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Pakistan

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

July-December, 2010 International Religious Freedom Report

Report

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The constitution and other laws and policies restricted religious freedom and, in practice, the government enforced these restrictions. The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion, and it requires that laws be consistent with Islam. The constitution states that "subject to law, public order, and morality, every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice, and propagate his religion;" in practice, however, the government limited freedom of religion. Freedom of speech was also constitutionally "subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of the glory of Islam."

The government rarely investigated or prosecuted the perpetrators of increased extremist attacks on minorities and the majority promoting tolerance, which deepened the climate of impunity. Despite the government's steps to protect religious minorities, societal intolerance and violence against minorities and Muslims promoting tolerance increased, and abuses under the blasphemy laws continued. The government did not take adequate measures to prevent these incidents or undertake reform measures to prevent the abuse of the blasphemy laws. Toward the end of the reporting period the public discourse regarding the blasphemy laws became increasingly heated, which contributed to the government's reluctance to address the issue. For example, after initially signaling he was considering pardoning Asia Bibi's death penalty sentence for alleged blasphemy, President Zardari refrained from doing so. This was the first time a woman was sentenced to death under the blasphemy laws. Also, in response to extremist societal elements, the government distanced itself from a bill introduced by a member of the ruling party that would have amended the blasphemy laws to prevent abuse.

Discriminatory legislation, such as the blasphemy laws and the anti-Ahmadi provisions of law, and the government's failure or delay in addressing religious hostility by societal actors fostered religious intolerance, acts of violence, and intimidation against religious minorities and Muslims alike. The country's blasphemy laws continued to be used as a legal weapon against religious minorities and other Muslims. The Ahmadiyya community continued to face governmental and societal discrimination and legal bars to the practice of its religious beliefs. Members of other Islamic sects, Christians, Sikhs, and

Hindus also reported governmental and societal discrimination. There were instances in which law enforcement personnel reportedly abused religious minorities in custody.

The government took some steps to improve religious freedom. The late Federal Minister for Minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, hosted several events to promote interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance and took an active role in assisting victims of religiously motivated attacks on Christians and Ahmadis. The ministry also provided scholarships to minority students and approved new programs aimed at the maintenance of minority places of worship and the development and welfare of minority communities. Hindus and Sikhs welcomed the government decision to approve Lahore's first crematorium to serve the over one million Hindus and Sikhs living in Punjab. Bhatti also established district level interfaith committees to meet monthly to address issues of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice continued, and there were increased reports of human rights and religious freedom activists and members of minorities going into hiding due to a climate of intolerance and fear, especially after the arrest of Aasia Bibi and the controversy surrounding the blasphemy laws. Relations between religious communities remained tense. Societal discrimination against religious minorities was widespread, and societal violence against such groups occurred. Nongovernmental actors, including violent extremist groups and individuals, targeted religious congregations. Acts of violence and intimidation against religious minorities by extremists increased and exacerbated existing sectarian tensions. Extremists in some parts of the country demanded that all citizens follow a strict version of Islam and threatened brutal consequences if they did not abide by it. Extremists also targeted violence against Muslims advocating for tolerance and pluralism, including followers of Sufism and other moderate forms of Islam. Several attacks were directed at Sufi and Shia gatherings and religious sites, resulting in numerous deaths and extensive damage. Issues involving the blasphemy law also generated extremist responses. In general society was deeply polarized regarding proposals to amend the blasphemy laws, and some religious leaders used incendiary rhetoric to convince much of the population that any attempt to amend the laws was an attack on the sanctity of Islam. More moderate voices argued the law was being misused, but those arguments were drowned out by the more emotional and extremist elements and the fear of violent retaliation from those elements. The prospect of President Zardari issuing a pardon for Aasia Bibi also generated a highly controversial debate.

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the Government of Pakistan as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. During the reporting period, U.S. embassy officials closely monitored the treatment of religious minorities, worked to eliminate the teaching of religious intolerance and promote interfaith dialogue, and encouraged the amendment or repeal of the blasphemy laws.

Section I. Religious Demography

The country has an area of 310,527 square miles and a population of 174 million. Ninety-five percent of the population is Muslim (75 percent Sunni and 25 percent Shia). Groups composing 5 percent of the population or less include Hindus, Christians, Parsis/Zoroastrians, Bahais, Sikhs, Buddhists, Ahmadis, and others. According to the Ministry for Minorities, Sikhs have 30,000 adherents and Buddhists 20,000. According to a Parsi community center in Karachi, the number of Parsis (Zoroastrians) dropped to 1,750 during the year as compared to 2,039 in June 2006. The Bahai stated that their numbers are growing, claiming 30,000 adherents. The number of Ahmadis living in the country, according to Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya, is 600,000, although it is difficult to establish an accurate estimate because Ahmadis, who are legally prohibited from identifying themselves as Muslims, generally choose not to identify themselves as non-Muslims. Some tribes in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPk – formerly known as the North West Frontier Province) practiced traditional animist religious beliefs; other religious groups include Kalasha, Kihals, and Jains. Less than 0.5 percent of the population, as recorded in the 1998 census, was silent on religious affiliation or claimed not to adhere to a particular religious group. Social pressure was such that few persons claimed no religious affiliation.

No data were available on active participation in formal religious services or rituals; however, religious beliefs often played an important part in daily life. Most Muslims offered prayers on Fridays (Islam's holy day), and many prayed daily. During the month of Ramadan, even less observant Muslims fasted and attended services. Seventy percent of English-speaking Roman Catholics worshiped regularly; a much lower percentage of Urdu-speaking Catholics did so. Attendance at Hindu and Sikh religious services increased during festivals.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

Please refer to Appendix C in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for the status of the government's acceptance of international legal standards <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/appendices/index.htm>.

The constitution and other laws and policies restricted religious freedom and, in practice, the government regularly enforced these restrictions. The constitution establishes Islam as the state religion. It also declares that adequate provisions shall be made for minorities to profess and practice their religious beliefs freely; however, the government imposes limits on freedom of religion, particularly on Ahmadis.

A 1974 constitutional amendment declared that Ahmadis are non-Muslims. Sections 298(b) and 298(c) of the penal code, commonly referred to as the "anti-Ahmadi laws," prohibited Ahmadis from calling themselves Muslims, referring to their religious beliefs as Islam, preaching or propagating their religious beliefs, inviting others to accept Ahmadi teachings, or insulting the religious feelings of Muslims. The punishment for violation of these provisions is imprisonment for up to three years and a fine. Religious parties opposed any amendments to the constitution affecting its Islamic clauses, especially the ones relating to Ahmadis. In April the 18th Amendment to the constitution was passed without amending constitutional clauses affecting minorities, including blasphemy and Ahmadi-specific laws.

Freedom of speech was subject to "reasonable" restrictions in the interest of the "glory of Islam," as stipulated in sections 295(a), (b), and (c) of the penal code. The consequences for contravening the country's blasphemy laws were death for defiling Islam or its prophets; life imprisonment for defiling, damaging, or desecrating the Qur'an; and 10 years' imprisonment for insulting "another's religious feelings." Some individuals brought charges under these laws to settle personal scores or to intimidate vulnerable Muslims, sectarian opponents, and religious minorities. Under the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), any action, including speech, intended to incite religious hatred was punishable by up to seven years' imprisonment. In cases in which a minority group claimed its religious feelings were insulted, the blasphemy laws were rarely enforced, and cases were rarely brought to the legal system. A 2005 law required that a senior police official investigate any blasphemy charge before a complaint was filed. This law was not uniformly enforced.

Laws prohibiting blasphemy continued to be used against Christians, Ahmadis, and members of other religious groups, including Muslims. Lower courts often did not require adequate evidence in blasphemy cases, which led to some accused and convicted persons spending years in jail before higher courts eventually overturned their convictions or ordered them freed. Original trial courts usually denied bail in blasphemy cases, claiming that because defendants could face the death penalty, they were likely to flee; however, the state has never executed anyone under the blasphemy laws. Many defendants appealed the denial of bail, but bail often was denied in advance of the trial. Lower courts frequently delayed decisions, conducted proceedings in an atmosphere of intimidation, and refused bail for fear of reprisal from extremist elements.

The penal code incorporates a number of Sharia (Islamic law) provisions. The judicial system encompasses several different court systems with overlapping and sometimes competing jurisdictions that reflect differences in civil, criminal, and Islamic jurisprudence. The Federal Shariat Court and the Sharia bench of the Supreme Court serve as appellate

courts for certain convictions in criminal court under the Hudood Ordinance, which criminalizes rape, extramarital sex, property crimes, alcohol, and gambling; judges and attorneys in these courts must be Muslim. A 2005 Supreme Court ruling allows the full Supreme Court to bypass the Sharia bench and assume jurisdiction in such appellate cases in its own right and prohibits the Federal Shariat Court from reviewing decisions of the provincial high courts. The Federal Shariat Court may overturn legislation it judges inconsistent with Islamic tenets, but such cases can be appealed to the Sharia bench of the Supreme Court and ultimately may be heard by the full Supreme Court. The Federal Shariat Court applies to Muslims and non-Muslims, such as in cases relating to Hudood laws. Non-Muslims were allowed to consult the Federal Shariat Court in matters that affected them or violated their rights.

Criminal law allowed offenders to offer monetary restitution to victims and allowed victims to carry out physical retribution rather than seeking punishment through the court system. The "Qisaas and Diyat" law calls for either providing qisaas (retribution for murder and other violent crimes) or diyat (compensation money to the victim of the crime). Religious minorities claimed that the amounts of monetary restitution were far higher for minority offenders and far lower for minority victims than for Muslims.

Under Sharia, Hudood referred to punishments for certain crimes such as theft, fornication, consumption of alcohol, and apostasy. The country's Hudood Ordinance often relied on harsh and discriminatory interpretations of Qur'anic standards of evidence and punishment that applied equally to Muslims and non-Muslims. If Qur'anic standards were used, Muslim and non-Muslim and male and female testimony carried different weight. Until the passage of the 2006 Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act (WPA), cases of rape and adultery were also heard under the Hudood Ordinance, which led to numerous abuses against women. The 2006 law moved these cases to secular rather than Sharia courts; thousands of women have now been released from jail, although social ostracism continued in some cases. The Federal Shariat Court recently ruled that key provisions of the act are unconstitutional, negating protections established by the act. In December the Federal Shariat Court ruled that some of the provisions of the WPA are against the Hudood Ordinance (mainly with regard to the provisions that transferred competences from the Shariat Court to the Criminal Courts) and asked the government to amend them. The government has six months to petition against the ruling, but has yet to do so.

The government designated religious affiliation on passports and requested religious information in national identity card applications. A citizen must have a national identity card to vote. Those wishing to be listed as Muslims must swear their belief that the Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet and denounce the Ahmadiyya movement's founder as a false prophet and his followers as non-Muslims, a provision designed to discriminate against Ahmadis. As a result Ahmadis continued to boycott elections.

The constitution provides for "freedom to manage religious institutions." In principle the government does not restrict organized religious groups from establishing places of worship and training members of the clergy; however, in practice religious minorities suffered from restrictions of this right. District-level authorities consistently refused to grant permission to construct non-Muslim places of worship, especially for Ahmadiyya and Bahai communities, citing the need to maintain public order. There were instances of minority places of worship being seized by informally organized persons who used threats, intimidation, and other unlawful means to force the owners of places of worship to abandon their properties or force a sale by government authorities. There is no official restriction on the construction of Ahmadiyya places of worship; however, Ahmadis were forbidden from calling them mosques. Ahmadis also reported that their mosques and community land were routinely confiscated by local governments and given to the majority Muslim community. District governments often refused to grant Ahmadis permission to hold events publicly; therefore, they held their meetings in members' homes. The government can also shut down these gatherings if neighbors reported hearing the recitation of Qur'anic verses.

The government provided funding for construction and maintenance of mosques and for Islamic clergy. The provincial and federal governments have legal responsibility for certain minority religious properties that were abandoned during the 1947 partition of the country. Minority communities claimed the government did not spend adequate funds on the protection and upkeep of those properties. The government collected a 2.5 percent zakat (tax) on all Sunni Muslims and distributed the funds to Sunni mosques, madrassahs, and charities. The government did not impose similar requirements on other religious groups.

Government policies did not afford equal protection to members of majority and minority religious groups. Religious minorities were legally restricted from public display of certain religious images and, due to discriminatory legislation and social pressure, were often afraid to profess freely their religious beliefs. The 2008 establishment of the Ministry for Minorities removed responsibility for protection of religious minorities from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry of Minorities is a stand-alone, cabinet-level ministry that has the "aim to protect the rights of minorities as envisaged under the 1973 constitution of Pakistan." The budget of the ministry covers assistance to indigent minorities, the repair of minority places of worship, the establishment of minority-run small development projects, and the celebration of minority religious festivals. These expenses were previously covered by the ministry of religious affairs. Religious minorities claimed that the Ministry for Minorities is underfunded and that localities and villages that were home to minority citizens went without basic civic amenities. There were also indications that the Ministry of Minorities would be dissolved at the federal level in 2011, along with several other ministries, as part of the devolution plan under the 18th Amendment. Minority representatives in the Parliament and minority rights organizations oppose the possible devolution of the ministry to the provinces.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is primarily responsible for organizing participation in the Hajj and other Islamic religious pilgrimages. The federal government, however, also consults the ministry on matters such as blasphemy and educational reforms. The ministry organized events aimed at promoting peace and religious tolerance and also carried out research on these subjects. In June the ministry reconstituted the Sufi Advisory Council as the National Sufi Council with the objective of promoting free religious thought and the establishment of Sufi Centers and research activities on Sufi Islamic thought. There is no evidence the Council has undertaken any activities since its establishment.

The government at senior levels continued to call for interfaith dialogue and sectarian harmony to promote moderation, tolerance, and minority rights.

The constitution safeguards "educational institutions with respect to religion." No student can be forced to receive religious instruction or participate in religious worship other than his or her own. The denial of religious instruction for students of any religious community or denomination was also prohibited.

Islamiyyat (Islamic studies) was compulsory for all Muslim students in state-run schools. Although students of other religious groups were not legally required to study Islam, they generally were not offered parallel studies in their own religious beliefs. In some schools non-Muslim students may study Akhlaqiyyat, or ethics. Parents may send children to religious schools, at the family's expense, and private schools were generally free to teach or not to teach religious studies as they choose. Madrassahs, private schools run by Islamic groups, were prohibited from teaching sectarian or religious hatred or encouraging sectarian or religious violence, although some reportedly did so.

The constitution specifically prohibited discriminatory admission to any governmental educational institution solely based on religious affiliation. Government officials stated that the only factors affecting admission to government educational institutions were students' grades and home provinces; however, students must declare their religious affiliation on application forms. This declaration was also required for private educational institutions, including universities. Students who identified themselves as Muslim must declare in writing that they believe that the Prophet Muhammad is the final

prophet, another measure that singled out Ahmadis. Non-Muslims must have their religious affiliation verified by the head of their local religious community.

Private schools run by Islamic clerics or madrassahs varied greatly in their curriculum and character. They may offer after-school non-degree Islamic religious instruction, a full degree course in Islamic religious studies based on degree parameters set by one of the country's five madrassah boards, a full degree course in regular studies based either on the government's matriculation standards or the British A level curriculum, certificate courses in vocational training, or some combination thereof. Madrassahs may have students on a part-time, full-time day, full boarding basis, or some combination thereof. In some rural communities, madrassahs were the only form of education available.

In recent years a small, yet influential, number of madrassahs have taught extremist doctrine in support of terrorism in violation of the law. In an attempt to curb the spread of extremism, the 2002 Madrassah Registration Ordinance required all madrassahs to register with one of the five independent boards (wafaqs) or directly with the government, cease accepting foreign financing, and accept foreign students only with the consent of their government. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as of December 31, 2010, 19,421 madrassahs had been registered. Of these, 770 madrassahs were registered in 2009 alone; however, many civil society organizations and education experts disputed the number of madrassahs operating across the country. On October 7 the Ministry of the Interior signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the heads of the five wafaqs. The agreement requires the madrassahs to teach secular subjects, refrain from teaching or publishing literature promoting militancy or extremism, and to establish an independent board to monitor madrassah education. In return madrassah graduation certificates would receive government recognition. The agreement must be followed with legislation that has yet to be tabled.

The MOA reflects the 2005 framework for cooperative registration of madrassahs, including provision of financial and educational data and expanded oversight of the prohibition on the teaching of sectarian or religious hatred and violence. The government and the independent madrassah boards have agreed to a phased introduction to all madrassahs offering full-time education of secular subjects, including mathematics, English, and science. The civilian government considers madrassah reform a priority but has yet made little progress in this regard. Due to the present economic conditions, the government does not appear to have any funds to carry out the plan, although in the past three years secular subjects were introduced in some madrassahs through government support.

On October 16 the Balochistan Assembly adopted the Societies Registration (Balochistan Amendment) Act of 2010, requiring all madrassahs to be registered in the province. The madrassahs were also told to submit annual reports of their educational activities to the registrar of societies at the end of each fiscal year.

All wafaqs continued to mandate the elimination of teaching that promoted religious or sectarian intolerance and terrorist or extremist recruitment at madrassahs. Inspectors from the boards mandated that affiliated madrassahs with full-time students supplement religious studies with secular subjects. Wafaqs also restricted foreign private funding of madrassahs. A comparatively small, yet influential, number of unregistered and Deobandi-controlled madrassahs continued to teach extremism and/or allow recruitment of their students by terrorist organizations. Similarly the Dawa schools, run by Jamaat-ud-Dawa, a charitable front for the banned Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, continued extremist teaching and recruitment for Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, a designated foreign terrorist organization. Following the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, attributed to Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, the Punjab provincial government took over management of several Jamaat-ud-Dawa institutions.

In an effort to end Taliban violence in the Swat Valley, the KPK government, led by the Awami National Party (ANP), concluded a peace deal in February 2009 with extremist organization Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM). The agreement included a commitment to implement the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation (NAR), establishing Sharia in the Malakand Division of KPK. In April 2009 President Zardari signed the NAR, making it effective. Based on previous

attempts in 1994 and 1998 to establish Sharia (interpreted locally as "swift justice"), the NAR established limits for deciding civil and criminal cases, recreated qazi (religious judges) chosen by the state, and established a local appeals court whose judges were selected by the Peshawar High Court. Civil society, and the minority religious community in particular, expressed concern about the effects of creating an alternative religious-based system of justice in Swat. NAR defenders pointed out that, under the constitution, all laws must already conform to Islam. In this respect, they said, the NAR was not a new regulation.

The deal was signed with the expectation that local militants would disarm in return for the implementation of Sharia through the NAR. After President Zardari signed the NAR, however, the militants refused to disarm and extended their patrols to Buner District of the Malakand Division. Amid growing incidents of violence by the militants, the army launched a military operation in April 2009 resulting in the largest mass migration in the country's history since partition and clearing much of the territory claimed by the Taliban. The NAR has been inoperative since the start of military operations in April 2009. At the end of the reporting period, military operations were ongoing in the FATA and KP Province, and the government's authority has been restored in many parts of the region.

The government does not restrict religious publishing in general; however, the sale of Ahmadi religious literature was banned. The law prohibited publishing any criticism of Islam or its prophets and insults to another's religious beliefs.

The government does not prohibit, restrict, or punish parents for raising children in accordance with religious teachings and practices of their choice, nor did it take steps to prevent parents from teaching their children religious instruction in the privacy of the home.

There were no legal requirements for an individual to practice or affiliate nominally with a religious group; however, the constitution requires that the president and prime minister be Muslims. All senior officials, including members of parliament, must swear an oath to protect the country's Islamic identity. Government employees were not prohibited from displaying or practicing any elements of their religious beliefs.

Missionaries (except Ahmadis) were permitted in the country and can proselytize, as long as there is no preaching against Islam and the missionaries acknowledge they are not Muslim. Missionaries were required to have specific visas valid from two to five years and were allowed one entry into the country per year. Only "replacement" visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries were available, and long delays and bureaucratic problems were common.

In accordance with the Anti-Terrorism Act, the government banned activities of and membership in several religious extremist and terrorist groups. The act allowed the government to use special streamlined courts to try violent crimes, terrorist activities, acts or speech designed to foment religious hatred, and crimes against the state; however, many banned groups remained active.

The government does not recognize either civil or common law marriage. Marriages were generally performed and registered according to one's religious group; however there was no legal mechanism in place for the government to register marriages of Hindus and Sikhs. The marriages of non-Muslim men remained legal upon conversion to Islam. If a non-Muslim female converted to Islam, and her marriage was performed according to her previous religious beliefs, the marriage was considered dissolved. Children born to Hindu or Christian women who converted to Islam after marriage were considered illegitimate unless their husbands also converted. The only way the marriage can be legitimated and the children made eligible for inheritance was for the husband to convert to Islam. The children of a Muslim man and a Muslim woman who both converted to another religious group were considered illegitimate, and the government could take custody of the children. The registration of Hindu and Sikh marriages by the government has been a long-standing demand of these communities. The Scheduled Caste Rights Movement (SCRM) and other minority rights organizations demanded legislation for minorities' marriage registration. The minorities' representatives were of the view that in the

absence of Hindu and Sikh marriage registration, women faced difficulties in getting a share of their parents' and husbands' property, accessing health services, voting, obtaining a passport, and buying or selling property. Corrective legislation has not yet been introduced.

The government did not restrict the formation of political parties based on a particular religious group, religious belief, or interpretation of religious doctrine. The government monitored the activities of various Islamist parties and affiliated clergy due to prior links to terrorist and extremist organizations. There were reserved seats for religious minority members in both the national and provincial assemblies. The seats were allocated to the political parties on a proportional basis determined by their overall representation in the assembly. The national assembly has 13 members of minority religious groups, 10 of whom hold reserved seats for minorities and three of whom hold reserved seats for women. As part of the 18th Amendment, the senate has four reserved seats for religious minorities, one from each province. Reserved seats for minorities also existed in the provincial assemblies: three in KPK, eight in Punjab, nine in Sindh, and three in Balochistan. Minorities were represented in the local government system with a minimum of one seat per zila, tehsil, and union council, as stipulated under the provincial Local Government Ordinances. During the year Balochistan Province passed the Local Government Act that implements a policy of religious minority representation based on population, with a minimum of two seats.

The government observed Islamic holy days as national holidays.

Restrictions on Religious Freedom

The government generally enforced existing legal and policy restrictions on religious freedom.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of assembly, Ahmadis have been prohibited from holding conferences or gatherings since 1983. They were also banned from preaching and from traveling to Saudi Arabia for the Hajj or other religious pilgrimages. The government also banned Ahmadiyya publications from public sale, but the organization published religious literature, circulated only within Ahmadi communities.

The constitution provides for the right to establish places of worship and train clergy, but in practice these rights were restricted for Ahmadis. Authorities continued to conduct surveillance on Ahmadis, and several Ahmadiyya mosques reportedly were closed or confiscated; others reportedly were desecrated or their construction stopped.

Public pressure routinely prevented courts from protecting minority rights and forced judges to take strong action against any perceived offense to Sunni orthodoxy. Complaints by religious minorities of discrimination against them were rarely brought before the judiciary. According to several NGOs, cases against Christians and Ahmadis continued to increase during the reporting period. Lower courts were frequently subjected to intimidation, delayed issuing decisions, and refused bail for fear of reprisal from extremist elements. Original trial courts usually denied bail in blasphemy cases, arguing that defendants facing the death penalty were likely to flee. As with the majority of cases in the country, many defendants appealed the denial of bail, but bail often was not granted in advance of the trial.

Representatives of the Sikh community in Punjab and Sindh reported the illegal sale of gurdwara (Sikh temple) lands by the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB). In April it was disclosed that the ETPB transferred approximately 72 acres (574 kanals) of gurdwara land in Lahore to the Defence Housing Authority. Despite protests by the Sikh community, the ETPB continued its plan to sell gurdwara land, which was not allowed under the 1925 Sikh Act. Similarly, Christian leaders in Sindh opposed a proposed sale of Saint Andrews Church in Karachi which recently celebrated 150 years of service.

There were no reports of district governments restricting the distribution and display of certain religious images, such as the Christian Trinity and Jesus. Such images were displayed openly and sold in Christian communities. Foreign books must pass government censors before being reprinted. Books and magazines were imported freely but were subject to

ensorship for objectionable sexual or religious content. Sacred books for religious minorities, except Ahmadis, were freely imported. Hindus faced some difficulty in importing books from India. Other groups did not face hardship in obtaining religious materials, although availability may be limited to some specific bookstores or religious centers.

Religious belief or specific adherence to a religious group was not required for membership in the ruling party or the moderate opposition parties. All political parties, including religious parties, had a separate minority wing, and some of the religious parties gave seats to religious minorities in provincial assemblies after the 2008 general elections.

The government funded and facilitated Hajj travel but had no similar program for pilgrimages by religious minorities. Due to the passport requirements to list religious affiliation and denounce the Ahmadi prophet, Ahmadis were restricted from going on the Hajj because they were unable to declare themselves as Muslims. Because the government does not recognize Israel, religious believers regardless of religious affiliation were unable to travel to Israel on pilgrimage. This especially affected Bahais, since the Bahai World Centre, the spiritual and administrative heart of the community, was located in northern Israel.

Discrimination against Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis in admission to higher education institutions persisted. There were no reports of discrimination against Christians when they applied for entry to universities and medical schools. Most minorities groups generally complained of discrimination in hiring. While there is a 5 percent quota for hiring minorities at federal and provincial levels, it has yet to be fully implemented. Shia leaders did not report that they were subjected to discrimination in hiring for the civil service or admission to government institutions of higher learning. Sikh leaders reported they faced restrictions in securing admissions into colleges and universities as they were required to obtain a certificate of permission from the Evacuee Trust Property Board, which they said was a lengthy process that discouraged Sikhs from pursuing higher education.

Promotions for all minority groups appeared limited within the civil service. These problems were particularly acute for Ahmadis, who contended that a "glass ceiling" prevented their promotion to senior positions, and certain government departments refused to hire or retain qualified Ahmadis. The government discriminated against some groups, such as Ahl-e-Hadith and Bareilvi, in hiring clergy for government mosques and the military and faculty members for Islamic studies positions in government colleges.

Members of minority religious groups volunteered for military service in small numbers, and there were no official obstacles to their advancement; however, in practice non-Muslims rarely rose above the rank of colonel and were not assigned to politically sensitive positions. A chaplaincy corps provided services for Muslim soldiers, but no similar services were available for religious minorities.

The public school curriculum included derogatory remarks in textbooks against minority religious groups, particularly Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews, and the teaching of religious intolerance was widespread. The government continued to revise the curriculum to eliminate such teachings and remove Islamic overtones from secular subjects. One local NGO reported that the Education Minister in KP Province, with federal input, developed new textbooks that removed all inflammatory material.

Officials used bureaucratic demands and bribes to delay religious groups trying to build houses of worship or obtain land. Although Ahmadis often were prevented from building houses of worship, Sunni Muslim groups built mosques and shrines without government permission, at times in violation of zoning ordinances and on government-owned lands without repercussions.

Abuses of Religious Freedom

There were reports of abuses of religious freedom in the country, including religious prisoners and detainees.

Police reportedly tortured and mistreated those in custody on religious charges and were accused of at least one extrajudicial killing in a blasphemy case. For example, on September 16, 2009, a young Christian man, Robert Fanish, who had been accused of blasphemy, died while in police custody. The case prompted widespread media attention, and several human rights groups asserted that he had been killed extrajudicially. Christian and Ahmadiyya communities claimed their members were more likely to be abused. Non-Muslim prisoners generally were accorded poorer facilities than Muslim inmates.

According to the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), between July 1 and December 31, a total of 24 cases were registered under blasphemy laws. Of these, ten were Christians, seven were Hindus, three were Ahmadis, and four were Muslims. A total of 1,068 persons were charged under the blasphemy laws between 1987 and 2010. In 2010, blasphemy First Information Reports (complaints) were registered with the police against 17 Christians, eight Muslims, five Ahmadis, and seven Hindus according to information provided by NCJP.

Ahmadiyya leaders claimed the government used sections of the penal code against their members for religious reasons. The government used anti-Ahmadi laws to target and harass Ahmadis and often accused converts to the Ahmadiyya community of blasphemy, violations of anti-Ahmadi laws, or other crimes. The vague wording of the provision that forbids Ahmadis from directly or indirectly identifying themselves as Muslims enabled officials to bring charges against Ahmadis for using the standard Muslim greeting and for naming their children Muhammad. According to the Rabwah-based Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya, between July and December 31, three Ahmadis registered complaints of criminal charges under Ahmadi-specific laws and the blasphemy laws with the police, and 21 Ahmadis claimed that they faced false charges under other sections of the penal code.

As of December, according to Ahmadiyya leaders, seven Ahmadis were in prison; three have been sentenced to death after being convicted of murder and are awaiting a hearing of their appeal, while four others were charged with murder in a religion-based incident. All four, currently in prison awaiting a bail hearing and trial, claimed the murder was committed by another individual. The presiding judge has registered a charge of murder against that person also. The Ahmadiyya community claimed the arrests were groundless and based on the detainees' religious beliefs. Several criminal cases, ranging from killings to destruction of property, were filed against prominent members of the Ahmadiyya community during the reporting period. The cases remained unprosecuted, and the accused were allowed to post bail.

Authorities detained and convicted individuals under the blasphemy laws on questionable charges and evidence. Judges and magistrates, seeking to avoid confrontation with or violence from extremists, often continued trials indefinitely.

The government did not subject individuals to forced labor or enslavement based on religious beliefs; however, minority community leaders charged that the government failed to take adequate action to prevent bonded labor in the brick-making and agricultural sectors. Christians and Hindus were disproportionately victims of this illegal practice.

As a result of militant persecution against religious minorities in the FATA and Malakand Division and ensuing military operations against the militants, thousands of people including hundreds of Sikh families left the affected areas and took shelter in other parts of the country. The government provided relief to Sikh internally displaced persons. By the end of the reporting period, most had returned to their homes.

A number of blasphemy cases were reported during the reporting period.

In December an Ismaili doctor, Naushad Valiyani, was arrested for insulting the Prophet Mohammed in Hyderabad, Sindh. He was detained following a complaint by a medical representative named Muhammad Faizan. The arrest was made after the complainant told the police that Valiyani threw his business card, which had his full name Muhammad Faizan, in a

waste basket during his visit. Faizan accused Valiyani of blasphemy because the name "Muhammad" was on the card he had thrown away.

On November 8 a Christian woman, Aasia Bibi, was sentenced to death for blasphemy, the first such sentence of a woman in the country, by a district court in Nankana Sahib, Punjab. Aasia was accused of committing blasphemy in June 2009 when she was reportedly fetching water while working in the fields. Following an argument with a group of Muslim women, the women went to a local cleric and alleged that Asia had made derogatory remarks about the Prophet. The cleric lodged a complaint with the police. On November 20 Punjab Governor Salman Taseer visited Aasia in Sheikhpura jail and appealed to President Zardari to pardon her. This request sparked protest across the country by religious groups who threatened to start an antigovernment movement if clemency was granted to her. Taseer also received death threats for his actions. An appeal at the Lahore High Court by Bibi's family is pending, and she remains in police custody.

On October 13 Express Tribune reported that the police detained the secretary general of an Ahl-e-Hadith mosque committee in Batapur, Punjab, after Ahl-e-Sunnat residents of the village accused him of burning pages of the Holy Quran. Heavy protests had erupted in Batapur on October 3 after residents found pages of the Holy Qu'ran in a burning pile of garbage near a local mosque. The police then registered a First Information Report (FIR – essentially a criminal charge document that opens an investigation) against unnamed accused under section 295-B of the Penal Code, which deals with blasphemy.

According to the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), a Muslim group attacked a Hindu community in Mir Wah Gorchani, Mirpurkhas, Sindh on August 23, after a Muslim cleric announced through the loudspeakers that Hindus had put up blasphemous wall chalking. A Muslim man was killed as a result of the attack. On the demand of the Muslim leaders, seven Hindus were arrested on charges of blasphemy while other Hindus abandoned the area.

On August 11 Rubina Bibi was acquitted by a local court in Gujranwala, Punjab. Rubina had been charged with humiliation of the Prophet Mohammad by residents of Alipur Chattah, Gujranwala, Punjab on March 20, 2009. Police arrested Rubina and registered a complaint under section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code. She was sent to the district jail in Gujranwala along with her one-and-a-half year-old son, Yashwa.

The killing of those accused of blasphemy continued during the reporting period. On July 19 two Christian residents of Faisalabad, Punjab, Rashid Emmanuel and his younger brother Sajad Emmanuel, were killed when exiting a court. They had been accused of distributing blasphemous material, but the judge had found them not guilty. Although escorted by three police officers, an assailant present at the hearing opened fire, killing the two men and injuring the lead police officer on the security escort team. The Lahore High Court and President Zardari ordered an inquiry into the incident.

There were numerous reports about attacks on holy places of religious minorities. In one case, on September 18, unidentified persons entered a church located at Shah Latif town in Karachi and torched it before fleeing. Several sacred books were reportedly burned, and a heavy contingent of police was dispatched to the area to avoid a breakdown in security. According to the police, an official report was registered on the complaint of Priest Peter Shahzad against unidentified persons. According to press reports, the attack was in reaction to the planned burning of a Quran by a U.S. pastor.

On October 31 an Ahmadi family removed the body of a relative recently buried in a Muslim cemetery after local police officials indicated that objections to the burial had been registered, and in the interest of peace and harmony, the family was asked to remove the body.

In June militants blew up the Sufi shrine of Mian Umar Baba in the Chamkani area of Peshawar. Police registered a case; however, no arrests were made by the end of the reporting period. This was the first attack on any shrine in Peshawar since March 2009, when militants attacked the shrine of popular Pashtun poet Rehman Baba.

On May 28 unknown terrorists attacked two separate Ahmadi congregations in Lahore during Friday prayers. The attackers used explosive devices, grenades, and automatic weapons. More than 86 persons were killed and 124 persons were injured. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, President Zardari, and Prime Minister Gilani condemned the attack and ordered an immediate inquiry. The Punjab government established an inquiry commission, but the Ahmadiyya community has yet to be contacted by any commission representatives. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) issued a statement on May 28 condemning the attack and criticizing the government for failing to increase security at Ahmadi places of worship in light of terrorist threats against the Ahmadiyya community. The HRCP called on the government to provide security for the Ahmadiyya community. Punjab authorities have provided no updates regarding the status of the investigation.

On May 16 according to International Christian Concern (ICC) approximately 40 Muslim militants assaulted the Christian Abundant Life Church in Karachi. The armed militants threatened to kill the Christians in the Saifal Marree Goth Surjani area, where the church is located. After the militants left, the pastor approached the Surjani police station to inform them about the attack and threats; however, the police filed a report against four Christians for threatening Tariq Muhammad, a Muslim convert from Christianity who led the militant group and formulated the plan to demolish the church and build a mosque. At the end of the reporting period, the four Christians were in hiding.

In May according to Compass Direct News (CDN), police illegally detained three Christians – Atif Masih, Kamran Masih, and Naveed Gill – on false charges of alcohol possession in Sialkot, Punjab, at the request of their Muslim employer, Rana Ejaz, after they refused to work on Sundays. According to an update provided by NCJP, the three Christians were released after three days in detention due to pressure by human rights organizations.

In May according to CDN, Zafar Masih, a Christian, fled his town in Punjab, after accusing Ali Ahmed of beating and raping his 12-year-old daughter on May 12. CDN claims that Masih attempted to file a police report against Ahmed at the Tatlay Aali police station, but Station House Officer (SHO) Iqbal Ojjhra refused to accept it and allegedly pressured Masih to withdraw the application. Masih has since been threatened by Imtiyaz Kharral, a local politician and the area's largest land owner. On May 13 Kharral called a meeting at his farmhouse with SHO Ojjhra, local Muslims, police officers, Masih and his family, and the other Christian families of the town. Kharral allegedly gave the Christians two options: Masih could drop his charges, or the Christians could relocate elsewhere.

On May 6 according to Assist News Service, at least five Christian boys, including Shoaib Ilyas, Chaman Ashraf, Ashar Masih, Neeta Masih, and Sunny, were forced to leave their homes in Lahore after being accused of committing blasphemy by desecrating a banner inscribed with Qur'anic verses. Local Muslim groups and Christians negotiated an agreement whereby the five accused would leave the area and never come back.

On April 1 unidentified militants in Faisalabad fired multiple shots and killed Ahmadis Sheikh Ashraf Parvez, Sheikh Masood Jawad, and Jawad's son, Asif Masood. There were reports that victims had been previously threatened because of their religious affiliation. No arrests have been reported.

On March 28 according to CDN, police filed false charges of alcohol possession against 47 Christians, including two children and eight women, in an attempt to intimidate and extort money from them. Later the district and session court granted bail to all the accused, but the case is still pending.

In March, according to ICC, Qamar David, a Christian man, was sentenced to life imprisonment and fined 101,000 rupees (\$1,187) for making blasphemous remarks about the Qur'an and the Prophet Mohammad. His appeal is pending in the Sindh High Court.

On March 2 according to Assist News Service, Munir Masih and Ruqqiya Bibi, a Christian couple, were sentenced to 25 years in prison for defiling the Qur'an after touching it with unwashed hands. On November 27 Munir was released on bail by the Lahore High Court, while Ruqqiya's bail application was still pending.

On February 27 seven people were killed and another 44 injured in Dera Ismail Khan and Faisalabad during religious processions celebrating Eid Miladun Nabi. The violence was attributed to sectarian clashes between Deobandi, Ahl-e-Hadith, and Barelvi groups.

On January 14 authorities in Ahmad Nagar confiscated an Ahmadiyya mosque and transferred it to non-Ahmadi Muslims on the grounds of "preempting the extreme law and order disturbance" when extremist religious elements threatened to take over the mosque by force. The district coordination officer cited the anti-Ahmadiyya constitutional amendment to justify his actions.

In January militants in the Tirah valley of the Orakzai Agency kidnapped three Sikhs and demanded a ransom of 30 million rupees (\$351,600). The militants killed one of the three, Jaspal Singh, on February 21 when the ransom was not paid by the deadline. Security forces secured the release of the other two men.

In January 2010 land belonging to Ahmadis in Rabwah was confiscated and sold at public auction by the Department of Housing and Town Planning of the Punjab government. The auction notice contained a "Special Note" indicating that neither Ahmadis nor their relatives could bid on the property, and any land purchased could not be subsequently sold to Ahmadis.

In December 2009 a suicide bomber attacked a Shia religious procession in Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, killing eight persons and injuring 80. There has been no attribution of responsibility for the attack.

On October 31 an Ahmadi family removed the body of a relative recently buried in a Muslim cemetery after local police officials indicated that objections to the burial had been registered, and in the interest of peace and harmony, the family was asked to remove the body.

In September 2009 police instructed Ahmadi shopkeepers of Green Town in Lahore to remove Qur'anic verses from their shops to avoid being attacked by Muslim extremists. Under the constitution, Ahmadis are not permitted to identify themselves as Muslim. The shopkeepers noted that the verses had been displayed on their shops for many years and claimed that Sunni shopkeepers had raised the issue with police due to jealousy and business rivalries.

In August 2009 according to Pakistan Christian Post, militants shot and killed six Christians and injured seven others in Quetta, Balochistan. A police report was registered against unknown people but no arrests have been made to date.

In July and August 2009 Muslim mobs, reportedly inspired by supporters of the banned Sipah-e-Sahba Pakistan (SSP) sectarian extremist organization, attacked the Christian communities living in Gojra and Korian localities, near Toba Tek Singh, Punjab, following allegations that local Christians had desecrated the Qur'an. The mob killed eight Christians and burned nearly 100 houses as police failed to stop the violence. The National Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution condemning the Gojra killings, and the Punjab Minorities Affairs Minister registered a case against the perpetrators. At the end of the reporting period, police had arrested 42 individuals in connection with the Gojra incident. Of those arrested 34 were released on bail and eight were still in custody at Toba Tek Singh. In the Korian case, police arrested 54 individuals, of whom 43 were released on bail and 11 remained in jail. The provincial government initiated a program to construct new

houses for members of the Christian community who lost their homes in the violence. The reconstruction program was ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

According to Compass Direct News, on July 22, a group of madrassah students reportedly gang-raped a 12-year-old Christian girl in Gujar Khan, Punjab. The girl's father attempted to file a complaint but the officer in charge refused to comply. Another officer later admitted that they were under pressure from Muslim leaders and extremists to refrain from filing a report.

In June 2009 a fistfight led to an alleged incident of blasphemy that sparked a mob attack on a Christian community in the district of Kasur, Punjab, prompting 700 persons to flee their homes. The late Federal Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti offered compensation to the affected families. There was no new information on this case at the end of the reporting period.

In June 2009 CDN reported that police imprisoned Arshad Masih, a Christian man from Gujranwala, in a Sialkot jail and reportedly abused him while in custody because his father was a Christian preacher. Although Masih was charged officially with robbery, he was later granted bail on the strength of testimony that he was not among the robbers. According to NCJP, the case was later dropped as no evidence was found against Masih, and the Masih family is peacefully living in Gujranwala.

In May 2009 two students of a seminary in Chakwal, Punjab, entered the home of an Ahmadi, Mubashir Ahmed, and tried to behead him. Neighbors intervened and saved his life, but he was severely injured. One student was captured and taken to a local police station; the other escaped. Police opened an investigation and were seeking the other assailant. According to Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya, the attackers were identified and arrested. Reportedly under pressure, however, Mubashir forgave the assailants, and the police case was dropped.

In April 2009 authorities released Catholics James Masih and Buta Masih from prison; they were convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to 10 years in prison in November 2006 for allegedly burning a Qur'an.

In March 2009 authorities in Sarghoda District in Punjab charged 15 Ahmadiis under Section 298c of the penal code for calling their place of worship a mosque and offering Eid prayers there. They were also charged with posing as Muslims. According to reports, the arrests were the result of a business dispute. The Ahmadiis were released on bail, but the case was ongoing.

There was no new information on the January 2009 killing in Kotri, Sindh Province of an Ahmadi shopkeeper, Saeed Ahmed. At the time, a spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community claimed that Ahmed was killed because of his faith. According to Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya, the killer remained at large and the police have made no headway in this case.

In January 2009 police arrested four Ahmadi teenagers and an adult in Layyah, Punjab, on charges of blasphemy. Local clerics reportedly attempted to incite violence following the incident. The accused were released on bail in November 2009, and the case went to trial in December 2009 in Multan. All the accused were acquitted of blasphemy charges on April 24.

In January 2009 police arrested Hector Aleem in Rawalpindi on charges of sending a blasphemous text message from his cell phone. After a hearing in an antiterrorism court, Aleem, who is a member of an agency that works for Christians' rights, was cleared of the blasphemy charges but not of abetting a crime. A government official told CDN that religious extremists heavily influenced the decision telling the judge, "If you release him (Aleem), then we will kill him outside." At the end of the reporting period, the blasphemy charges against Hector Aleem had been dropped, but he remained jailed on charges of fraud and smuggling.

Minority communities claimed the government was complicit in seizures of their property by Muslims, and that the policy of dismantling illegal slum settlements disproportionately targeted minority communities. These groups also accused the government of inaction in cases where extremist groups attacked places of worship belonging to minority groups.

Forced and coerced conversions of religious minorities to Islam occurred at the hands of societal actors. Religious minorities claimed government actions to stem the problem were inadequate. The NCJP noted abductions and forced conversions of Christians and Hindus were on the rise. It reported that 31 Christians and 11 Hindus were forced to convert to Islam during the year. In March the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan estimated that as many as 20 to 25 girls from the Hindu community were abducted every month and forcibly converted to Islam.

On May 19 a Christian woman who was kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam was reunited with her family after three years' separation. Tina Barkat was kidnapped by the family of a friend, who, together with her uncle, forced her to convert to Islam and marry one of their relatives.

In December 2009 a 15-year-old Hindu girl was abducted by a Muslim neighbor from her home in Katchi Mandi, Liaquatpur. Her parents later learned that she was being held captive in a madrassah, and she had been forced to convert to Islam and marry.

Abuses by Rebel or Foreign Forces or Terrorist Organizations

There were several incidents involving the abuse of religious groups by individuals or organizations designated as terrorist organizations by the U.S. Secretary of State under Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act and by armed sectarian extremist groups with strong links to such organizations.

Sectarian violence continued in different parts of the country during the reporting period, with attacks on the Shia minority, particularly in Dera Ismail Khan, Quetta, Hangu, Kohat, Tank, DG Khan, Gilgit, and Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. Throughout the reporting period, attacks, threats, and violence by religious extremists occurred across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Attacks on houses of worship, religious gatherings, and religious leaders linked to sectarian, religious extremist, and terrorist groups resulted in hundreds of deaths during the reporting period. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia extremists continued during the reporting period, and several religious minority individuals and communities were the targets of religious violence across the country.

On July 1 at least 44 persons were killed and 175 others injured when three suicide attackers blew themselves up inside the shrine of Lahore's patron saint Syed Ali Hajwairi, popularly known as Data Gunj Bakhsh. It was reported that the attack was a reaction to the arrests of suspected terrorists in Lahore, who were involved in exploding NATO tankers in Islamabad as well as the attack on Ahmedi worship places on May 28.

On July 17 militants from LeJ killed 18 Shias including two women and wounded four others as they ambushed a civilian convoy travelling from Parachinar to Peshawar. The convoy, escorted by security forces, came under attack in Dhad Kamar, Charkhel region in Lower Kurram, FATA.

In September the Shia community was the victim of back-to-back attacks in Lahore and Quetta. On September 1 three suicide bombers struck a procession of Shiite worshipers in Lahore, killing at least 27 and wounding over 200. On September 3 a suicide bomber attacked a Shia protest in Quetta, killing over 70 people and wounding at least 100. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for both attacks.

Terrorist attacks on religious minorities' sites were also reported. On September 12 a remote-controlled bomb planted near the wall of Lotharan Church in Mardan was detonated, injuring two policemen and creating panic in the area. It was the first bomb attack on a church in the past few years in the insurgency-hit northwest KP. However, no loss of life was reported.

On October 2 Dr. Mohammad Farooq Khan, a moderate Islamic scholar and vice-chancellor of Swat Islamic University, was gunned down in Swat, KP along with his assistant. The TTP claimed responsibility for the murder saying, "Dr. Farooq was propagating (sic) against the Taliban and had written anti-Taliban books."

On November 5 more than 60 persons were killed and nearly 100 injured in a suicide bomb attack on a mosque in north-west Pakistan. The attack took place during prayers in the Darra Adam Khel area, near Pakistan's tribal regions. The TTP claimed responsibility for the attack. Several hours later, grenades thrown into a second mosque near Peshawar killed at least two people and injured 20.

On December 8 a suicide bomber blew himself up close to a minivan in Kohat, KP leaving 15 Shia passengers, including women and children, dead and 24 others injured. TPP claimed responsibility for the attack.

Improvements and Positive Developments in Respect for Religious Freedom

The government took steps to bolster religious freedom during the reporting period.

The Ministry for Minorities established interfaith committees at the district level to meet monthly to address issues of religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Committees were established in 30 districts in Balochistan, nine districts in Sindh, and 13 districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the Ministry, consultations to establish committees in other provinces are ongoing. During 2009-10 the Ministry approved 70 development projects for minorities worth 68.4 million rupees (\$804,706), with a special fund worth 16.1 million rupees (\$189,411) distributed among minority students for scholarships from 2008-2010.

In August the Punjab government authorized the Hindu community in Lahore to operate its first crematorium to serve the more than one million Hindus living in Punjab. The walled crematorium, divided into two parts, serves both Hindus and Sikhs.

On July 28 President Zardari called approximately 30 Islamic scholars and representatives of minority communities to his official residence to discuss minority rights and interfaith harmony in the country.

Section III. Status of Societal Actions Affecting Enjoyment of Religious Freedom

During the reporting period there were reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Citizens continuously used blasphemy laws to harass religious minorities and vulnerable Muslims and to settle personal scores or business rivalries. Relations among religious communities remained tense. Violence against religious minorities and between Muslim sects continued. Most believed a small minority was responsible for attacks; however, discriminatory laws and the teaching of religious intolerance created a permissive environment for such attacks. Police often refused to prevent violence and harassment or refused to charge persons who committed such offenses. Conversion to minority religious beliefs generally took place in secret to avoid societal backlash.

On July 1 unidentified assailants killed a Shia scholar, Ali Muhammad, in a suspected sectarian attack in Saryab area of Quetta, Balochistan.

Christian communities in Punjab province came under attack in at least two reported incidents in July. On July 1 an unidentified motorcyclist tossed a grenade in front of the gates of St. Filian's Church of Pakistan located in Sargodha, Punjab; however, the explosive did not detonate. On July 5 it was reported that religious extremists threatened to demolish the Apostolic Church of Pakistan building in Lahorianwali, Narang Mandi, Punjab with a bulldozer. They also threatened to destroy homes belonging to Christians. Christian leaders contacted district police who were able to intervene in the planned attack. The militants reportedly threatened to "create a scene here like Gojra" if there were any attempts to rebuild the walls or renovate the Apostolic Church building.

On July 10 in Karachi, six people were wounded in an exchange of gunfire between two religious groups in a mosque in the Jubilee area. The violence started when individuals belonging to one school of thought were allegedly disturbed by youths talking loudly in the courtyard of the mosque as they said their prayers.

On July 21 a 16-year-old Christian girl was raped by three men in Farooqabad, Sheikhpura, Punjab. The three men, who worked for the same employer as her father, overpowered her while she was at home. After the incident, the girl's father, Ghafoor Masih, registered a complaint. While Ghafoor was on his way home from filing the report, he was kidnapped and taken to their employer's home where the perpetrators and another employee shackled and tortured him, leaving him in critical condition.

On July 29 10 Sunnis were killed and their houses torched in sectarian violence in Kurram Agency, FATA. According to local residents, men of the Shia sect carried out the attack. The incident occurred in the Sanghbakht village inhabited by the Mengal tribe near the Afghan border. Mengal tribesmen are predominantly Sunni and live on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghan border.

On July 18 three people were killed and more than 20 were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside an imambargah (Shia mosque) in Sargodha, Punjab. The target was Darululoom Muhammadia Imambargah, witnesses said.

There were instances of destruction of religious properties during the reporting period. On July 18 hundreds of individuals from the Hindu community took to the streets protesting against the demolition of an ancient temple used for commercial purposes. The Muslim residents of the locality also joined the protesters to express solidarity and blocked the road for an hour. After President Zardari ordered an inquiry into the demolition, a committee was formed by the Ministry of Minorities to probe the case.

On September 3 a suicide bomber blew himself up at the main gate of an Ahmadi place of worship in Mardan, KPk during the Friday congregational prayers. One Ahmadi, Sheikh Amir Raza, was killed and three people injured. According to local police, a boy, who appeared to be about 16 years old, detonated the explosives he was wearing when he was intercepted.

Discrimination against religious minorities and some Muslim sects relating to burial was also reported. In December, a Hindu family exhumed the body of a deceased child in order to rebury the child in another graveyard after Muslim clerics in Rawalpindi claimed they had committed sacrilege by having the child buried in a Muslim graveyard.

On October 19 students of a seminary demolished about 40 cemented graves and epitaphs in Bonga Balochan village near Kasur, Punjab. According to sources the head of the Darul Islah seminary had issued an edict against cemented graves.

On October 24 a bomb planted on a motorcycle exploded at the gate of the Baba Farid Shakar Ganj Sufi shrine in Pakpattan, Punjab during morning prayers, killing at least five people and wounding 13 people.

Mobs occasionally attacked or threatened individuals accused of blasphemy and their families or their religious communities. When blasphemy and other religious cases were brought to court, extremists often packed the courtroom

and made public threats against an acquittal. Religious extremists continued to threaten to kill those acquitted of blasphemy charges. Accused persons often went into hiding or emigrated after acquittal.

Ahmadi individuals and institutions long have been victims of religious violence, much of it organized by religious extremists. According to a spokesman for the Ahmadiyya community, since the promulgation of anti-Ahmadi laws in 1984, 203 Ahmadis have been killed on religious grounds.

Tehrik-e-Khatme Nabuwwat, a Deobandi group that actively opposed Ahmadiyya beliefs and individuals, issued a 2010 calendar with hate propaganda characterizing Ahmadis as infidels, cursed, and apostates, and urged people to cleanse their streets of Ahmadis.

The Hindu community living in Sindh and Balochistan reported they were increasingly the target of kidnappings for ransom. Hindus claimed they were forced to pay ransom because police did little to recover kidnapping victims. In 2010, according to a Newsline report, 1,150,000 rupees (\$13,592) was paid by the Hindu families living in Kandhkot, Sindh as ransom to secure the release of several kidnapped Hindu children. In December the kidnapping of a Hindu spiritual leader triggered protest demonstrations across Balochistan. Maharaja Luckmi Chand Garji, 82, was kidnapped along with his four companions, near Surab area of Kalat. The kidnappers later released three of them at a deserted place, but the whereabouts of Garji still remains unknown.

In August news organizations reported that flood-affected Dalit (low-caste Hindu) families living near Jirkh Town in the Thatta District near Karachi were being denied flood relief assistance by the government. News reports also indicated that 500 Ahmadiyya families in southern Punjab were denied shelter in flood relief camps, and that the government did not provide assistance to Ahmadiyya communities hit by the floods. There were also news reports of assistance being denied to Christian families, and that the government and local NGOs were focusing relief efforts on Muslim communities.

Despite recent attacks against Sikhs in the FATA, societal violence against the Sikh community remained comparatively rare.

Ismailis reported they were the objects of resentment of Sunni Muslims due to their comparatively better economic well-being. Ismailis reported they frequently faced societal pressure to adopt conservative Islamic practices or risk being socially ostracized.

Anti-Semitic articles were commonly found in the vernacular press, although there were no known Jewish communities in the country.

Some Sunni Muslim groups published literature calling for violence against Ahmadis, Shia Muslims, other Sunni sects, and Hindus. Some Urdu newspapers frequently published articles that contained derogatory references to religious minorities, especially Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews.

Discrimination in employment based on religious affiliation appeared widespread. Christians had difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, although Christian activists stated that the situation had improved somewhat in the private sector in recent years.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government discusses religious freedom with the Government of Pakistan as part of its overall policy to promote human rights. U.S. embassy and consulate officers maintained a dialogue with government, religious, and minority community representatives to encourage religious freedom and discuss the blasphemy laws, curriculum reform in public education and madrassah education systems, treatment of the Ahmadiyya and Christian communities, and sectarian violence.

Embassy officers attended and hosted meetings with leaders of all religions, government officials, and nongovernmental organizations where issues of interfaith dialogue, religious tolerance, and religious freedom were discussed. Embassy officials also explored with these groups the development of programs and projects to promote religious tolerance.

Officers investigated and monitored human rights cases involving religious minorities and pressed government officials to respond swiftly and effectively to these incidents, as well as to improve the regular protection of and outreach to minority groups.

Embassy officials, including the ambassador, and visiting State Department officials met with government officials as well as leaders from communities of all religious groups and nongovernmental organizations working on religious freedom issues.

Embassy officials also raised with parliamentarians the treatment of Ahmadis, Christians, and Hindus.

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