



Independent review of FCO support for persecuted Christians.

CSW Submission - Pakistan

Pakistan is a diverse country divided along ethnic, religious and linguistic lines. The seeds of sectarian and religious extremism sown by former president, General Zia-ul-Haq's regime are bearing fruit, and the state of human rights is concerning. Michelle Chaudhry, President of Cecil & Iris Chaudhry Foundation (CICF) one of CSW's partners in Pakistan said that, *'Religious intolerance and the extremist mindset is so deep rooted in today's Pakistan that a person can get killed for the personal way they choose worship God. Religious minorities live a life of constant fear.'*

The right to religious freedom intersects with many other fundamental rights and freedoms such as freedom of expression or the right to education, and the politicisation of religion has intensified religious hatred and violence which has led to continued violations against Christians and other religious minorities. Religious freedom violations against Christians are manifold and include:

- Sectarian and targeted violence
- Blasphemy accusations
- Forced conversion and marriage
- Hate speech
- Biased education.

Christians in Pakistan are a religious minority who is increasingly vulnerable and suffers discrimination across all levels of society. According to the recent census there are under four million Christians in Pakistan comprising around 1.6% of the population. Many Christians community are descendants of low-caste Hindus who converted under British colonial rule, to escape caste discrimination. The legacy of the caste system means that Christians continue to face severe discrimination from the Muslim majority. Christians also experience many forms of everyday discrimination. A large proportion of the Christian community comes from lower socio-economic backgrounds, is poorly educated and takes up menial, low-paid manual labour such as in brick kilns or the cleaning and sanitation sector.

Christians are also seen to be sympathetic to the 'West' and this is also a reason why certain Islamist groups target them. Christians are referred to using derogatory terms such as 'choora' which means sweeper and also 'kafir' which means infidel.

Blasphemy Laws

Pakistan's blasphemy laws continue to be a source of controversy and suffering, having extremely adverse effects on the accused and their families. Though blasphemy accusations are frequently levelled against Muslims, religious minorities (including Christians) are disproportionately accused, and the law is often misused to lodge false cases against them.

According to the latest figures (1987-2017) from the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP), a total of 774 Muslims, 501 Ahmadis, 219 Christians and 29 Hindus and 11 of unknown religion have been accused under various provisions on offences related to religion since 1987.¹

The laws, including Sections 295(A), outraging religious feeling; 295(B), defiling the Qur'an; and 295(C), defiling the name of the Prophet Mohammed; criminalise anyone who insults Islam, with Section 295(C) carrying the death penalty. Bail is not a right, but is granted at the discretion of the court. The law itself is poorly defined and has low standards for evidence, as it does not require specific proof of intent to commit blasphemy. As a result spurious accusations are commonplace, with the law being widely misused to settle personal scores or to resolve disputes over money, property or business. The misuse of the blasphemy laws are of particular concern because once an allegation is made often the Muslim majority community turns against the blasphemy accused and their family, either forcing them into hiding or instigating mob violence against them. Christians who have been accused often face violent threats once an accusation is made but also in prison.

The impact of mob violence spurred on by a false blasphemy accusation can have devastating consequences. On 4 November 2014 Shama Bibi and Shezad Masih,² a Christian couple from Kot Radha Kishan, Punjab Province who were working as bonded labourers, were brutally lynched and burned alive in a brick kiln by a violent mob. Mrs Masih was clearing out items belonging to her late father-in-law, and was burning papers with Arabic script on them. A local who saw this accused her of burning pages of the Qur'an. Once the news reached the local *maulvi* (Muslim scholar) an announcement was made from the mosque ordering action to be taken against those who desecrate the Qur'an.³ A mob of hundreds gathered, broke into the office where Mr and Mrs Masih were being held, brutally beat them and threw them alive into a brick kiln where they died.

On 23 November 2016 five men were fined and sentenced to death by the ATC, and a further eight men sentenced to two years' imprisonment, for the murder of the couple.⁴ On 24 March 2018 an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Lahore acquitted 20 suspects who were involved in the lynching.⁵ Perpetrator impunity is widespread and convictions for attacks on Christians are rare; the brick kiln owner, Yousuf Gujjar, who was the lead suspect, was released on bail.⁶

Asia Bibi case

Religious clerics and their supporters wield considerable influence on blasphemy cases. Asia Noreen (commonly known as Asia Bibi) is a Christian woman who was convicted in 2010 under Section 295(C) of the PPC and sentenced to death.⁷ Qari Muhammad Salaam,⁸ the cleric who registered the First Information Report (FIR) in Mrs Bibi's case, was not even witness to the incident. As Mrs Bibi was the first woman to be sentenced to death for blasphemy, the case garnered widespread publicity including

¹ BBC, 'What are Pakistan's blasphemy laws?', 6 November 2014 www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12621225

² CSW, 'CSW calls for inquiry into Kasur lynchings', 12 November 2014 www.csw.org.uk/2014/11/12/news/2370/article.htm

³ Al Jazeera America, 'Blasphemy in Pakistan: Anatomy of a lynching', 20 June 2015 <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/20/blasphemy-in-pakistan-anatomy-of-a-lynching.html>

⁴ CSW, '13 men sentenced for lynching of Christian couple', 24 November 2016 www.csw.org.uk/2016/11/24/news/3356/article.htm

⁵ CSW, 'Twenty Men Acquitted of Murder of Christian Couple', 28 March 2018 www.csw.org.uk/2018/03/28/press/3895/article.htm

⁶ World Watch Monitor, 'Pakistan court grants bail to chief suspect in oven killings of Christian couple', 19 April 2016 www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/04/pakistan-court-grants-bail-to-chief-suspect-in-oven-killings-of-christian-couple/

⁷ CSW, 'Death sentence for Asia Bibi', 18 November 2010 www.csw.org.uk/2010/11/18/press/1052/article.htm

⁸ Reuters, 'Guestview: The infliction of the blasphemy law in Pakistan', 13 December 2010 <http://blogs.reuters.com/faithworld/2010/12/13/guestview-the-infliction-of-the-blasphemy-law-in-pakistan/>

from international media, when the former governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer, visited her in prison. He boldly spoke out about the controversial blasphemy legislation, describing it as a 'black law' and saying that 'Islam calls on us to protect minorities, the weak and the vulnerable.'⁹ Mr Taseer was assassinated in 2011 by his bodyguard, Mumtaz Qadri, who claimed that his motivation was Mr Taseer's opposition to the blasphemy laws.

Mrs Bibi's final appeal in the Supreme Court was scheduled for 13 October 2016. The case was adjourned when one of the three judges, Justice Iqbal Hameed ur Rehman, recused himself, citing a conflict of interest due to his involvement in the Mumtaz Qadri case.¹⁰ The final Supreme Court appeal was eventually held on 8 October. The three-member bench reserved its verdict, with the Chief Justice warning the media not to discuss the case until the judgement by the Apex Court was issued.¹¹

On 31 October the Supreme Court acquitted Asia Bibi. The detailed 56-page judgement reversed the earlier decisions by the High Court and Trial Court, and affirmed that the state must ensure that no innocent person is compelled to face an investigation or a trial on the basis of false or trumped-up allegations of blasphemy. It further noted that there were a number of material contradictions and inconsistent witness statements in Asia Bibi's case which cast doubt on the evidence, and that the prosecution 'has categorically failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt.'¹²

Following the landmark judgement the Islamist political party Tehreek-e-Labbaik (TLP), led by cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi, together with other far-right parties, instigated demonstrations in all major cities and openly incited violence against those involved in Mrs Bibi's case. On 2 November the government reached an agreement with TLP to end the protests. Their demands included that the government initiate a legal process to put Mrs Bibi's name on the exit control list (ECL) to prevent her leaving the country, and not to object to a review petition of the Supreme Court judgement in her case.¹³

The three-day-long countrywide protests brought Pakistan to a standstill and caused damage to public and private property estimated at GBP 900 million. Amid further intimidation and incitement to violence against the Supreme Court judges and anyone involved in Mrs Bibi's case, her lawyer Saiful Malook fled to the Netherlands after receiving death threats.¹⁴ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) condemned the government's agreement, saying 'The TLP called openly for murder and mutiny, made a mockery of the rule of law and fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution, and appears to have assumed all the while that its methods were legitimate means of dissent.'¹⁵

CSW is concerned about the increasing weaponisation of the blasphemy laws: Sections 295(A), 295(B) and 295(C) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which are being used by Islamist groups not only to

⁹ *Express Tribune*, 'Taseer's remarks about blasphemy law', 5 January 2011 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/99277/taseers-remarks-about-blasphemy-law/>

¹⁰ CSW, 'Conviction of Mumtaz Qadri upheld by Supreme Court', 9 October 2015 www.csw.org.uk/2015/10/09/news/2803/article.htm

¹¹ *Dawn*, 'Supreme Court reserves verdict on Aasia Bibi's final appeal against execution', 8 October 2018 www.dawn.com/news/1437605

¹² CSW, 'Pakistan Supreme Court frees Asia Bibi', 31 October 2018 www.csw.org.uk/2018/10/31/press/4156/article.htm

¹³ *Dawn*, 'Government, TLP reach agreement, state to "take measures" to place Aasia on ECL: reports', 2 November 2018 www.dawn.com/news/1443121/government-tlp-reach-agreement-state-to-take-measures-to-place-asia-on-ecl

¹⁴ *Dawn*, 'Aasia Bibi's lawyer leaves Pakistan citing threats to his life', 3 November 2018 www.dawn.com/news/1443317

¹⁵ Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 'Appeasement of mob violence unacceptable', 4 November 2018 <http://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/appeasement-of-mob-violence-unacceptable/>

persecute religious minorities but also to gain political ground. The latest agreement between the government and the TLP disregards both the rule of law and the primacy of the judiciary, while undermining the state's authority to counter extremist ideology and endangering the country's religious minorities who are already vulnerable. CSW has come to learn that Asia Bibi though free from prison remains in Pakistan.

Impact of blasphemy accusations

Blasphemy accusations have an impact beyond that on the accused individuals, having far-reaching consequences that can trigger mass violence against minority communities. The attack on the Christian neighbourhood of Joseph Colony on 9 March 2013 occurred after Sawan Masih, a young Christian man, was accused of blasphemy. He was given the death penalty under Section 295(C) of the PPC for insulting the Prophet Mohammed, after getting into an argument with a Muslim friend.¹⁶ A mob torched over 170 houses in Joseph Colony, leaving more than 100 families displaced. Mr Masih was sentenced to death for blasphemy and fined PKR 200,000 (approximately GBP 1,157) on 27 March 2014;¹⁷ he is still awaiting his appeal in the Lahore High Court. On 29 January 2017 the ATC acquitted 115 suspects in the attack.¹⁸ No one was charged despite the existence of video and photographic evidence.

Patras Masih, a 17-year-old Christian living in Shahdara Town in Lahore, was allegedly accused of sharing 'blasphemous content' on social media on 16 January 2018. Tehreek Labaik Ya Rasool Allah (TLYR) and other religious parties blocked the Shahdara intersection and demanded the arrest of Patras Masih, while inciting violence against his family. Christian residents of Shahdara fled their homes due to fears of communal violence. After pressure from TLYR, an FIR was registered against Patras Masih under Section 295(C) of the PPC on 19 February 2018. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) took Sajid Masih, the accused's cousin, into custody for questioning on 23 February 2018. The investigation ended when Sajid Masih jumped from the fourth floor of the FIA building to escape, after he was subjected to torture and humiliation by being ordered to perform a sexual act with Patras Masih. Sajid Masih suffered broken legs and serious head injuries and an FIR was filed against him for attempted suicide. The incident was initially denied by the police officials. CSW received reports that even when he was being treated in hospital the doctors discriminated against him and were reluctant to treat him. The disturbing nature of this case highlights serious concerns over the ill-treatment of marginalised groups by law enforcement agencies.

CSW has learned from blasphemy victims and lawyers taking blasphemy cases that once an accusation is made, the victim and their family live in a constant state of fear. They experience harassment and threats from their accusers, even when the allegation is found to be false. The accused and their family cannot resume normal life, as there is no safe place for them to live. Internal relocation is extremely difficult and even if victims do manage this, they are constantly pursued by their accusers. Zohra Yusuf, chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), stated, 'Anyone even accused of blasphemy practically carries a death sentence even if they are released.'¹⁹

Attempts to reform the blasphemy laws have made little or no progress. In November 2010 Sherry Rehman, former information minister and Member of the National Assembly (MNA) of the Pakistan

¹⁶ CSW, 'Blasphemy accusation triggers arson in Lahore', 9 March 2013

www.csw.org.uk/2013/03/09/news/1415/article.htm

¹⁷ Dawn, 'Opposition cries foul at blasphemy sentence', 29 March 2014 www.dawn.com/news/1096379

¹⁸ CSW, 'Court acquits 115 accused in Joseph Colony attack', 1 February 2017

www.csw.org.uk/2017/02/01/news/3445/article.htm

¹⁹ Al Jazeera, 'Disappeared: Silencing Pakistan's activists', 21 January 2017

www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/01/disappeared-silencing-pakistan-activists-170121074139848.html

People's Party, submitted to the National Assembly a private member's bill to amend the laws.²⁰ However, Mrs Rehman was herself accused of committing blasphemy when speaking about the laws, and was forced to withdraw the bill.²¹ Debate was significantly stifled after the 2011 assassinations of Salman Taseer, governor of Punjab, and Shahbaz Bhatti, Federal Minister for Minorities.

The blasphemy laws violate multiple rights: freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to life and freedom of opinion and expression. Although the laws are incompatible with international human rights standards and should be repealed, due to their sensitive nature and the pressure of religious hardliners there is reluctance to change the law since any change will be met with fierce opposition. According to CSW sources and civil society groups in Pakistan, the current religious and political climate will not permit a repeal of the laws; however, implementing urgent procedural amendments to curb false accusations would prevent misuse of the laws.

TARGETED ATTACKS AND PERPETRATOR IMPUNITY

Though Pakistan is predominantly a Muslim country, societal divisions exist along lines of religion, caste, class, ethnicity, gender and wealth. Sectarian violence affects every religious minority group. One of the worst incidents occurred on 16 February 2017, when a suicide bomber attacked a Sufi shrine in Sindh Province visited by Hindus, Muslims and Christians: at least 88 people were killed and over 300 injured.²²

The Christian community is deliberately targeted and continues to face sectarian militancy from extreme religious groups, so it is common for churches to be protected by high walls, security barriers and security guards. On 27 March 2016, Easter Sunday, a suicide bombing at the Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park in Lahore killed at least 72 people and injured around 300.²³ JuA, a faction of TTP, claimed responsibility and announced that this was a deliberate attack against Christians, with more to follow. The year before, on 15 March 2015, a double bombing at St John's Church and Christ Church in Youhanabad had claimed 14 lives and injured over 70.²⁴

CSW met the family of Akash Bashir, who had volunteered as a church security guard on Sundays and during other prayer meetings, and was killed in the 2015 attack. Akash was 20 years old and worked in a factory manufacturing jeans. His mother explained that Christians face multiple forms of discrimination because of their religion: she has another son who attends a Muslim school and is verbally abused because of his faith. She said that when Christians applying for jobs disclose their religion they are told there are no vacancies. Despite receiving compensation after Akash's death, Mrs Bashir was disappointed by the lack of government support. At the time of interview it had been two years, six months and one day since Akash died. She recalls telling him not to go to church, and he told her not to be afraid, saying, 'If God has chosen me for this purpose, if one person dies to save many people, don't stop me from going over there.'

Although no one was prosecuted for the church attacks in Youhanabad, two suspects who were being held by the police were released and subsequently lynched. Attention immediately shifted to those responsible for the lynching, and Christian men in Youhanabad were randomly picked up by police and arrested. Originally 42 Christian men were arrested and imprisoned after being accused of involvement in the lynching. Following the deaths of two of the accused, 40 men remain on trial.

²⁰ Dawn, 'Sherry submits bill for amending blasphemy laws', 30 November 2010 www.dawn.com/news/587351

²¹ Express Tribune, 'Blasphemy law amendment: Sherry Rehman to withdraw bill, says PM', 3 February 2011 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/113445/blasphemy-law-amendment-sherry-rehman-to-withdraw-bill-says-pm/>

²² Guardian, 'Pakistan launches crackdown as Isis shrine attack toll rises to 88', 17 February 2017 www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/16/thirty-killed-100-injured-isis-bomb-sufi-shrine-pakistan-sindh

²³ CSW, 'Pakistan: Suicide attack targets Christians', 29 March 2016 www.csw.org.uk/2016/03/29/press/3037/article.htm

²⁴ CSW, 'Pakistan: Two churches bombed in Lahore', 15 March 2015 www.csw.org.uk/2015/03/15/press/2511/article.htm

One of the accused, Indriyas Ghulam, a 33-year-old Christian man, died after contracting tuberculosis while in jail. CSW met Mr Ghulam's widow, who told us that her husband was not in Youhanabad but at a church in Dulan when the bomb blasts occurred. Mr Ghulam was picked up by two police officers three months later, on 15 June 2015, after he was accused of getting into a fight. The police beat him on the spot, arrested him and then took him to Central Jail where he spent two years and four months, until he became ill. He fell ill one month before he died but was only informed that he was suffering from tuberculosis about four or five days before his death. The jail staff administered medicine for tuberculosis instead of taking him to hospital or having him checked by a doctor. The police told his wife that her husband was at the end of his life and said, 'If you want to do something for him, do it now.' He died two days after being admitted to hospital. Mr Ghulam's widow and three children are deeply distressed that he did not receive proper medical treatment much earlier.

One month later, on 9 December 2017, another suspect, Usman Masih, 29, died in Central Jail in Kot Lakhpat. Mr Masih was married with two children. According to the police the cause of death was a heart attack. The remaining 38 Christian men are still in jail and continue to deny any involvement in the lynching.

The Christian community was targeted again on 17 December 2017 when two suicide bombers stormed the Bethel Memorial Methodist Church in Quetta, killing nine people and injuring over 30.²⁵ Though Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack, to date no one has been prosecuted.

Attacks continued throughout 2018. On 2 April four members of a Christian family from Punjab were killed when attackers on a motorbike opened fire on them as they travelled by rickshaw on Quetta's Shah Zaman Road. The family was visiting relatives in Quetta to celebrate Easter. On 15 April 2018 two Christians were killed and five injured after unknown gunmen fired on them as they left the Sunday service at a church in Essa Nagri in Quetta.²⁶ The attacks against Christians in Quetta signify a shift in sectarian violence, as Christians in this region have not previously experienced violence.

The government has repeatedly failed to bring to justice the perpetrators of violence on the Christian community, creating a culture of impunity which has led to an increase in attacks on minorities.

ROUTINE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS

Religious minorities face multifaceted discrimination which permeates all aspects of society from education to employment. Due to historical caste-based discrimination, when Hindus from lower castes such as the 'Untouchables' converted to Christianity, many took jobs as sweepers or cleaners. Pervasive institutional and societal bias is especially evident in the sanitation sector, in which approximately 90-95% of employees are Christians, who are woefully treated. Government advertisements for these jobs explicitly request non-Muslims applicants.²⁷ Despite outcry from civil society adverts still specifically target Christians for cleaning and sanitation jobs.

On 1 June 2017 Irfan Masih, a Christian sanitation worker from Umerkot City in Sindh Province, became ill while cleaning a manhole.²⁸ He was taken unconscious to Civil Hospital and subsequently

²⁵ *Dawn*, '9 killed in suicide attack on Quetta's Bethel Memorial Methodist Church', 17 December 2017 www.dawn.com/news/1377184

²⁶ CSW, 'Pakistan witnesses attack on Christians in Quetta', 19 April 2018 www.csw.org.uk/2018/04/19/news/3930/article.htm

²⁷ *Express Tribune*, 'Ending discrimination: Eligibility rules changed for sanitation jobs', 30 November 2015 www.tribune.com.pk/story/1000860/ending-discrimination-eligibility-rules-changed-for-sanitation-jobs/

²⁸ CSW, 'Pakistan: Christian sanitation worker dies after being denied treatment', 9 June 2017 www.csw.org.uk/2017/06/09/press/3580/article.htm

died after being refused treatment by three doctors, one of whom said he was fasting and could not treat Mr Masih because he (Mr Masih) was *napaak* or 'unclean'. The doctors were accused of criminal negligence and manslaughter under Sections 319 and 34 of the PPC. The Municipal Committee Umerkot was also accused of failing to provide Mr Masih with any health and safety equipment.

FORCED CONVERSION AND MARRIAGE

Cases of forced marriages and forced conversions are prevalent among Christian and Hindu girls and women, particularly in Punjab and Sindh Provinces. Many victims are girls under the age of 18 years. Studies by the Aurat Foundation,²⁹ the Movement for Solidarity and Peace³⁰ and the World Sindhi Council document a number of individual cases of forced marriage and conversion. The Aurat Foundation estimates that 1,000 Christian and Hindu girls each year are abducted and forced to marry and convert; although due to under-reporting and the complex nature of the crimes, the true figure is likely to be much higher.

CSW interviewed two Christian sisters from Lahore who in 2015 were abducted from their college by their father – a recent convert to Islam – and a local mullah, and forced to marry men they had never met. The sisters were studying for their ACCA accounting qualifications when they were kidnapped from college and taken to the mosque to sign the *nikahnama* (Islamic marriage contract). They told CSW, 'We signed the documents without our consent and had to do it out of fear. Our father forced us to sign.' The sisters managed to escape before being sent to live with their husbands, but are being pursued by their father. They remain in hiding with no hope of resuming their studies, and live in constant fear of being found.

On 3 September 2018 Benish Paul,³¹ a Christian girl from Karachi, was thrown off a second floor building after she refused to convert to Islam and marry a Muslim boy, Tahir Abbas. Mr Abbas became angry after her family rejected his marriage proposal, and continued attempting to force her to marry him until he eventually pushed her from the second floor, injuring her spine. The family complained to police who blamed them rather than arresting Mr Abbas.

Biased education and discrimination

Despite educational reforms by the government as well as national and international investments in education, schools still follow a biased education system – the current curricula and official textbooks are insensitive to the country's religious diversity and promote intolerance between the majority and minority faiths.

Background

The right to education is protected by Pakistan's 1973 constitution. In April 2010, under the 18th Amendment, a new article, Article 25A, was introduced which reinforces the government's responsibility to ensure the provision of education as a basic right, right to education says that: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to 16 years in such manner as may be determined by law.

²⁹ Aurat Publication and Information Service Foundation (2014), *Forced Marriages and Inheritance Deprivation in Pakistan* www.af.org.pk/pub_files/1416847483.pdf

³⁰ Movement for Solidarity & Peace (2014), *Forced Marriages & Forced Conversions in the Christian Community of Pakistan* http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/msp/pages/162/attachments/original/1396724215/MSP_Report_-_Forced_Marriages_and_Conversions_of_Christian_Women_in_Pakistan.pdf?1396724215

³¹ Pakistani Christian girl thrown from second floor for refusing to marry a Muslim man <http://www.claas.org.uk/news/pakistani-christian-girl-thrown-from-second-floor-for-refusing-to-marry-a-muslim-man/>

Since the creation of Pakistan, the predominant academic and intellectual discourse has reinforced Islam and Islamic identity with little or no reference to other faiths, so that religious minorities are subject to a religious and political ideology within an education system that discriminates against them. Former president General Zia-ul-Haq initiated a process of Islamisation during the 1970s and 80s, The priority of General Zia's 1979 education policy was 'reorganizing the entire content around Islamic thought and giving education an ideological orientation so that Islamic ideology permeates the thinking of the younger generation...to refashion society according to Islamic tenets.'³²

The curricula and textbooks currently used in government schools and *madrassas* (Islamic religious schools) are rife with biases against religious minorities, and continue to emphasise Pakistan's fundamental Islamic identity. Recurring derogatory references to all minorities are found throughout textbooks. Contributions to the building of the nation made by religious minorities, including Christians such as Colonel Cecil Chaudhry Sr.³³ and Chief Justice Alvin Robert Cornelius,³⁴ are notably absent. Children are fed a narrative of inferiority which lacks the positive contribution of religious minority heroes.

Textbooks also include ideas that incite violence and hatred towards religious minorities:

*Because Christians rulers were led by fanatic Priests; that war with Muslims is necessary for the protection of Cross.*³⁵ (Class 7, Social Studies, Islamic Society, p.13)

CSW interviewed students as part of their recent Faith and a Future campaign. One Christian student said that in Islamiyat (Islamic Religious Studies) they were taught that Jesus was not crucified on the cross, but someone who looked like him took his place – an idea contrary to Christian beliefs.

In 2017 CSW interviewed children from religious minorities who described how they were routinely subjected to severe physical and psychological ill-treatment, including being segregated, bullied, teased, insulted and beaten on multiple occasions, by both teachers and classmates. They felt they had to accept this discriminatory treatment as part of their education, and many were compelled to abandon their studies at various stages.

Christian students were referred to using a range of derogatory terms. They were accused of worshipping idols or statues, told that all non-Muslims are infidels, and referred to by classmates and teachers as *churas* or sweepers, and as *kafir*³⁶ or infidels. Several gave accounts of Muslims not wanting to drink from the same cup or bottle as Christian students. Jacob Gill,³⁷ a 17-year-old Christian, said that when he was younger Muslim classmates told him, 'You're not supposed to use the same glass as us, play with us, and sit beside us...because you're *kafir*.' Other Christian students said they received similar derogatory insults. Imran Masih,³⁸ a 17-year-old Christian, said, 'No Muslim classmate wanted to be my friend,' and said that 12 Christians from class 6 (ages 12 to 13) left because of 'the aggressive discrimination and pressure to convert.'

³² National Commission for Justice and Peace (2013), *Education vs Fanatic Literacy*
<http://archive.paxchristi.net/MISC/2014-0251-en-ap-GE.pdf>

³³ *Dawn*, 'Air war hero Cecil Chaudhry dies at 70', 13 April 2012 www.dawn.com/news/710333

³⁴ Pakistan Christian News, 'Alvin Robert Cornelius – A Role Model for Christians', 2 September 2015
www.pakistanchristiannews.com/a-r-cornelius-a-role-model-for-christians/

³⁵ National Commission for Justice and Peace, 2013

³⁶ Derogatory term meaning 'infidel', used to describe non-Muslims.

³⁷ Name changed for security reasons.

³⁸ Name changed for security reasons.

Denial of access to educational opportunities

Religious minority students reported being penalised in a variety of ways because of their faith, and being deliberately denied access to educational opportunities. Some students from religious minorities received lower marks than classmates; others were told if they converted to Islam they would get better grades and more support from teachers; while other students were refused scholarships or entry onto higher courses. Daniel Maqsood,³⁹ a 17-year-old Christian, was told by his teacher when he was in class 8 that he would receive good grades if he followed Islam. When he refused to change his religion she beat him twice a week and marked down his grades. Joseph Sethi,⁴⁰ an 11-year-old Christian, reported that his teacher said, 'If you were a Muslim I'd happily help you with your course and syllabus, homework and assignment.'

Despite some reforms to the education system, the government is falling desperately short in revising and eradicating religious intolerance and discriminatory attitudes from the curricula and from schools. Efforts must be increased to combat the pervasive intolerance that informs current religious and cultural norms by implementing long overdue curriculum reforms, removing bias from textbooks and including the contributions of religious minorities.

Conclusion

The state of religious freedom in Pakistan is declining, with ongoing and egregious FoRB and human rights violations taking place. Discriminatory legislation against religious minorities, such as the blasphemy laws have laid a foundation that empowers those with an extremist mindset to carry out attacks. The lack of political will to prosecute perpetrators quickly and effectively, coupled with a weak judicial system and rule of law, have fostered an environment of impunity. This further marginalises religious minorities and weakens their confidence that they will receive justice for crimes committed against them.

The Supreme Court's landmark suo motu judgement in June 2014 made significant recommendations to protect religious minorities. It noted a 'general lack of awareness about minority rights among the people and those entrusted with enforcement of Law'.⁴¹ The judgement recommended that the government increase its political will to combat terrorism, disarm militant groups and religious schools that provide weapons training, and return to a more plural society to protect religious minorities and all Pakistani citizens. Pakistan has a long history of impunity for the perpetrators of FoRB violations, and Imran Khan's new PTI-led government must take more effective steps to prevent sectarian violence and hold the perpetrators of religious attacks to account where previous governments have failed. There must be greater political will to promote religious literacy and human rights through initiatives including reforms of biased textbooks and curricula, public awareness and education programmes, interfaith initiatives as well as training for police authorities and public officials, in order to create a more plural, tolerant society in which religious freedom and human rights for Christians and other religious minorities is respected.

³⁹ Name changed for security reasons.

⁴⁰ Name changed for security reasons.

⁴¹ Supreme Court of Pakistan, 'Suo moto actions regarding suicide bomb attack of 22.9.2013 [sic] on the Church in Peshawar and regarding threats being given to Kalash tribe and Ismailies in Chitral' www.supremecourt.gov.pk/web/user_files/File/smc_1_2014.pdf

