

# Minority CONCERN Pakistan

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## What TEXTBOOKS Teach Children About Christians?

A new study on textbooks used in Pakistan's public schools found "deeply troubling content" in the representation of Christians and other minority religions as fundamentally inferior and less trustworthy than Muslims. The comprehensive report, *Teaching Intolerance in Pakistan: Religious Bias in Public School Textbooks*, found that the textbooks are used to confer "public shaming" on Christians and other minorities, indoctrinating schoolchildren with a pro-Muslim prejudice from the earliest ages. (Full story on page 13)

## THREAT BY THE TALIBAN

In an interview with NBC News, a spokesman for the Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a Taliban faction, who claimed responsibility for a deadly Easter bombing in Lahore, Pakistan, reportedly is vowing to continue targeting Christians and other religious minorities, the *Fox News* reported on 5 April.



**Violence  
Against  
Christian**

**F**or centuries, Christians have been a part of the Asian subcontinent in what is now known as Pakistan. There are famous Pakistani Christians, such as A.R. Cornelius, the first non-Muslim chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, but also politicians, educators, health care professionals and fighter pilots. But **Christians often rank among the country's poorest people, often working at menial jobs and living in poor, slum-like areas.** Some of the Christian population has its roots in the Hindu religion. When Pakistan was carved from a larger India in 1947 and given independence as a homeland for South Asia's Muslims, many Dalats or lower caste Hindus living in what is today Pakistan, converted to Christianity. While looked upon with suspicion, it worsened for Christians, like many minorities, after dictator Zia-ul Haq, with Western support, nurtured Islamic militancy to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The intolerant views of these militants began to dominate, and minorities became easy targets. (Full story on page 13) (Photo: Suicide attack on Easter Sunday in Lahore - TNS)

# PAKISTAN

## Victims of Easter Day Suicide Attack



74 people, both Christian and Muslim, were killed, including 29 children, and over 370 injured in a suicide bomb blast on the Easter Sunday, 27 March, in Lahore, Pakistan. Majority of victims belong to poor families.

**Many children are still in hospitals,  
some are in critical condition.**

**Children need urgent help with  
MEDICATION !**



Pope Francis called the attack *bloodied and hideous*.  
Pope demanded protection of Pakistan's religious minorities, including Christians.

### Minority Concern

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### DO OR DIE

**Qadri, a cold blooded murderer of Governor Taseer, is hero of Islamists.**



Qadri's supporters

An estimated 20,000 protestors were present in Islamabad (during the month of March), destroying property and even attacking journalists. The protestors did issue a list of 10 bone-chilling demands, including the immediate execution of Aasiya Bibi (a Christian), a memorial built for Mumtaz Qadri (a self-confessed murderer of a liberal Pakistani politician Salman Taseer), the exile of all Ahmadis, no amendments to the blasphemy laws and the immediate execution of anyone accused of blasphemy. The protests, both after the funeral and for the chehlum, were unarguably dominated by members of religious groups associated with the Barelvi school, perhaps the biggest sect in Pakistan. Owais Noorani, the head of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Pakistan (JUP-N), terms Qadri's execution as "judicial murder" and condemns the PML-N government for "appeasing" the West. Leaders of political parties like the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazlur Rehman (JUI-F), and the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) meanwhile, are linking Qadri's sentence to a broader agenda: they say attempts are underfoot to turn Pakistan into a 'liberal' state by repealing laws like the Blasphemy Act and making new acts that are not in consonance with their obscurantist interpretation of Islam.

A London preacher and his friend, former imam Qari Mahmood, 38, and Khalid Iqbal Malik, 43, who attend Lea Bridge Road mosque in Leyton, hailed killer Mumtaz Qadri "a hero" and "a martyr," *Evening Standard* reported on 15 April 2016.

According to Newsline of April 2016, Pakistan is a conservative society where Islam plays a heavy part in the lives of most people. But Pakistan was not born an extremist society. It was turned into one – and this circumstance should be noted and engraved in stone – not by the mullah or the firebrand preacher spouting fire and brimstone from the pulpit but by the English-speaking ruling class, whether dominating politics or commanding the army.

### Christian Couple Lynched: The Trial Gets Serious

LAHORE: It will not be easy to get justice for the death of the Christian couple **Shahzaz Masih and Shama Bibi**, lynched and burned alive in November 2014 by a crowd of Muslims in Kasur, for alleged blasphemy, Fides reported on 21 April. While Yousaf Gujjar, the main suspect was granted bail. Those arrested have also launched threats to witnesses, to intimidate them, even in the courtroom, Fides quoted a lawyer. According to the agency, on the side of the defense of the accused there are 24 lawyers, joined by other collaborators, while on the prosecution side (the families of the couple killed) there are only three. According to the provisions of the anti-terrorism court, 106 men were arrested and three released on bail.

### Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws

The blasphemy law also violates the Constitution of Pakistan, in particular Article 10-A, which promises due process and fair trial to every person in Pakistan.

The law is fundamentally bad and wholly draconian in nature. A bad law cannot be administered fairly. This legal truism is truer still of all the offences against religion provisions of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). Badly worded, and often in contradiction to common sense, these sections of the PPC are an affront to any person's sense of justice and fair play. Mercifully, no one convicted under this law has been executed by the state so far. Mercilessly, however, more than 50 such accused have been dispatched to the hereafter by either a violent mob or to an individual would-be soldier of the honour of the Prophet (PBUH), *Daily Times* said on 17 April.

*US Today* reported on 20 April that blasphemy laws are being used as a tool of revenge, sometimes between different religious groups, but also as a way of settling scores or trying to get an economic or financial advantage over a targeted minority," said Katrina Lantos Swett, commissioner at United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), who visited Pakistan in 2015 as part of the organization's delegation. "The blasphemy laws are truly being abused, and there are no credible threats of prosecution for false or ill-fated accusations," Swett said.

A 2012 report from Pew Research shows that 22 percent of "the world's countries and territories" have blasphemy laws, and 11 percent penalize apostasy according to the *daily Beast* of 3 April 2016.

# ANALYSIS

## Pakistan's Blasphemy Law

By Naeem Shakir

(Excerpts) This public statement ostensibly has been made against a background of continuing discussions about the abuse of the blasphemy law. On numerous occasions neighborhoods have been burnt, people lynched alive, their houses and worship places burnt and destroyed.

It was vigilante justice each time, unleashed by a violent mob carried away by religious fervour to avenge the honour of the Prophet or of the Quran, thus acting as prosecutors, judges and executioners. Yet the record bears out that this law has been abused for settling personal scores, professional rivalry, land grabbing and for religious persecution. It is also true that all segments of society including the judiciary, political leadership and civil society and even the religious leaders themselves have acknowledged that abuse of this law has caused tremendous loss to society as a whole.

In the light of this discussion there has been constant pressure to revisit the law. But the religious extremists have always protested, exercising street power through their pupillage of madrassas (Islamic seminaries), and issuing threats of dire consequences and fatwas (religious decrees) against any move that would disturb the law as it exists.

**JUSTICE:** The blasphemy law as presently constituted on the statute book has not only many a time created a law and order situation, and negated the concept of the rule of law and due process of law, but also impaired the concept of safe administration of justice. As drafted, it is vague and ambiguous and by casting its net too wide catches any unsuspecting citizen on a false accusation of blasphemy.

Who is responsible for this grave situation? Parliament is the state organ that is constitutionally obliged to take care of all legislation. The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) merely has a recommendatory capacity under Article 230 of the constitution for matters relating to Islamic Injunctions. Through various judgments, the High Courts and Supreme Court of the state, while adjudicating cases under blasphemy law, have made important comments and given cautions over the gravity of the situation and issued recommendations in procedures including registration, investigation, and standard of proof, and have called upon the executive and the legislature to adopt remedial measures.

**LOBBY:** The crucial point is what is preventing the legislature from exercising its constitutional right to discuss this sensitive subject in the house. There appear to be two reasons: one is fear of the religious lobby coming onto the streets should there be any move to change or modify the law. And the second is that the politicians whether in or out of power are not prepared to anger the clergy.

The clergy and the religious political parties have deliberately created the impression that the law as framed by the authors was 'divine' and must be preserved as such and that any move to disturb the text would be tantamount to blasphemy. Ordinary people need to be educated that this text was prepared by earthly men mandated by an army general, Zia ul Haq, and passed through unelected parliament made up of his handpicked members. As far as the honour of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the holy Quran are concerned,



Death row: Asia Bibi, the Christian mother sentenced to death

there could hardly be any controversy especially in a state that is an Islamic republic and has more than 95% of Muslim population.

It is the constitutional, political and religious duty of the government to launch a campaign in the state media to dispel the false impression that any comment or discussion over this law would be blasphemous.

The recent judgment of the three-member bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the case of Mumtaz Qadri has had a salutary effect. Mumtaz Hussain Qadri was an official bodyguard of the Governor of the Punjab, Salman Taseer, when he assassinated him in 2011, deeming him a blasphemer for criticizing the blasphemy law and expressing support for Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five who had been sentenced to death in a blasphemy case.

The sentence against Qadri was upheld by the High Court. The bold observations made in this judgment include that the blasphemy law was a manmade law and any criticism or comment about its reform could not be termed as a blasphemous act. It went on that no one could be allowed to take the law into their own hands 'as a door would open for religious vigilantism that would deal a mortal blow to the rule of law in the country in which divergent religious interpretations abound, and tolerance stood depleted to an alarming level'. (*Lapido Media, 20 April 2016*)

# The Never Ending Plight Of Christian

Rabia Mehmood, Al Jazeera, 8 April 2016



Pakistani Christians attend services for the victims of the suicide bombing which killed dozens of people, at a local church in Lahore, on April 3. [AP]

**ATTACKS IN YOUHANABAD:** After the suicide attacks on two churches in Lahore in March 2015, more than 150 men and boys had been arbitrarily detained by the police for murder and vandalism. Families did not know about the locations of their loved ones for at least a month and a half after the detentions. The state's "picking up" of Christian men from their streets and beds in the middle of the night continued till October 2015. Today, [43 Christians remain in jail](#) on murder charges of two Muslims. On the face of it, arresting and charging a group of men for murder looks legal and reasonable. But, Christians in Pakistan are among some of [the poorest and most marginalised](#) populations in the country. This marginalisation manifests itself most violently through the ill-application of a justice system, and legal redress is tenuous at best.

**ATTACKS IN PESHAWAR:** The widespread detentions during the protests in Youhanabad were not the first experience that Christians had with especially heavy-handed law enforcement. In 2013, after twin bombings at the All Saints Church in Peshawar which killed at least 80 people, a large number of young Christians agitated in Lahore and Karachi. [Multiple arrests by the Punjab police](#) followed, resulting in a heightened sense of insecurity and vulnerability among Pakistani Christians. Some even applied for asylum abroad, citing [state persecution alongside militant violence](#).

**JUSTICE AND SECURITY?:** Anger expressed by the community in demonstrations represents its pleas for justice and security. Protests by the Christian community that were never so destructive as to harm the lives of Muslims, turned aggressive and then subsequently violent in the past few years only. In addition to becoming victims of militancy, these protests were also [consequences of years of abuse](#) faced by the community through blasphemy cases and arson attacks by Muslim protesters on Christian settlements and villages. *Christians are not only "soft targets" for the militancy, but also victims of socioeconomic and political exclusion.* Historically, many Christians are said to be former members of Hindu communities who converted to escape systematic caste oppression in colonial India. They have since inherited the [socioeconomic marginalisation](#) of their former caste, and

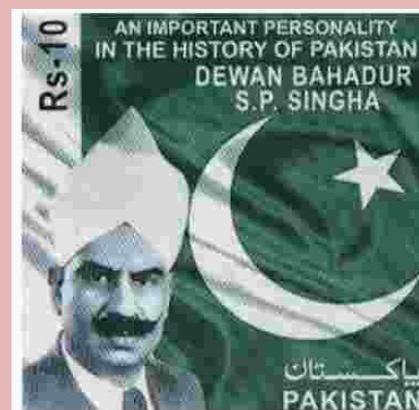
continue to work as [janitorial](#) and domestic workers. Politically, many remain vulnerable to Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws. They are also not fully integrated in the political process in Pakistan. From the [biases in school textbooks](#) to everyday [poverty](#), Christians eke out a living on the edge of our world, the world of a Sunni Islam majority.

This marginalisation of the Christians means [protesting against brutal attacks by militants or the insecurity becomes nearly impossible](#). In fact, the violence against this community indicates that the operation launched by the state against militants in the Punjab province will not make much of a dent in the lives of ordinary Christians.

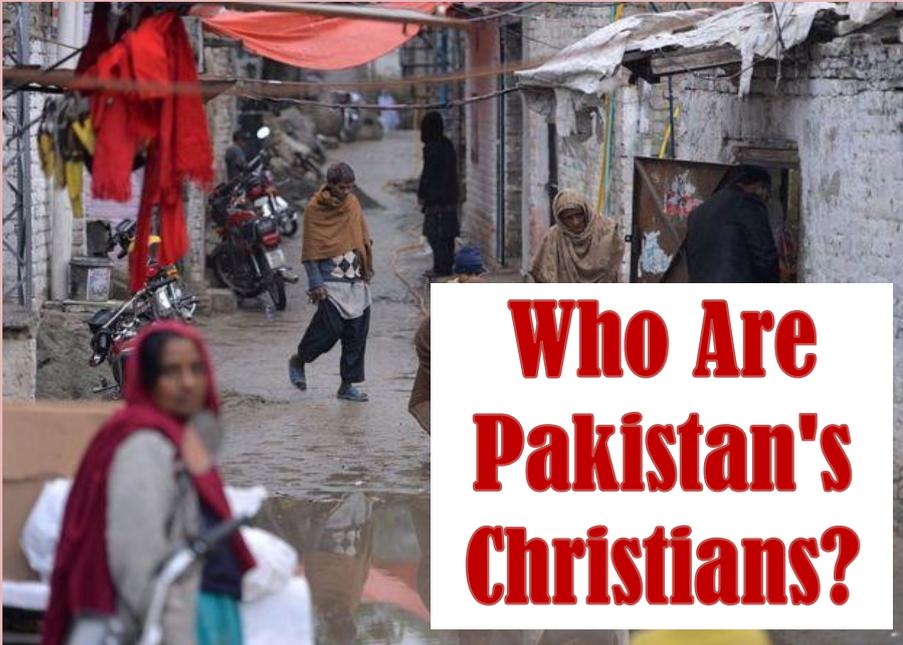
Tough crackdowns on disempowered Christian people after the protests in the wake of attacks on their community have pushed Pakistani Christians up against the wall. This year, they barely brought out demonstrations after the suicide attacks.

## POSTAGE STAMP

The Pakistan Post issued on 26 April a commemorative postage



stamp of Rs.10 denomination of recognise the services of Dewan Bahadar S. P. Singha, a Christian leader at the time of Pakistan's independence. (Photo: Dawn)



# Who Are Pakistan's Christians?

**NUMBERS:** Pakistan is overwhelmingly Muslim but after Hindus, Christians are the second-largest minority group, representing about 1.6% of the population. The southern metropolis of Karachi has a large Christian population and there are countless Christian villages in the Punjab heartland and cities of Lahore and Faisalabad. There is also a sizeable population in the deeply conservative north-western province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, particularly in Peshawar city. Pre-partition Pakistan was a much more diverse place but [tolerance has declined](#) as society has been increasingly Islamicised and more homogenous. Before partition minorities made up 15% of the population, now they fall short of 4%.

**BACKGROUND:** The majority of Pakistan's Christians are descended from low-caste Hindus who converted under the British Raj, in part to escape the caste system. Many provided labour in garrison towns and every cantonment city has an area known as Lal Kurti, traditionally the area where Christians reside. But Christian communities remain in the poorest sector of society doing menial jobs. Entire villages in parts of Punjab are Christian with inhabitants working as labourers and farmhands. There are sections of the Christian community that are well off. They came over from Goa under the Raj, are more educated and mainly settled in Karachi. What all of them share is a sense of vulnerability, with a number of wealthier Christians leaving to settle in Canada and Australia as the climate of intolerance in Pakistan becomes more unbearable.

**ATTACKS:** Muslims and Christians mostly co-exist amiably enough without frequent outbreaks of [animosity](#). But accusations of [blasphemy](#) have also often led to mob violence against Christians, while militant Islamists have also targeted the community. (BBC, 28 March 2016)

## A Christian Disabled Brutally Killed

**LAHORE:** Nazir Masih, 50, a Christian disabled and father of four children, was attacked by three Muslims who brutally killed him. As Fides learns, the complaint of the tragic incident, which occurred on 5 April was presented by one of the children, Iqbal Masih, but so far the murderers have not been arrested. (Agenzia Fides)

## AHMADIS

According to the annual report on persecution against the group, 248 Ahmadis were murdered last year, with another 323 victims of attempted murder. (Asia News, 27 April)

## INSULTING HINDUS



The show 'Sawa Teen' aired on Neo TV, shows 'comedian' Sajjan Abbas use the word 'Hindu Kutta (dog)' and later the audience can be seen laughing and clapping on the so-called joke. Pakistan has 2 million Hindus living in the country. And this is what they think of their citizens. (ZN, 18 April 2016 – Watch the clip at: <http://www.storypick.com/wtf-pakistani-show/>)

## Christian Female Police Officers Appointed

**LANDI KOTAL:** Police in Khyber Agency have for the first time in the



country's history recruited three Christian women to work alongside their Muslim male colleagues. The three were among a group of 15 female Christian applicants for the job, despite the fact that the posts were open to all religions. Officials said no Muslim women applied due to local traditions in the conservative tribal society. (AFP/TET, 8 April)

### Kidnappings, Forced Conversions Of Hindu Girls

On April 9, 2016, three teenage girls of Hindu community in Sindh province went missing from their villages. The missing includes Pirma Bheel, 14, a resident of Village Nikno Bheel Tarka Islamkot, Kiran Menghwar from Hyderabad, and Leelan jogi, 14, from Sanghar district. Member of Pakistan's National Assembly [Ramesh Kumar](#) says the girls were kidnapped and converted to Islam forcibly. He alleged that girls have been kidnaped by Influential Muslims of area, including Hayat Hingorjo, allegedly supported by a member of Pakistan's lower House Faqir Sher Mohammad. Until filing of this report, the whereabouts of all four girls were not known despite continuous efforts by the police and the victim's families.

The kidnapping of Hindu girls and forced conversion are not new in the Sindh province. Pakistan's Hindu Council says [four Hindu girls every month are forced to convert to Islam](#).

Burning the religious books of the Hindu minority, kidnapping and forced conversions of Hindu girls in Pakistan have made the lives of the Hindu community miserable, ultimately forcing them to cross border and take refuge in India. Two years ago in May 2014, member of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, reviled in the lower House that around [5,000 Hindus are migrating from Pakistan to India every year](#).

Currently, Pakistan is home to about two million Hindus, most of who live in the southern province of Sindh and belong to lower castes, including Sochi. While upper-caste Hindus complain of their traders being [kidnapped for ransom](#), lower-caste Hindus say their daughters are being targeted.

Sadly, a handful of Muslim clerics consider it an [honour to convert](#) non-Muslim girls. Last year, Mian Abdul Malik, custodian of the Bharchundi Sharif Shrine, famous for conversions of Hindu girls, converted two Hindu men and 15 Hindu women. *(IT, 25 April 2016)*

### Five Christian Girls Kidnapped

Laveeza Bibi, 23, was kidnapped on 14 April by two Muslims who stormed in Sarwar Masih's family house, in the district of [Kasur](#), in Punjab, armed with guns, taking the girl and threatening her parents. One of the kidnapers Muhammad Talib forced the girl to marry him, *Fides* reported on 25 April. Masih immediately went to the local police station, but the police were reluctant to registering a First Information Report. Later on, the police registered the complaint against Talib.

In April in the area of [Kasur alone, five Christian girls were kidnapped](#) and converted to Islam and forced to marry their captors. These girls are denied the legal protection of individual rights, according to the *news agency*.

### KALASH Complain That Their Youth Are Forcibly Converted To Islam

The community of 3,000 is polytheistic, speaks an Indo-European language, and traces its origins to Alexander the Great's army. At school, their children are forced to take a [compulsory class on Islam](#) but not about their own traditions. Some [face anger from Muslim neighbours](#), who believe that Allah is enraged by the tribe's un-Islamic practises and has unleashed natural disasters – floods and earthquakes – on the area as punishment. Under such pressure, more and more (especially female members of the community) end up [converting to Islam](#). "The Kalash are a living civilisation and need to be protected legally through the government of Pakistan," said KPNDN activist Luke Rehmat. *(Asia News, 13 April)*

### GAMES OF LAW

In its latest pronouncement the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) has said it is authorised to issue an edict (period after divorce) on any issue of its choosing. This verdict by the chairman of the body, Maulana Muhammad Khan Sheerani, is not likely to settle concerns which already exist about the role of the body and its recent attempt to hold back fundamental rights by [opposing laws to protect women](#) in both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and by stating a few months ago that [child marriages](#) were legitimate. Islamic scholars from around the country and beyond its border have rejected these curious interpretations of a religion that protects all who follow it. The time has perhaps come when we need to define more precisely why the CII continues to exist and what its purpose is. *(Editorial, The News, 14 April 2016)*

## Minority Concern



# APPEAL

**HELPLESS**

**Pakistani  
CHRISTIAN  
Asylum Seekers  
in Thailand**

In the recent years, because of violence and persecution thousands of Christians have been fleeing Pakistan and many came to Thailand to get asylum.

More than 11,000 Pakistani Christians (men, women and children) are in Thailand to seek asylum through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Asylum seekers have to wait up to 3 to 5 years for their case to be processed by the UNHCR. Delay causes visa expiration of these asylum seekers and because of that they are considered illegal immigrants in Thailand. During this period, they have to survive on their own resources, and some are forced to work illegally just to survive.

Unfortunately, Thailand is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Therefore, hundreds of these asylum seekers have been arrested by the local police under criminal law and put in jail. There is no exception for women and children. In some cases, children are taken from their mothers when their mothers are sent to jail. They have to pay money to be granted bail, as they do not have money, they are unable to do so. Some of them die in jail.

Watch BBC Documentary: OUR WORLD: Thailand's Asylum Crackdown

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b072sbqr/our-world-thailands-asylum-crackdown>

**They live in extremely difficult circumstances and are vulnerable to violence, extortion and bribery.**

### THEY NEED YOUR HELP FOR:

Shelter, Daily Meal, Medicine, Milk and Food for Children, Education & Money to Get Bail from Jail.

**“These asylum seekers often live in a desperate state of poverty with little or no access of job opportunities, education and healthcare.”**

**REPORT: All Party Parliamentary Group on International Freedom of Religion or Belief, UK**

**PLEASE HELP THEM.**

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### Should A State Exist If It Can't Provide Health Cover, Education, Asks SC

**ISLAMABAD:** The Supreme Court on 25 April asked if there was any justification for a state to exist if it couldn't provide basic facilities like healthcare and education to its people. The observation came from Justice Ejaz Afzal Khan during the hearing of a suo moto case concerning the death of a number of patients from pneumonia and Hepatitis C in the country.

The court took notice of the two dreadful diseases and observed that their treatment cost a fortune and was out of the reach of poor patients. "How can a poor man afford to buy expensive medicines if he can't arrange a square meal to keep his body and soul together," he asked. (*The News*, 26 April 2016)

### New Textbooks Include Chapters On Basic Human Rights

**KARACHI:** The Sindh provincial education department was developing textbooks for grade VIII to XII under the new curriculum wherein the Student's Learning Outcomes (SLOs) focused on forming a child's basic concepts of fundamental human rights; the Sindh High Court (SHC) was informed on 13 April, according to *The News*.

### Man Summoned By Jud 'Sharia Court' Moves LHC

**LAHORE:** A property developer, Khalid Saeed of Samanabad, summoned by 'Shariat Court' of Jamaatud Dawa (JuD) has moved the Lahore High Court, seeking action against Qazi (judge) of the organisation's 'court' for running a parallel judicial system.

A legal expert Dawn talked to said this is in sheer violation of the Constitution of Pakistan. However, the organisation claims it offers arbitration only and resolves disputes in light of Sharia. Court documents show the group is accused of holding parallel sharia courts where Islamic law experts decide family, civil and criminal law cases without official supervision according to Dawn of 27 April.

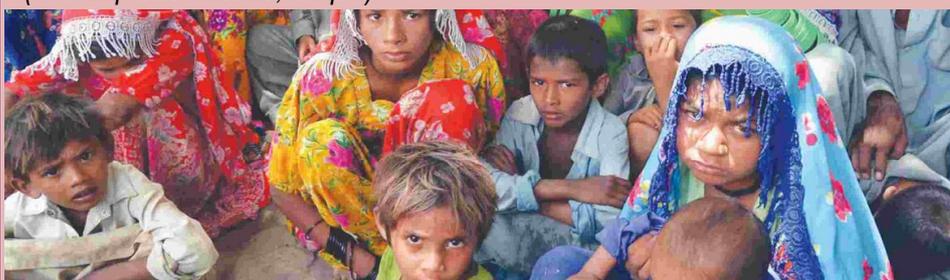


### Three Out Of Every 10 Pakistanis Are Poor

**ISLAMABAD:** The government has readjusted the country's poverty line to bring the headcount in line with prevailing socioeconomic conditions and has officially recognised that three out of every ten citizens are poor – a ratio that was earlier just one out of ten. In absolute terms, 59

million are now being recognised as poor against the earlier figure of 20 million.

(*The Express Tribune*, 8 April)



Bonded Hindu labourers at Sindh High Court in Hyderabad on 19 April after their release from the custody of a landlord in Umerkot. (*Dawn*)

### 'Qualified Equality: Minorities In The Constitution Of Pakistan'

**ISLAMABAD:** Babar Sattar, a lawyer, said, during a session titled 'Qualified Equality:



Minorities in the Constitution of Pakistan' at the Islamabad Literature Festival on 17 April, the Constitution is inherently an "unequal document", and differentiated between individual religious rights, and communal rights. "The Principles of Policy say we will encourage the Islamic way of life." He said, according to the Constitution, people will not be encouraged to live according to their beliefs, but that the state will encourage an Islamic way of life. He questioned the setting of a state religion, and the Islamic nature of the state guaranteed by the Constitution, and said that once it is declared that the state has a religious belief system; minorities would always be second grade citizens. Mr Sattar said this sets up religious minorities as the "other". He also discussed the "attitude of protection" of minorities, and language used to talk about minorities. He drew a distinction between simply tolerating religious minorities and equality between all citizens irrespective of their religious affiliation.

Discussing his research earlier in the session, Mr Mansoor said that while some articles guarantee equality for all citizens irrespective of religious beliefs, others contradict these provisions Dawn reported.

## Crackdown on Islamic Militants Looks Selective

BAHAWALPUR: After a suicide bomber killed more than 70 people on Easter Sunday in a park in the eastern province of Punjab, the government vowed to go after Islamist militants in the area. The massacre in the provincial capital of Lahore, which targeted the city's sizable Christian minority, was claimed by a faction of the Pakistani Taliban, long a major target of the security forces. But another outlawed extremist group, one with ties to al Qaeda, continues to operate openly at its base in



this city of 600,000, which also is headquarters of the Pakistani army's XXXI Corps. On a recent visit, a bearded gunman lounged by the entrance of Jaish-e-Mohammad's four-story compound downtown, which also houses an affiliated seminary. Residents and a member of the group said there hadn't been any crackdown—even after India accused Jaish of being behind a cross-border attack in January.

Outside town, an even bigger Jaish installation is under construction, spread over at least 10 acres just off a highway. A new madrasa, crowned with white domes, loomed over the surrounding farmland.

"We don't hide who we are. We are a jihadist group," said a cleric affiliated with Jaish.

Under international pressure, Islamabad has said it is waging a concerted campaign against all militants. But critics say the military still shelters jihadists it finds useful, an impractical strategy because the groups share an ideology and their members move back and forth.

"In reality, there is no clear separation between 'good' and 'bad' militants," said Ayesha Siddiqa, an independent expert on Pakistan's military.

Punjab, home to more than half of the country's population, has seen a far more low-key approach to fighting extremists, run largely by the provincial police. Punjab is the political base of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Mr. Sharif's brother, Shehbaz Sharif, is the province's top elected leader.

"Operations are only against those that shoot the police or army," said Riaz Husain Pirzada, minister of federal-provincial coordination and a member of parliament from Bahawalpur, about 300 miles southwest of Lahore.

"The breeding grounds remain, the madrasahs are still being financed," said Mr. Pirzada, whose father was assassinated by Sunni Muslim jihadists who target Muslims from the minority Shiite sect. (*Saeed Shah, The Wall Street Journal, 25 April 2016*)

## When The Law Promotes Slavery

THE Punjab bill on the prohibition of child labour in brick kilns is a double-edged weapon. Ostensibly, the bill is designed to end the evil of child labour in a fairly large sector, but it also aims to revive the curse of peshgi (an advance against wages), and thus legitimises bonded labour.

The bill provides for regulation of employment in brick kilns through a written contract (an appointment letter) between the worker and the employer, containing the terms of employment and the wages that have been promised. In a country where owners of brick kilns have stubbornly resisted the registration of their trade, and rarely disclosed the exact number of employees working for them, a new contract system can only be welcomed. But other than this progressive step, the bill has an utterly retrogressive provision. The

contract will include the amount of peshgi taken by the worker and the payback schedule. The way that peshgi registers are maintained, and debt arbitrarily inflated, is well known. Who will guarantee that employers do not include huge amounts of peshgis into their contracts? (*I.A. Rehman, Dawn, 7 April 2016*)

## GOVERNMENT BANS MAALIK MOVIE

Maalik, which had already been playing in cinemas, was declared "uncertified for the whole of Pakistan" by the ministry of information, *BBC* reported on 28 April. Maalik tells the story of a former special services commando hired to protect a corrupt feudal lord who has risen to become chief minister. The parts of the movie that show government officials are deeply divisive, with some saying it amounts to military propaganda - while others think it makes the civil government look like it's not serious about tackling terrorism.



Other complaints stem from a scene where the chief minister is shot by his guard, which has parallels to the real-life [killing of Punjab governor Salman Taseer](#) (by a fundamentalist) - which deeply divided the nation. Some think the film is promoting vigilantism.

According to *BBC*, the strong reaction to this film on social media suggests that the film plays to the already divisive view of the civil-military dynamic in the country and is perceived to be deepening the divide. But others still feel no matter what the film depicts, banning it amounts to censorship.

## EDUCATION

**HARD TARGET:** Keeping in view the poor state of education system, the target to achieve 100 per cent primary enrolment by 2018 seems a far cry

Federal Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal announced the launching of the month-long education campaign on April 1, 2016 in collaboration with the provincial governments to ensure 100 per cent enrollment in schools by 2018. This will help meet an international target set under the sustainable development goals.

In reality, the chances of achieving the goal of 100 per cent enrollment in primary education by 2018 seem bleak because approximately **24 million children in the country are out of schools currently**. Sindh and Balochistan with percentages of 51 and 66 respectively have the highest proportion of out-of-school children (OOSC). Punjab has 47 per cent out-of-school children.

The existing trend of the literacy rate reveals a gloomy picture. The state of education, instead of improving, has deteriorated slightly from the previous



years. The number of children that are currently going to schools is plummeting. In 2001, under the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Pakistan had to increase its literacy rate from 48 per cent to 88 per cent by 2015. To achieve the targeted literacy rate, Pakistan had announced

development plans such as National Plan of Action 2001-2015 and Education Sector Reforms (ESR). Regrettably, after 15 years of efforts, the results have been disappointing. We have succeeded in getting only an additional 10 per cent children enrolled in schools. **In 2015, the overall literacy ratio stood at 58 per cent.**

In the 2015-16 budget, 2.68 per cent of GDP has been allocated for education collectively by the federal and provincial governments which is insufficient for improvement and development of the education system. (*The News, 10 April 2016*)

**KEEPING THEM ILLITERATE:** The UNDP, which compiles the Human Development Index using schooling as one of the criteria, tells us another story. In its 2015 report, Pakistan is categorised as a Low Human Development country and ranks 147th out of 188 states. The mean years of schooling for children is 4.7 years and only a third of the population above 25 has had some secondary schooling.

At home, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) for 2015 is even more damning. Although Article 25-A of the constitution that was enacted in 2010 makes education free and compulsory for children between five and 16 years of age, nearly 20 per cent of those who should be in school are not. The performance of those who are enrolled is also a matter of profound concern. According to ASER, which focuses mainly on the rural areas, its surveyors found that 45 per cent of grade five children could not read a grade two story in Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto. They were worse in English; 51 per cent of the same students could not read English sentences of grade two level. (*Zubeida Mustafa, Newslite, April 2016*)

## LOWEST EXPENDITURE

Despite an increase in the 2015/16 education budget Pakistan's current expenditure on education is the lowest in South Asia. A report said there are around 24 million out-of-school children in Pakistan, the second highest figure in the world after Nigeria. (*Pakistan Today, 28 April 2016*)

## PAKISTANI HINDUS

The abuse of minorities in Pakistan can be traced to two broad reasons. First, the misappropriation of the **nationalist discourse** has led various actors to characterise Pakistan as a state that has as its raison d'être the wellbeing of **Muslims only**. This provides Muslims in Pakistan with the pretence to make people of other faiths feel unwelcome. It does not matter to them that the region, which constitutes Pakistan, had historically been home to people of different faiths. Moreover, this hostility along with the much **broader intolerance** at the societal level combines to produce a general antipathy towards minority communities. To make matters worse, the traditional South Asian networks of **caste and class** mediate with this intolerance, with the result being a deplorable attitude towards religious minorities. Those **Hindus and Christians** who occupy a low-income position are **in practice treated as if they are untouchables**.

The alarming number of Pakistani **Hindu migrations to India**, estimated to be around **5,000 every year**, is testament to the deplorable condition of minorities in Pakistan. (*Daily Times, 19 April 2016*)

## THE QUESTION OF MILITANCY IN PUNJAB



### TARGET PUNJAB

Punjab, Pakistan's most developed province, is also at the heart of what is arguably its biggest problem — extremism and militancy. It has often been painted as a cosy, safe-haven for militant organisations from where they operate with impunity. When Zarb-e-Azb (a military operation) was initiated, in the backdrop of all praise and optimism, the need to take a look at Punjab and dismantle the militant network in the province was often iterated. Later, when the attention was focused on Sindh and Karachi in particular, the issue of inaction and complacency against militancy in Punjab came up again. Militancy and extremism in Punjab can be traced back to Pakistan's early years — the anti-Ahmadi riots in Lahore in 1953 that resulted in massive violence and bloodshed provided a glimpse into the rot that had begun just a few years after the partition. It also gave an idea about the kind of role Punjab would play in the degeneration process.

Historian Dr Mubarak Ali He said that the Deobandi political party, Majlis-e-Ahrar (which was later called Ahrar), and was at the forefront of the anti-Ahmadi movement in Pakistan. ,

Historians like Dr Tahir Kamran have also asserted that for the [Punjabi middle class](#), Tehrik-e-Khatam-e-Nabuwat was able to strike a chord in a way that no other social or political movement did. Armed with exceptional oratorical abilities, the leadership of the movement which included the likes of Ataullah Shah Bokhari and Mohammad Ali Jullundhri was able to attract and captivate audiences.

Religious fundamentalism and extremism increased over the years as the state engaged in efforts to appease the right — even a liberal Prime Minister like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto submitted to the pressure.

The largely Punjab-centric right-wing political alliance, the Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) gave the PPP a tough time and also had a role to play in Bhutto's downfall.

Then came the Zia years, when the Islamisation process was in full swing. As religious extremism increased in Punjab, the country found itself deeper in the quandary of violence and militancy. Both Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (Ahle-e-Sunnat Wal Jamat now) which was founded in the 1980s in Jhang and Tahafuz-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqh-e-Jaferia (Tehrik-e-Jafria now) founded in 1979 have had a dominating presence in the province. (*Enum Naseer, TNS, April 24*)

### ALIGNED POLITICALLY

Although Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his party have been trying to distance themselves from the rightwing politics of the 1990, their opponents accuse them of maintaining contacts with groups like [Sipah-e-Sahaba](#), a banned sectarian group blamed for the deaths of hundreds of Shias.

From Jhang district to Dera Ghazi Khan, PML-N leaders were seen openly [courting banned outfits' supporters during the last election campaign](#). But PML-N leaders have categorically denied this, saying that banned groups operating in the province have lost their support.

About twelve small and big gangs, like the "Chotu Gang", are operating in Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Layyah, Jhang, Muzaffargarh

and Bahawalpur, locals of South Punjab tell *TNS*. All these groups have political backing of the local landlords who also represent the people in Parliament.

"There has been a strong support for extremist groups from political figures, namely Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Furqan-ul-Quran, Khudam-ul-Islam, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT), Jamat-ud-Dawa (JuD), Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), Sipa-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), defunct Ghazi Force, Laskhar-e-Jhangvi, Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ), Punjabi Taliban and some scattered militants," says Sardar Akhtar Gorchani, a local landlord in Rajanpur and Ghazanfar Lund, a local in Taunsa.

[Experts still believe that there are some groups like the JuD which continues to enjoy the backing of various state agencies in Punjab. They recall that Jaish-e-Muhammad and LeT have been running their camps.](#) Interestingly, both groups continued to be treated by both civilian and military establishment as good friends in the past, they say.

"It's time for the military to decide — either to let such militant groups operate anymore or to rein them in (militant groups) in Punjab" says Lt. General (retd) Talat Masood. "Military operation in Punjab will alter the thinking of political parties, such as PML-N, JI, and JUI-F, etc, which sought short-term support of such militant groups in electoral politics," he believes.

In ["Contextualising militancy in Punjab,"](#) Dr Ayesha Siddiq, a security expert, sees little difference between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's party and Imran Khan's PTI as far as their support for militant groups in the province is concerned. (*Zahid Gishkori, TNS, April 24*)

## Violence Against Christians In Pakistan

For centuries, Christians have been a part of the Asian subcontinent in what is now known as Pakistan. There are famous Pakistani Christians, such as A.R. Cornelius, the first non-Muslim chief justice of Pakistan's Supreme Court, but also politicians, educators, health care professionals and fighter pilots. But Christians often rank among the country's poorest people, often working at menial jobs and living in poor, slum-like areas. Some of the Christian population has its roots in the Hindu religion. When Pakistan was carved from a larger India in 1947 and given independence as a homeland for South Asia's Muslims, many Dalats or lower caste Hindus living in what is today Pakistan, converted to Christianity. While looked upon with suspicion, it worsened for Christians, like many minorities, after dictator Zia-ul Haq, with Western support, nurtured Islamic militancy to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The intolerant views of these militants began to dominate, and minorities became easy targets. In the 1980s and 1990s, Christians sometimes were set upon by mobs of militant Muslims, but it wasn't until after the 2001 U.S.-led assault on Afghanistan that attacks against Pakistan's Christians increased both in numbers and ferocity.

**NATURE OF THE VIOLENCE:** In predominantly Christian neighborhoods, radical Muslims have carried out attacks based on trumped-up charges of blasphemy, which is punishable by death. Christians are routinely accused by radical Muslims of trying to undermine Pakistan as an Islamic state. There have been reports of forced conversions of Christian girls. In January, a girl was killed and two were injured when they refused the advances of three Muslim men, who ran them over upon learning they were Christian. An Islamabad-based think tank, The Jinnah Institute, called the violence "some of the worst mob attacks against minority communities in Pakistan." Christian neighborhoods in Punjab and Islamabad "have seen mass attacks fueled by hate speech. These attacks have led to widespread destruction of homes and properties," he said. (AP/TNYT, 28 March 2016)

- Christian monitoring group [World Watch Monitor](#) points to the overwhelming number of Christians employed as sanitary workers in major cities -- as much as 80% in the city of Peshawar. This is not a coincidence. One recent advert for sanitary workers clearly says it's looking for non-Muslims to clean toilets. The ad was later retracted. (CNN, 4 April)

- Beyond major attacks by terror groups, including several other church explosions in the past few years, Pakistan's 3 million Christians face economic marginalization and persecution at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists. "I have been denied promotions several times because I am Christian," said Liaqat James, 36, an office worker at a private company in the province of Punjab. "They won't tell you directly but you know why you are being kept behind others. I have close relatives who were denied jobs in the public and private sector only because they were Christians." US Today, 20 April.

### Pakistani Textbooks Teach Children That Christians Are 'Nefarious, Violent, And Tyrannical By Nature'

A new study on textbooks used in Pakistan's public schools found "deeply troubling content" in the representation of Christians and other minority religions as fundamentally inferior and less trustworthy than Muslims.

The comprehensive report, *Teaching Intolerance in Pakistan: Religious Bias in Public School Textbooks*, found that the textbooks are used to confer

"public shaming" on Christians and other minorities, indoctrinating schoolchildren with a pro-Muslim prejudice from the earliest ages. "Public shaming begins at a very young age," the report found, and the Pakistani curriculum teaches that religious minorities, particularly Christians and Hindus, are "nefarious, violent, and tyrannical by nature."

Pakistani public school textbooks reach over 41 million children and negatively portray religious minorities as outsiders, unpatriotic, and inferior, which helps explain the alarming state of religious freedom in Pakistan today.

The study, released on 12 April, was sponsored by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and conducted by the Pakistan-based Peace and Education Foundation (PEF), a non-governmental



PHD, Faisalabad



Anjuman Muzarien

### Appeal: Christian Couple Sentenced To Death For Blasphemy

LAHORE - An appeal has been filed to the Court of Appeal and the first hearing will take place in May regarding a Christian couple Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar, Fides reported on 27 April 2016.