human-rights activists say.

With any real hope of amending the law fading, there is talk of procedural changes that would take authority from lower court judges and local police officers and empower senior judges and police chiefs to investigate and hear alleged blasphemy cases as a way to avoid misuse of the law.

### ***One family's story***

In Lahore's Joseph Colony, the Christian Masih family gathered recently in the front room of one of their homes. Uncles, cousins and siblings share stories of those days in early March when Sawan Masih was accused of blasphemy and fiery protests followed. The rampage turned Joseph Colony's churches and more than 100 homes into a charred reminder for Pakistan's minorities that in this Muslim-majority country, being accused of desecrating the Koran or insulting the Prophet Mohammed carries a steep price – and that is even before a court hears the details of any blasphemy case.

"The only thing that was saved were the clothes we were wearing – otherwise we lost everything," said Khurram Bashir Masih, cousin of the accused.

Fear of another attack continues.

"People are running away from here. They're afraid," said Bushra Daniyal, Sawan's younger sister, sitting on the woven charpoy bed, as her nine-month old son climbs over her. Ms. Daniyal's father sits quietly in a lawn chair nearby.

Sawan Masih, a sanitation worker now in jail, is accused of insulting the Prophet Mohammed during a quarrel with a Muslim drinking buddy.

That same week, following Friday Muslim prayers, a mob converged outside the metal gates that lead in to the Joseph Colony neighbourhood's tightly packed two- and three-storey homes, demanding to see Mr. Masih.

Residents in this largely industrial area of Lahore known for its steel mills and traders knew that handing over Mr. Masih would mean his certain death.

Mr. Masih was eventually taken into protective police custody. But protests continued.

The following day, after a hurried evacuation, mobs ran through the neighbourhood pouring flammable chemicals on buildings. Police did not intervene.

Photographs showed young men cheering before cameras as black smoke billowed over Joseph Colony.

### **Search for justice**

Mr. Masih's family relations are still haunted.

They describe finding their Bibles burnt in the fire. They worry that pursuing a court case will only aggravate matters. Also, not a single person believes the perpetrators who burned down their homes will be brought to justice.

"This [police] investigation is very poor. That's why there's no chance [of a conviction]," said Sardar Mushtaq Gill, who wears the Pakistani lawyer's uniform: black suit, white shirt and black tie.

He is more confident about Mr. Masih's blasphemy case. As one of his lawyers, Mr. Gill believes that a higher court will eventually dismiss the case because it is based on "flimsy" evidence that Mr. Masih referred to the Prophet Mohammed as a "joota nabi," or false prophet, he said.

In the hot afternoon sun, Joseph Colony looks like a building site. Labourers carry pails of mortar on their heads along footpaths. Bricks are piled outside homes being repaired. The provincial government of Punjab gave most families 500,000 rupees, or \$5,200, in compensation, and offered to repair their homes and churches.

In the local market, Joseph Colony's Christians are taunted.

"You've become wealthy people," said a Muslim shop owner, as recalled by a resident of Joseph Colony.

But no amount of compensation can bring sukoon, or peace of mind, say residents.

The anti-blasphemy law has left a trail of fear. But law aside, vigilante justice has claimed 52 lives since 1990.

Inside the Lahore prison where Sawan Masih is being held, his sister Bushra Daniyal pays him a visit every Wednesday. His message during her most recent visit in early May is still raw.

"Get me out somehow or I'll do something to myself," he reportedly told her. She has not given up fighting for his release.

"I believe he will come home. I have faith in my God," she added.

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## **Report on Pakistan's Christian persecution suggests change in Blasphemy Law**

The Christian Post (28.05.2013) - A recently released, highly researched report conducted by a senior judge suggests that violence against Christians in Pakistan over the past five years could have been prevented by the country's local authorities.

The report also suggests that the country's blasphemy laws be modified to prevent future violence, primarily through removing special protection for Muslims and inserting punishment for those who exaggerate blasphemy accusations.

The Pakistani government reportedly ordered a senior judge to conduct a review following the anti-Christian riots which took place in 2009 in Gojra town, in the Punjab province of Pakistan, during which eight Christians were killed after angry mobs, fueled

by the rumor that a Quran had been desecrated, torched Christian homes, a church, and shot at Christians in the streets.

The mob, which accumulated strength in numbers over several days following encouraging sermons at local mosques, torched the Christian neighborhoods of Gojra after it was rumored that family members of a Christian couple used torn-up pieces of the Quran as confetti at a Christian wedding ceremony.

Although 113 suspects were arrested for their alleged involvement in the riots, no one was ultimately tried because no witnesses were willing to testify. One resident, Rafiq Masih, told the London Times shortly after the riots that police stood idly by while the rampage ensued.

According to The Christian Science Monitor, the recent report amounts to 318 pages and contains interviews with 600 people, including politicians and intelligence officials.

The purpose of the report is not only to address the 2009 incident but also to determine how to end the violence relating to more recent disputes, including an incident in April in which a Muslim mob attacked a Christian neighborhood in Gujranwala, resulting in the injury of five Christians and the damaging of property, including a church and vehicles.

As The Christian Science Monitor reports, the extensive research finds that local intelligence agencies and law enforcement were aware that the banned Muslim extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba was organizing riots against Christian neighborhoods in 2009, yet they did nothing to stop the violence.

In fact, the report states that police fled the scene of the riots when the violence grew unmanageable, instead of staying to protect the Christians who, according to reports from the London Times, sought shelter in their homes from the growing mob.

The conclusion of the report echoes similar urgings from the National Council of Churches in Pakistan and the country's Catholic Bishop Conference, which, following the violence in 2009, urged country officials to repeal its strict blasphemy laws. They argue that the laws favor Muslims and place hundreds of Christians in danger through no fault of their own.

The World Council of Churches called the country's blasphemy laws "a major source of victimization and persecution" of religious minorities, who live in "in a state of fear and terror."

The organization also called on Pakistan to "guarantee the rights of all religious minorities in the country."

The country's blasphemy laws are some of the strictest in the world, and include punishment – in some cases, imprisonment for life or death – for outraging the religious feelings of Muslims.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom also recently released its annual report in which it called on the U.S. government to designate Pakistan as one among eight other countries "of particular concern" in regards to its abuses against religious minorities.

"The government continues to fail to protect Christians, Ahmadis and Hindus," the report says of Pakistan, noting that allegations of blasphemy "are widely used to violate religious freedoms and foster a climate of impunity."

"Pakistan is in a crisis right now with these particularly severe violations of religious freedom," Knox Thames, the commission's director of policy and research, said in a statement, as reported by The Express Tribune.

Currently, Christians remain a small minority in the predominately Muslim country, making up about 1.6 percent of the population.

Continued violence in the country has resulted in some Christians retaliating by standing to defend their property instead of running for safety, as they have previously done, as seen when dozens of Christians sought to defend their homes during the neighborhood attacks in May in Gujranwala.

As one local bishop in the Lahore community previously told The Blaze, often times blasphemy accusations in the country really have to do with a personal dispute, but Muslims will falsely invoke blasphemy claims as payback.

Subsequently, politicians will not revoke the claims because they don't want to appear to be soft against blasphemers.

The country evidently does take blasphemy seriously, as two politicians were assassinated in 2011 for urging to reform blasphemy laws.

Still, occasionally accusers have been charged. In November 2012, a Pakistani court threw out the blasphemy charges against a teenage Christian girl who was accused of burning pages of the Quran.

The girl was freed on the grounds that the accusations against her were not legally sound, and her accuser, a Muslim cleric, was arrested for apparently tampering with evidence, although he was later released on bail.

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## **Pakistan's Ahmadis face rising persecution, violence**

RFE/ RL (21.05.2013) - One of the many religious minorities whose plight is documented in the latest U.S. State Department report on religious freedom is the Ahmadiyya community, or the Ahmadis.

The Ahmadis consider themselves Muslim, but that is a view rejected by mainstream Islamic sects. And in Pakistan, as RFE/RL correspondents Daud Khattak and Frud Bezhan report, Ahmadis have come under assault not only from extremist religious groups but also from the government.

Pakistan's minority Ahmadi sect has become the target of rising sectarian violence, with its burial grounds, mosques, and homes coming under assault.

Authorities have done little to stem the attacks, with the government still refusing to grant the community equal status.

Those were the findings documented by the U.S. State Department's 2012 International Religious Freedom Report, which was released on May 20. The report said Pakistan's Ahmadis, who number between 2-4 million, are being harassed, detained, and banned from practicing their faith.

Under Pakistani law, the Ahmadis cannot refer to themselves as Muslims or engage in

any Muslim practices, including using Islamic greetings, calling their places of worship mosques, or participating in the hajj, or holy pilgrimage. Ahmadis risk imprisonment for up to three years and a fine if they break those laws, according to the report.

According to Ameer Mehmood, who is a spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community, the Pakistani government's "anti-Ahmadi laws" have helped foster a climate of violence with authorities doing little to stop attacks against Ahmadis.

"There is no safety for Ahmadis in Pakistan," he says. "It is because the laws against Ahmadis are not only providing a base for extremist elements of society, but also for the government of Pakistan to file cases against Ahmadis on the basis of those laws and to harass them."

There are roughly 10 million Ahmadis around the world. The group's members are followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the man who founded the movement in British India in 1889 and who Ahmadis believe was a messiah and prophet. For the mainstream Islamic sects, that contradicts a cornerstone of their faith -- that Muhammad was the final prophet.

### ***Systematic Persecution***

Those beliefs have seen the Ahmadis come under pressure in a number of countries, including Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, the State Department report says. In Pakistan, members of the community have been systematically persecuted by both mainstream Muslim sects and the government.

In the 1970s, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto passed an amendment to the Pakistani Constitution declaring that anyone who does not believe Muhammad was the last prophet would be deemed a non-Muslim. Under the rule of military dictator Zia ul-Haq in the 1980s, practicing the Ahmadi faith was declared a "blasphemous" criminal offense.

Mehmood says that Ahmadis are denied fundamental human rights such as access to education and the right to vote. He claims Pakistani laws put pressure on Ahmadis to renounce their beliefs to gain the same rights as other Pakistanis.

The U.S. State Department's report says, "Those wishing to be listed as Muslims on their national identity card, which is needed to vote, must swear their belief that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet and denounce the Ahmadi Muslim movement's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslim."

Ahmadis are only allowed to vote for parliamentary seats reserved for non-Muslims and, since they refuse to declare themselves non-Muslims, they do not vote.

"For Ahmadis, discrimination starts with birth and continues until death," says Mehmood. "It occurs not only in employment but even in educational institutions. A student is only a student and he does not preach anything. But Ahmadis are being expelled from educational institutions. Then they are being deprived of the right to live, which is the basic right of every human being. Then after death, it is the right of every individual to be buried with respect, but I think Ahmadis are not safe even in their graves after death in Pakistan."

### ***Stark Choice***

Mehmood maintains that Ahmadis have been particularly harassed by extremist religious groups. He claims such groups have issued fatwas, or religious edicts, calling for Ahmadis to be killed.

"There are both good and bad people in every society," he says. "But the tragedy is that the extremist elements, though small in number, have taken the whole Pakistani society hostage. They are spreading hate against Ahmadis in open conferences where they issue fatwas to kill Ahmadis. They ask for Pakistanis to boycott Ahmadis and thus Ahmadis cannot follow their faith or properly carry out other business related to their faith."

Even mainstream politicians have added to the marginalization of the group. On May 4 Imran Khan, the cricket star turned politician, said during a campaign rally that he did not regard Ahmadis as Muslims and would not campaign for their votes.

Mehmood suggests that Ahmadis face a stark choice in Pakistan. They can follow their faith and risk persecution and death or they can convert or leave the country. Thousands of Ahmadis from the subcontinent have left, with large communities now living in Britain and the United States.

"Of course, this is becoming a very common thing in Pakistani society," Mehmood says. "They are holding open conference and issuing threats that Ahmadis have one choice [to stop following their faith]. Then they issue statements in the Pakistani media saying Ahmadis have two choices: Either join other Muslims or leave Pakistan."

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## **Chinese man accused of insulting Quran held**

***Lee was reportedly moving the belongings of a Pakistani doctor, named Sajid, who was hired by the consortium and had a dispute with the management about relocation. The doctor refused to vacate the room and Lee threw out his luggage including the Quran, stirring protests.***

Ahmadiyya Times (18.05.2013) - A Chinese national working for an energy company was taken into protective custody on Saturday in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, after he endured threats over alleged insult of the Quran, news reports said citing Pakistani officials.

Lee Ping, the administration manager of a Chinese consortium building the Neelum Jhelum Hydropower project, was accused of throwing the Quran on the ground, sparking protests, the AFP news agency reported from Muzaffarabad, close to where the alleged incident took place.

Blasphemy is a serious offense in Pakistan, where dozens were charged last year and at least 16 people remain on death row, while another 20 serve life sentences, according to a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report.

"We have taken [Lee] Ping into protective custody after protests erupted in the company when Pakistani laborers saw him throwing the belongings of a Pakistani worker including the Quran," Sardar Gulfraz, a senior police official, told AFP.

Lee was reportedly moving the belongings of a Pakistani doctor, named Sajid, who was hired by the consortium and had a dispute with the management about relocation. The doctor refused to vacate the room and Lee threw out his luggage including the Quran, stirring protests.

The incident occurred at midday on Friday, when Muslims offer their main weekly prayers.

An angry mob reportedly damaged vehicles and windows inside the company premises.

Lee has been moved to a secret location for protection, police told AFP. Lee will be charged under the blasphemy law only if Pakistani authorities confirm that he was involved in a serious violation, police said.

Last July, police arrested a man who appeared to suffer from a mental disability for allegedly burning the Quran. A mob led by local clerics attacked the police station, pulled the victim out and burned him alive, the HRW report stated.

In another incident, last August, a teenage Christian girl from an Islamabad suburb with a "significantly lower mental age," was accused of blasphemy for burning pages filled with Quran verses.

Although police successfully evaded a mob demanding that the girl be handed to them, the local Christian community, comprising some 400 families, had to flee their homes following threats. An investigation that followed found that local cleric Khalid Chishti fabricated evidence against the girl to rid the neighborhood of Christians. In September, police officials stated the girl was released and given state protection at an undisclosed location, the HRW report added.

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## **Pakistan election: Christians in alliance with Islamists in Lahore**

BBC News (09.05.2013) - At first glance, the sight of flags with black and white stripes fluttering atop several Christian homes in the run-down Joseph Colony neighbourhood of Lahore seems highly incongruous.

The flags are those of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Pakistan's largest Islamic religious party, which is often described as being close to the Taliban. The JUI-F and the Christian community are definitely not natural bedfellows.

The flags seem all the more out of place when one considers that this neighbourhood was attacked by a Muslim mob in March on the pretext that one of its residents blasphemed against Islam. More than 50 houses were destroyed and hundreds were left homeless.

So why should the JUI-F be supported here of all places ahead of general elections on 11 May?

For Joseph Colony's Christian residents, the answer is straightforward.

"JUI-F leaders were the only ones who approached us after the carnage and offered us both moral and material support," says Daniel, 30, a local resident.

"The only other party to do the same was [another Islamist party] the Jamaat-e-Islami. None of the others came to ask how we were managing under the open sky during those hard days."

### **Strong voice**

Later, the Punjab government provided financial assistance for homeless people to rebuild their homes. But residents say some rebuilding funds also came from the JUI-F.

Muslim hardliners attacked Christians in the Joseph Colony area in March

So is the drift of religious minorities towards the JUI-F a new phenomenon?

"Certainly not," says Jan Assakzai, the party's spokesman in Islamabad.

"The JUI-F has a history of standing up for minority rights [which] goes back a long way."

After the 2008 elections, the JUI-F became the first political party to select a Christian woman, Aasia Nasir, for one of its parliamentary seats reserved for women.

Women have 60 reserved seats in the Pakistani parliament, filled by MPs nominated by their parties. No other party has ever nominated a non-Muslim woman for one of these seats.

During the last five years, Mrs Nasir has been a strong voice in the parliament, often using harsh words against the "Muslim mindset" that led to incidents like the 2009 riots in Gojra in which at least eight Christians were burnt to death and 24 Christian homes were set on fire.

### ***Divisions narrowed***

The Christian community also remembers clearly the 2011 assassination of former minority affairs minister Shahbaz Bhatti, in addition to the more recent Joseph Colony incident.

The JUI-F leadership tends to eliminate social and political concepts that separate Muslims from other religious groups"

"If I were a member of any other party, I would have been expelled for the language I sometimes used in the parliament," Mrs Nasir says.

Instead she and other minority members of the JUI-F are regularly consulted on matters concerning minorities and on other major issues.

"We at the JUI-F are best placed to narrow the divisions between the Muslims and the religious minorities," Mrs Nasir says.

"This is because we have an authentic Muslim religious leadership which is widely respected in Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and the Pakistani tribal areas."

Mrs Nasir is now campaigning for the JUI-F in Joseph Colony and other Christian settlements in Lahore where the party has fielded candidates.

Another Christian party campaigner in Lahore is Akram Waqar Gill, a JUI-F member for 18 years. He is now president of the party's minorities wing in Punjab province.

Mr Gill spearheaded efforts to investigate a case in 2012 in which a young Christian girl, Rimsha Masih, was accused of blasphemy by a Muslim cleric.

### ***Controversial blasphemy law***

He says that a JUI-F committee held internal hearings and concluded that the girl had been wrongly accused by elements that wanted to occupy lucrative land on which a small Christian community lived in the vicinity of Islamabad.

Christians in Joseph Colony are still carrying out repairs from violence in April

Charges against the girl were dropped by a court a few months later.

"The JUI-F does not oppose Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law, but party chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman does support the view that steps should be taken to stop its misuse by commercial interests and land-grabbing mafias," Mr Gill says.

More significantly, in 2008 the JUI-F blocked a government proposal to build a dam on the Hingol river in Balochistan province that would have inundated the ancient Hindu cave-temple of Hinglaj.

Dr Jay Prakash, a JUI-F member for 20 years and twice a minister in the Balochistan cabinet, played a key role in stopping the move from going ahead.

"When it became apparent that the federal government's plan to build the Hingol dam was going to affect the temple, I opposed it, and took the matter to the party which then shared power with the PPP party both in the centre and in Balochistan," Dr Prakash said.

The JUI-F's consultations with alliance partners led to a unanimous Balochistan parliament resolution rejecting the dam project.

The JUI-F is the only religious party to have built alliances with secular parties like the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Awami National Party (ANP).

Perhaps because of this image, it has angered Sunni Muslim hardliners and militants, creating a deep enmity with them.

"In the past, the militants have killed a number of key leaders of the party," JUI-F spokesman Jan Assakzai says. "Maulana Fazlur Rahman has survived two suicide attacks."

Just this week two of the party's election candidates were targeted in the north-west, while its candidates in Punjab have also been attacked by hardline groups.

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## **When will cases of blasphemy be filed against the Muslim attackers?**

***Sections 295 and 295A of the Pakistan Penal Code do not differentiate between Islam and Christianity***

Asian Human Rights Commission (12.03.2013) - These are just two of the photos, among many, taken during the attack on Joseph Colony, a Christian residential area in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. The pictures tell the real story of the attack by Muslim extremists at the instigation of members of the assemblies from the ruling party of Punjab. In the photographs the attackers themselves committed blasphemy by setting fire to the items belonging to a Church. As a direct result of the attack hundreds of copies of the Bible (the Christian holy), were destroyed. The Muslim attackers also desecrated

the Cross by throwing it on the fire thereby sending a message to over seven million Pakistani Christians that for them, there have no place in Pakistan despite the fact that the country's Constitution guarantees freedom of religion and equal rights to all. In an Islamic Pakistan there can be no freedom of religion or equal rights for anyone and this includes the minority Islamic sects.

It must be asked as to why the government of Punjab has not taken action against the Muslim blasphemers and filed cases against them for desecrating the property, holy books and places of worship of the Christians.

The incident of the ransacking, looting and burning of 180 Christian houses and two Churches in Joseph colony happened on March 9 after the filing of a baseless and false case of Blasphemy by the police on the complaint of a Muslim liquor peddler. The arrest of Sarwan Masih was carried out without any investigation but merely on the word of a criminal.

In the case of a Blasphemy accusation the police act quickly without performing the legal requirements of investigation. With regard to blasphemy cases, in the year 2004, it was made compulsory that no police officer below the level of Superintendent of Police (SP) can investigate the charges. However, this has never been adhered to. Under pressure from Muslim extremists the ordinary police official files the case in an effort to appease them. Furthermore this is done with the knowledge of the government.

It is evident from the history of the country that on hundreds of occasions the residential areas and places of worships of Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis and Shias have been attacked and burned. In these incidents their sacred symbols and holy books were burned and defiled by spitting on them. However, there has never been a single case of blasphemy filed against the attackers who were from powerful Muslim groups who have the patronage of the military and the state itself. This is despite the fact that on the occasions when Ahmadi and Shia places of worship their copies of the Quran were destroyed. The Quran is the holy book of Islam, and there is no difference in these books despite the differing sects. Somehow it is all right to destroy a Quran belonging to an Ahmadi or a Shia but not one belonging to a powerful Muslim group. This means that Muslim groups from powerful sects have the authority to file blasphemy cases but others do not have the same right. It is blatantly obvious that the state thinks that Blasphemy laws only apply to the religious minority groups. Can it be that 'Might makes Right'?

The Muslim pressure groups are so strong that the police always follow the dictate of these bigots who show their power through the illegal misuse of mosques loudspeakers. The mosques, by law, are not allowed to use loudspeakers for any other purpose than calling (Azan) for prayers but there is no political will to stop them using the loudspeakers for any purpose they chose.

The attacks on religious minorities will not stop until such time as the state issues warrants of arrest on charges of blasphemy against the attackers. Section 295 of the Pakistan Penal Code states as follows:

*Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction damage or defilement as an insult to their religion shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.*

It is important to note that no one religious belief is mentioned in this section but rather applies to all religions. In the same spirit Section 295A continues:

*Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the 'Religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Pakistan, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, or with fine, or with both.*

In view of the above there can be no plausible reason as to why the state and the government of Punjab has not taken action against the attackers on charges relating to these two Sections.

The Asian Human Rights Commission urges the governments of Pakistan to take a serious look at the situation which has occurred and which will continue to occur if equal rights are not applied to all citizens regardless of their religion. Therefore the AHRC urges that cases of blasphemy be filed against the Muslim attackers, the two members of the assemblies of the ruling party, PML-N and the high ranking police officers of the province who apply the laws according to the dictates of the powerful.

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## **Muslim mob burns scores of Christian homes in Lahore**

The Express Tribune (09.03.2013) - A highly-charged mob of thousands burnt more than 40 Christian houses in Badami Bagh area of Lahore on Saturday to "take revenge of the blasphemy" allegedly committed by a Christian two days earlier.

Express News had earlier reported that around 100 houses were burnt by the mob.

Eyewitnesses said that the mob broke into the houses, looted them and burnt the remaining belongings on the roads.

SSP Operations Suhail Sukhera and the SHO of Badami Bagh were also reportedly injured when the mob pelted a police party with stones.

Punjab Law Minister Rana Sanaullah told Express News that he saw no reason for the mob's violence especially after the person accused of blasphemy had been arrested on Friday. He added that cases have been registered against those responsible for Saturday's vandalism and that they will be prosecuted.

Sanaullah added that all those whose property had been damaged will be compensated within five days.

Shahi Imran, who had filed the blasphemy FIR, told The Express Tribune that he was not responsible for the incident and he had left the area when the mob arrived to burn the houses. He maintained that the accused should be taught a lesson but the other Christian families should not be harmed.

SSP Sukhera, when contacted, denied that the houses were set on fire and said that the police personnel was present in the area.

On Friday, a mob of almost 3,000 people forced the Christian community to flee for their lives, leaving behind their houses and possessions unprotected.

The charged group had gathered around Joseph Colony on Noor Road, led by Shafiq Ahmed, who was in search of the accused Savan, alias Bubby. The mob then attacked Savan's house, setting it on fire and pelting it with stones. Other houses in the locality -

home to about 150 Christian families - were also attacked. Many residents, including women and children, hastily fled to save themselves.

Savan was arrested and shifted to an undisclosed location.

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## **Shia targeted by extremists: over 50 dead and 150 wounded**

AsiaNews (04.03.2013) - Tension remains high in Karachi, Sindh province, southern Pakistan, where yesterday a devastating explosion in a predominantly Shiite area caused more than 50 deaths and at least 150 wounded. Hashim Raza Zaidi, a senior official from the local government, said that "the death toll could rise, because the conditions of at least half of the wounded are highly critical." In recent weeks, the Asian nation - due to hold general elections in the near future - has seen an escalation of sectarian, ethnic and confessional violence. The last serious incident dates back to mid-February, [when the minority Hazara were attacked in Quetta](#) causing almost two hundred dead.

The explosion - a car bombing according to preliminary reports - invested two five-story buildings located in the district of Abbas, in a predominantly Shiite area of the metropolis of Karachi. Following the blast a huge blaze broke out that has trapped many of the residents in the apartments. The blast shattered windows of buildings and caused the collapse of balconies and terraces, with extensive damage to hundreds of houses and shops in the area. The explosion was triggered as the faithful were leaving a local mosque. It is possible that the Shiite worshipers were the target of the attack, in which, however, many Sunni Muslims, the vast majority in the country, were also killed.

Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf was already in Karachi at the time of the attack, he canceled all commitments on his agenda, to coordinate rescue operations. So far there have been no claims of responsibility, even if investigators are concentrating on Sunni extremist groups.

Karachi is a city of over 13 million inhabitants - the most populous in Pakistan - and it is an explosive mixture of criminal gangs, land lords, drug traffickers, communal violence, political rivalries and Islamic fundamentalism. However, the police report that murders of a confessional nature are only 20% of the total. This despite claims by human rights associations and activists, according to which the central government and local authorities have done little or nothing to stem divisions and violence.

2012 was one of the most terrible years for Shiites, with a bloody toll that speaks more than 400 deaths in several attacks, including 125 in the province of Baluchistan where there is a strong Hazaras presence. With more than 180 million people (of which 97% profess Islam), Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world and is the second largest among the Muslim countries after Indonesia. About 80% are Sunni Muslim, while the Shiites are 20% of the total. There are also Hindus (1.85%), Christians (1.6%) and Sikhs (0.04%). Violence against ethnic or religious minorities is commonplace all over the country, from the province of Punjab to Karachi in southern Sindh province, where in the first eight months of 2012 more than 2,200 people were killed.

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## Shia genocide - Military and militants

By Yousuf Nazar

Asian Human Rights Commission (23.02.213) - Pakistan's top military spokesman Director General (DG) Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Asim Salim Bajwa on Thursday spoke with the media and rejected the impression that any banned organisation was being supported, saying that the armed forces were not in contact with any militant organisation including Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ). The government arrested LeJ's leader Malik Ishaq Friday 22 February for the second time in the last six months in an apparent bid to calm growing public anger at its inaction after more than 100 people died in a bomb blast in Quetta in Balochistan province on last Saturday. He may be out soon!

The LeJ has claimed responsibility for two bomb blasts in Quetta so far in 2013 targeting Shia Hazaras that killed over 210 men, women, and children. In 2012, at least 325 members of the Shia Muslim population were killed in targeted attacks that took place across Pakistan. In Balochistan province, over 100 were killed, most of them from the Hazara community.

During the last decade, over 2000 Shia Hazara community children have been killed or wounded in attacks perpetrated by terrorists in southwestern town of Quetta of Pakistan's turbulent Balochistan province. Many hundreds of Shia Muslims have been killed in northern areas of Pakistan such as Gilgit, Baltistan, Parachinar and Chelas. The attacks on Shia Muslims since the year 2000 have not been limited to Balochistan or the northern areas and major cities like Karachi and Lahore have also seen target killings of Shias. Historically since the 1980s, Pakistan's biggest province Punjab had been at the centre of Shia-Sunni sectarian tensions but while there it is now mostly peaceful in Punjab – the power base of the LeJ- Balochistan has been hit hard by a wave of Shia killings in the last few years that can hardly be described as sectarian conflict. It is genocidal.

During the last few days Pakistan's intelligence services have come under fire for their failure to stop the killings, at the very least, and for complicity at worst. Khwaja Mohammad Asif, a senior lawmaker from the opposition, demanded that "all institutions responsible for security" — including secret agencies, the paramilitary Frontier Corps operating in Balochistan and police — should be called "so the representatives of 180 million people (of Pakistan) ask them why the nation is so unsafe". Hamid Mir, one of Pakistan's leading journalists and TV anchors, said the Pakistan's intelligence services had ignored a tide of sectarian bloodshed after deliberately creating "private death squads" to fight a war against separatists in the country's troubled Baluchistan province.

Many analysts accuse the military intelligence of complicity and protecting Malik Ishaq – the leader of LeJ. He was released on bail by Pakistan's Supreme Court in July 2011 after spending 12 years in jail. On his release, he was received outside the prison by leaders of Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), banned in 2001 as a terrorist organization but now renamed to Ahle Sunnat wal Jamaat (ASWJ). The ASWJ leader heading the welcome party was Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Ludhianvi who came in handy when the current Army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, called on Ishaq to talk to the terrorists who had attacked Army General Headquarters in Rawalpindi in October 2009. The Army chief's personal plane had carried Ishaq to Rawalpindi, while another plane belonging to the ISI chief, Gen. Shuja Pasha, carried Ludhianvi, according to the reports published in Newsweek Pakistan, and daily newspapers, the Express Tribune and the News International.

After his release, Ishaq has been participating in political activities and even appeared at public rallies at least one of which was attended by Pakistan's former ISI Chief Lt. General Hamid Gul. Ishaq was briefly detained for making a 'provocative' speech in August 2012 from Lahore airport on his return from Saudi Arabia where he had gone for a "short visit". He was quickly released on 'bail' by a lower court. According to the British daily Guardian, Saudi Arabia was described as the world's largest source of funds for Islamist militant groups in a secret December 2009 paper signed by Hilary Clinton.

Most noticeable and significant development has been the dramatic rise in attacks on Shias since Ishaq's apparent rehabilitation which started in October 2009, finally leading to his release in July 2011. On 28 December 2009, as many as 40 Shias were killed in an apparent suicide bombing on a Shia procession in Karachi. Another attack took place on 1 September 2010 in Lahore where at least 35 Shia were killed and 160 people sustained injuries during a Shia procession. Another occurred on 3 September 2010 in the city of Quetta which killed around 56 people during another Shia procession.

During 2011, most of the attacks on Shias took place in Balochistan marking the shift in focus from other parts of Pakistan. Over 70 Shias died in Balochistan, mainly in or near the provincial capital Quetta, in at least eight major incidents that involved use of rocket launchers, bomb blasts, and open massacre such as shooting Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran by road.

In 2012, at least 325 members of the Shia Muslim population were killed in targeted attacks that took place across Pakistan, about one-third of them in Balochistan province, which is the smallest in terms of population and accounts for just around 4% of Pakistan's total population of 190 million.

According to the New York Times, the murders in Quetta (a small city of around 2 million) involve remarkably little mystery. In a report published 3 December 2012, the paper said: "by wide consensus, the gunmen are based in Mastung, a dusty agricultural village 18 miles to the south that is the bustling local hub of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, the country's most notorious sectarian militant group". Earlier on 20 September 2012 gunmen opened fire on Shia Muslim pilgrims travelling by bus through Mastung, killing 26 people. On 30 December 2012 the terrorists struck again in Mastung as remotely-triggered bomb hit a convoy of three buses carrying Shia pilgrims to Iran and killed 19 people and injured 25.

Abdul Khaliq Hazara, a leader of the Hazara Democratic Party, mainly consisting of Shia Muslims, told Al Jazeera TV's Jane Dutton 18 February 2013, "they are trying intentionally, in Quetta district, to promote religious extremism. So I think they are provoking our community to be involved; they are going to drag us into sectarianism. But our people are very peaceful people".

The accusations that Pakistan's military establishment is using Islamic militants and extremists to promote religious extremism are more than just accusations given the long history of Pakistani establishment in using them as both a foreign policy and domestic politics tool. Former military dictator Pervez Musharraf helped a coalition of religious parties win provincial elections in 2002 in the northwest frontier province (now renamed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). The coalition was led by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) which ran seminaries that gave birth to the Talibans.

The military establishment has faced tough resistance from secular Baloch nationalist groups for most periods of Pakistan's history but that resistance turned into a province wide insurgency after a leading Baloch leader Akbar Bugti was killed in a military operation in 2006. Instead of seeking a political solution, Pakistan's security establishment started a ruthless campaign of crushing the dissidents and insurgents

through all possible means. In April 2011, the Army began a limited withdrawal from the cantonments and turned much of the security responsibility to the Frontier Corps (FC), at least nominally. But FC is also headed by a serving Major General. The province is now in the middle of its fourth major episode of insurgency, following major outbreaks in 1948, 1963–69, and 1973–78.

President of the Balochistan High Court Bar Association, the province's lawyer's body, Hadi Shakeel told Pakistan's Supreme Court in February 2011 that there were more than 5,000 cases of 'forced disappearances' in Balochistan. A three-member-bench headed by Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammad Chaudhry conducted many hearings on the petition filed on the law and order situation in Balochistan. On 27 September 2012, the chief justice told the province's top civilian bureaucrat to discuss the issue with the president, Director General (DG) of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) and DG Military Intelligence (MI) and to inform the court in writing as to what steps are being taken to improve the situation. This was a clear indication of the active involvement of the military intelligence agencies as well as the recognition of that fact by the country's highest court.

It is important to note that the Pakistan military including the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard all maintain a presence in Balochistan, while the most significant branch is the Army. The Pakistan Army XII Corps, commanded by a three star general who serves concurrently as the commander of the southern command, is based in Quetta. The Pakistan Air Force operates four bases in Balochistan. The primary base is Samungli in Quetta and is home to the 31st Fighter Wing. The other three smaller bases include Shahbaz, Pasni, and Faisal. The Pakistan Navy operates four naval bases on the Arabian Sea in Balochistan. The primary base is the deep water port of Gwadar in western Balochistan which is the second largest port in Pakistan after Karachi. The port is also home to the 3rd Battalion of the Pakistan Coast Guard. The three smaller naval bases are located in Jiwani, Ormara, and Pasni.

The Pakistan Intelligence community also maintains a significant presence in Balochistan. The Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI) is responsible for strategic intelligence as well as conducting operations has a large element in Quetta. The ISI's Joint Signals Intelligence Bureau (JISB) operates signal intelligence collection stations in Saindak which covers the western border and in Gwadar which cover the shipping lanes of the Gulf of Oman. In addition to the ISI each service has military intelligence assets, collectively known as MI, which support tactical requirements. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) is the oldest intelligence entity in Pakistan which traces its heritage back to British India. The IB conducts federal investigations in Balochistan along the lines of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation and also supports the military establishment. Finally, there are the special branches of the provincial and local law enforcement that conduct criminal intelligence.

Given the extensive presence of the security agencies and their operations particularly since 2006, it is absurd to try to portray Balochistan as some place like North Waziristan. Anybody who is anybody in Pakistan knows well who runs Balochistan and the nature of the military operations inside it. But the most damning indictment of the extra-legal activities of the military intelligence agencies came when the chief justice said that the 'Death squads' of ISI and MI agencies should be abolished.

In some other country, this would have created a major political and legal crisis and many top heads would have rolled if its chief justice acknowledged that the state operated death squads but not in Pakistan. On the contrary, the alleged proxies of the intelligence agencies have struck with greater force in the last five months after the remarks of the chief justice. Gunmen in Quetta operate with impunity. Sometimes, they don't even take the trouble of wearing masks to hide their identity, and kill Shias in the city's streets and markets in broad daylight.

Clearly, Pakistan's security establishment is unwilling to stop the growing power of dreadful extremists of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi while their own 'death squads' have the reputation of pursuing and killing insurgents with great efficiency. It seems that as in the past; like the use of the Talibans in the 1990s, that of local militant groups in Kashmir, and that of sectarian groups like the SSP in the 1980s, the security establishment considers the LeJ as an ally in Balochistan with the apparent aim of controlling the unruly province with the help of religious forces that have little in common with the secular orientation of the Baloch rebels and are controlled by ethnic Punjabis like Malik Ishaq. LeJ and their Pakistani allies are believed to have the sympathies if not the active support of the Saudis although there seems to be little doubt about the funds that generously flow to these groups from the Arabian Gulf. These militants are also hostile to the neighbouring Shia Iran due to their religious beliefs. Hazara Shias, a peaceful community, has thus become a victim and cannon fodder in this high stake and deadly game to promote hatred and extremism in order to keep Balochistan under the grip of the security establishment which has found the challenge of fighting the insurgents rather daunting in the last six years. But Pakistani people and the World must not allow innocent and peaceful Hazara Shias to become a 'collateral damage' in this extremely sensitive part of the region and Pakistan because the repercussions could spill over across the region and within Pakistan, with possibly catastrophic consequences.

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## **Suicide bomber hits Pakistani mosque**

AP (01.02.2013) - A suicide bomber detonated his explosives outside a Shiite mosque in northwestern Pakistan as worshipers were leaving Friday prayers, killing 22 people and wounding over 30 in the latest apparent sectarian attack in the country, police said.

Shiite Muslims in Pakistan have increasingly been targeted by radical Sunnis who consider them heretics, and 2012 was the bloodiest year for the minority sect in the country's history.

The attack on the mosque took place in the town of Hangu in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which has experienced previous clashes between the Sunni and Shiite communities that live there.

The bomber staged his attack at one of the mosque's exits leading to a bazaar, said Hangu police chief Mian Mohammad Saeed.

The blast damaged several small shops and peppered a wall with shrapnel, leaving scores of pockmarks, according to local television footage. Ambulances rushed in to pick up the dead and wounded, as police tried to keep back onlookers in the crowded bazaar.

The explosion killed 22 and wounded over 30 people, said another police officer, Naeem Khan. One policeman who was guarding the mosque was killed and another was injured. Most of the dead and wounded were Shiites, but some of the casualties were also from the country's majority sect since there is a Sunni mosque nearby, said Khan.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but suspicion will likely fall on the Pakistani Taliban or Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which have both carried out bombings against Shiites.

The worst sectarian violence in Pakistan in recent years has been in southwestern Baluchistan province, which has the largest concentration of Shiites in the country. A twin bombing last month at a billiards hall in the provincial capital, Quetta, killed 86 people, most of them Shiites.

According to Human Rights Watch, more than 400 Shiites were killed in targeted attacks in Pakistan in 2012, including over 120 in Baluchistan.

Sectarian militant groups, such as Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, have increased their strength through alliances with al Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban, which has been waging a bloody insurgency against the government for the past several years.

Rights organizations have criticized the Pakistani government for not doing enough to crack down on the attacks against Shiites.

Pakistan's intelligence agencies helped nurture Sunni militant groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in the 1980s, to counter a perceived threat from neighboring Iran, which is mostly Shiite. Pakistan banned Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in 2001, but the group continues to operate fairly freely.

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## **Pakistan Supreme Court confirms decision to drop blasphemy case**

***Rimsha Masih now free; lawyers say she always will be at risk in Pakistan***

World Watch Monitor (16.01.2013) — The Pakistan Supreme Court on Tuesday threw out an appeal to reopen a blasphemy case against a 14-year-old Christian girl, who had been accused of burning verses from the Koran.

Rimsha Masih had been acquitted of the charges in November by the High Court in Islamabad. A Muslim cleric was subsequently charged with fabricating evidence against the girl. The lower court's decision was appealed to the nation's highest court.

One of the girl's lawyers, Thahir Naveed Chaudhry, confirmed the Supreme Court's rejection of the appeal to World Watch Monitor. Separately, Federal Minister for National Harmony Paul Bhatti told Asia News he was satisfied with the decision of the Supreme Court confirming "Rimsha Masih is innocent."

According to Vatican Radio, the minister said these were "days of stress and tension" but "justice had prevailed". Bhatti is the brother of Shahbaz Bhatti, the government Minorities Minister who was assassinated for calling for reform of Pakistan's anti-blasphemy law.

Although Rimsha was 14 at the time of her arrest last summer, her developmental age is said to be lower. Some reports say she has Down syndrome and has never received an education.

Prior to Tuesday's ruling, Vatican sources said the decision to appeal at the Supreme Court may have been taken for political reasons to appease fundamentalists ahead of the parliamentary elections later this year.

Fr. Mario Rodrigues, director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Pakistan, told the Vatican information service, Fides: "On the one hand there is the political manipulation of Rimsha's case; on the other hand there are some mullahs who insist. Moreover, there is a right to lodge an appeal."

Rimsha was arrested Aug. 16 after being accused of burning pages on which were printed verses from the Koran, a violation of Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws. The girl, who lived in Meranabadi, a poor Christian district outside Islamabad, was held for three weeks in an adult prison in Rawalpindi, before being released on bail in September.

After being granted bail, Rimsha had to be airlifted by police helicopter to avoid an angry mob. She went into hiding with her family for fear that extremists would take revenge, whatever the outcome of the court decision.

According to Christian relief organisation LEAD, dozens of poor Christian families fled the neighbourhood of Meranabadi after blasphemy charges were brought against Rimsha. They say fear returned to the neighbourhood when it was learned Rimsha's case was being brought back to the Supreme Court.

Though Rimsha now is legally free, Christian lawyers say she and her family have no future in Pakistan, where their lives will always remain at risk. Others who have been acquitted of blasphemy have been assassinated by militants taking the law into their own hands.

The case against Rimsha was thrown out by the High Court in Islamabad in November, after Chief Justice Iqbal Hameed-ur Rehman cited the lack of witnesses to support the allegation.

The case against Rimsha collapsed after the police were informed the cleric of the mosque in Rimsha's area had planted the evidence against her. The cleric has been named as Khalid Chishti.

News agency Agence France-Presse said his deputy, Maulvi Zubair, reported to the police that Chishti had added pages of the Koran to papers Rimsha had burned. Citing police sources, AFP says Chishti's deputy warned the cleric not to interfere with the evidence, but Chishti replied, "You know, this is the only way to expel the Christians from this area." Police arrested the imam on suspicion of tampering with the evidence and desecrating the Koran.

Pakistan Lawyers say Rimsha's acquittal is unlikely to result in a change in Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which critics say are routinely abused to settle scores and take revenge. However, religious liberty campaigners say they hope the case will set a precedent for the way future blasphemy allegations are investigated.

Chief Justice Rehman warned blasphemy charges should only be brought with caution because of their sensitivity. Campaigners hope the court's remarks will have a positive bearing on other outstanding cases, including that of Asia Bibi, the first Christian woman to be sentenced to death on blasphemy charges.

But Fr. Mario Rodrigues told the Vatican's Fides service that "the abuse of the blasphemy law, such as Rimsha's case, continues while the country is crossed by a worrying spiral of violence."

Pakistan's blasphemy laws have been in the spotlight since January 2011, when Punjab governor Salmaan Taseer was shot dead by his own bodyguard after calling for reform to

the blasphemy law. Two months later, Minorities' Minister Shahbaz Bhatti, a Roman Catholic, was also assassinated, after campaigning for the blasphemy law to be changed.

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## **Pakistan's newest martyrs: Why anti-Shi'ite violence may be the country's biggest problem**

Time (15.01.2013) - For days, they refused to bury their dead. On a main road in the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta, hundreds of mourners from the local Hazara community, adherents of Shi'ite Islam, watched over the nearly 90 coffins in below freezing temperatures. The victims of an increasingly bloody wave of terror were no longer willing to inter the corpses of their loved ones for the world to forget about them.

Among the dead was Irfan Ali, a brave and much liked young activist who had to abandon his education because of the appalling security situation in the province of Baluchistan, where Quetta is the capital, yet devoted much of his time telling the world about the suffering of his people. Last Thursday, Ali felt he had cheated death the first time. He tweeted that he had narrowly escaped a bombing in Quetta. When he went to tend to the victims, a second deadlier blast struck the billiards hall in Quetta, raising the death toll to nearly 100. It was the greatest single tragedy to visit the community.

The tragedy jolted many Pakistanis, bringing tens of thousands around the country out onto the cold streets. Protests and candlelight vigils sprouted in many cities. Ali, the slain activist, was a familiar face at such protests. In recent photographs, he was seen holding up the image of a Pashtun politician, who was assassinated by the Taliban last month. This time, many protesters held aloft portraits of Ali's smiling face, some adorned with words from his Twitter bio: "I am born to fight for human rights and peace. My religion is: respect and love all the religions."

The protests were eventually heard. Some of the largest crowds had gathered in Karachi, outside the private residence of President Asif Ali Zardari. On Monday, the government dispatched Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf to Quetta to meet with the victims. Chief Minister of Baluchistan Nawab Aslam Raisani, a figure of clownish incompetence with a taste for the good life, was told there was no job waiting for him when he returned from his latest foreign jaunt. The provincial government was sacked, having forfeited its mandate. And a form of emergency rule imposed under the province's more stolid governor.

It was enough to persuade the families of the Hazara victims to bury their dead, but more will need to be done to stop others from being sent to an early grave. Last year, over 400 Shi'ites were killed across Pakistan, double the number killed in 2011. A significant minority in majority Sunni Pakistan, Shi'ites comprise roughly a quarter of the country's population. At least a quarter of the recent death toll belongs to the Hazara community in Baluchistan, who migrated there over a century ago from neighboring Afghanistan. Seeking safety, many have been making journeys onward. Last Thursday's attacks, though deadlier than previous ones, were depressingly familiar.

In recent years, Shi'ite pilgrims from the Hazara community have been hauled off buses bound for pilgrimages in Iran to be lined up and summarily shot. In other parts of the country, as far apart as Karachi in the south, Lahore to the east, the northern hills of Gilgit, Parachinar near the Afghan border, and Dera Ismail Khan in the northwest, Shi'ite worshippers have seen their processions routinely attacked.

On each of these occasions, Shi'ite worshippers had gathered in the streets, as they have done for centuries, to mourn the memories of their ancient martyrs. They left having to mourn the loss of new ones. The seventh century massacre of their most revered saint, Imam Hussein, and his followers, becomes not just a retelling of the foundation of their faith. It is relived as a parable for the present, the story of a vulnerable minority brutally slaughtered for its beliefs.

The responsibility for these attacks has often been claimed by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), probably the most dangerous group operating in Pakistan today, and its militant allies. LeJ began life as an even more vicious offshoot of the banned anti-Shi'ite organization, the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP). A decade ago, the group found common doctrinal ground with newcomers from al-Qaeda and proffered its deep and pervasive network. Al-Qaeda maintained operational control, LeJ supplied the foot soldiers. The lethal combine has been blamed for attacks such as the 2008 bombing of the Islamabad Marriott and the 2009 Lahore attack on the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team.

The failure to stop these militants is the collective failure of Pakistan's power elites: the politicians, the army and the judiciary. Less than 24 hours after the Quetta attacks, Malik Ishaq, a notorious LeJ leader, was in Karachi inciting further anti-Shi'ite hatred. "I don't have fun making speeches," the self-confessed killer of Shi'ites told his supporters. "You know what I have fun doing."

Ishaq was shockingly released from prison in 2011 after the courts said they didn't have enough evidence to convict him. As is often the case, witnesses are not protected and are either eliminated or reduced to a terrified silence. The prosecution and the police fail to marshal the evidence necessary to support a conviction. There are also questions that analysts raise about Islamabad's intelligence agencies' links to sectarian groups like the LeJ and its parent organization, the SSP.

Ishaq has barely been prevented from roaming around freely. He was briefly taken into custody once only to be released again. He and his cohorts are also the beneficiaries of sordid deals with Pakistan's power elites. When the army's headquarters were under siege in 2009, Ishaq was reportedly flown from prison to help negotiate a stand-down. The Punjab government, lead by the opposition Pakistan Muslim League-N, has courted votes alongside leaders of the anti-Shi'ite SSP.

The failure of Pakistani authorities to protect the Shi'ite population and act against their killers is eroding faith in the state and its institutions. Their failures amount, as Human Rights Watch has said, to complicity. It also raises troubling questions about Pakistan's identity. In 1947, after the partition of the subcontinent, Pakistan was founded ostensibly as a state for the region's Muslims — and the minorities that live there. The founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was himself a secular man of a Shi'ite background.

Over the decades, various minorities have found themselves under siege. Prejudiced laws against the Ahmadi Muslim sect have seen the group's leadership take exile as its followers have either abandoned the country, fall foul of its blasphemy laws or lose the loved ones in terrorist attacks by the same groups that have targeted the Shi'ites. The beleaguered Christian community fares no better, similarly trapped between militant violence and laws that make them vulnerable to persecution. The old Parsi community has dwindled sharply, with an estimated three times as many living in Toronto as do in Karachi.

For the Shi'ites, it was supposed to be different. They have long lived peacefully alongside the majority Sufi-inspired Sunni community, marching together at the same annual Muharram processions. There were always levels of prejudice, with bigots comparing Shi'ites to "cockroaches" and hard-line Deobandis — adherents of a puritanical

South Asian strain of Sunni Islam — declaring them heretical. But the Pakistani mainstream never considered them a separate minority. In public, for example, Shi'ite politicians are not identified by sect.

If, however, Shi'ites are not going to feel safe in Pakistan, it will have grave consequences not just for the country but also the wider region. Pakistan's Shi'ite population is second only to neighboring Iran, where Shi'ites are the majority and Shi'ite Islam is embedded in the heart of the country's politics. In the long term, it could be the most destabilizing of all of Pakistan's problems — with the violence not restricted to a remote borderland, but tearing into the country's very fabric.

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## **Formidable power of Pakistan's anti-Shia militants**

BBC News (12.01.2013) - Wednesday's bombings of a Shia Muslim neighbourhood in the Pakistani city of Quetta that killed almost 100 people is a grim reminder of the power of sectarian militants to act as the arbiters of peace - and war - in this country.

Since 2004-05, they have steadily spread their wings in south western Balochistan province, where the ethnic Hazara community of Shia Muslims has been their main target.

Figures released by the Balochistan government place the number of Shias killed in the province between 2008 and 2012 at 758. Members of the Hazara community say the figure is much higher.

The hatred these Sunni militant groups bear towards Shia Muslims is fundamentally theological although the groups' origins date back to the late 1970s, the time of neighbouring Iran's Shia revolution.

The historic split between Sunni and Shia originate in a dispute soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad over which of his four companions should lead the Muslim community.

The group which has claimed responsibility for the blast, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, was born out of another group called Sipah-e-Sahaba, whose name literally translates as "Soldiers of the Companions of the Prophet".

So their anti-Shia agenda is there in the very origins and name of this group. But over the last few years there has been a dramatic escalation on attacks against Shia Muslims around Pakistan, with some activists naming 2012 as the worst year in living memory for Shia killings.

The key to the increasing power of these groups to wreak havoc on Shias is not just their ideological fervour, but also their ability to set up militant training camps - and Pakistan's complex political environment.

### **Balochistan training camps**

The bombing reflects the extent to which the Pakistani policy of using Islamic militancy as a foreign policy tool has, in the course of three decades, compromised its ability to clean up its house.

The geographical spread of these outfits today is unprecedented in terms of both their striking capability and their ability to paralyse life in areas of their influence.

In December, activists for Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, which is now banned, closed down Karachi, a city of more than 15 million people, when one of their leaders was injured in a gun attack blamed on a rival sect.

Credible reports from the region say the group has also set up several residential and training camps in the remote Mastung area of Balochistan, from where they have been attacking buses carrying Shia pilgrims to holy sites in Iran.

A couple of very large arms dumps uncovered by the police in Quetta in recent months indicate that they have copious supplies of arms, ammunition and explosives, and the tactics they use during attacks show them to be highly trained.

But sectarian militants also have vast influence in the north-western tribal region of Pakistan, where some analysts believe they form the backbone of the Pakistani Taliban group, Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Not many people know that some top TTP leaders - such as the late head of the suicide training squad, Qari Hussain, and the TTP's current spokesman, Ehsanullah Ehsan - were all members of Lashkar-e-Jhangvi in Punjab at one time or another before they became part of the TTP.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and its affiliated groups also provide crucial technical and manpower support to other major groups in the tribal region, such as the Haqqani network and other groups.

### ***Electoral power-brokers?***

With this kind of spread and influence, can the sectarian militants be defeated at all?

Most analysts believe the state is far more powerful than the entire Pakistani militant network, but at the moment it lacks the will to pull the ground from under them.

There are various reasons for this.

In Punjab province, which is the breeding ground of sectarian militants, the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and its parent organisation, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, have a strong electoral presence due mainly to the state patronage they enjoyed during the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf.

All the major political parties in the province depend on this vote bloc in many areas of central and southern Punjab to win parliamentary seats.

Therefore, any kind of a crackdown on these groups would run contrary to their interests, especially when elections are approaching.

The country's powerful military establishment also has an ambivalent attitude towards these groups. Even as cadres of these groups are clearly seen as an enemy because they work with the Taliban, they serve several other major interests.

### ***Useful in a crisis***

In Balochistan, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and its affiliates have helped dilute the impact of an armed nationalist separatist movement by diverting international attention to the issue of targeting Shias.

Elements in the military establishment have also felt a need to use the street protest power of these groups as a second line of defence at times of international crises.

Last year, these groups formed a major part of the movement launched by an alliance of Jihadist religious forces, the Defence of Pakistan Council, to put pressure on the Pakistani civilian rulers not to reopen the Nato supply routes through Pakistan.

In addition, these groups have provided both political and military support to Pakistani objectives against India in the disputed region of Kashmir.

As things stand, the Afghan endgame, in which the Pakistanis are fishing for a major role, is yet to play out to the finish, and the border with India in Kashmir is far from stable.

So while the destructive potential of these groups is not lost on anyone in Pakistan, they have not outlived their utility quite yet.

And if they continue to prove their anti-Shia credentials day after day, they will not have lost their utility for the Sunni-Wahabi sheikhdoms of the Middle East as well, from where they receive the bulk of their funding.

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