

## **Oral Evidence on Pakistan QR (with AB)**

In the formation of Pakistan, Jinnah, who was Pakistan's first Governor General repeatedly promised Christians that they would enjoy equal rights and privileges in Pakistan. The Christian vote was the key vote in establishing Pakistan and yet his legacy has not been honoured. In the present-day Christians are fighting for their equal and fundamental rights. They are marginalised, a soft target for terrorists, face workplace religious hatred, lynching, and forced conversion and live in fear and distress.

Text books in schools' fuels extremism and intolerance against Christians which leads to incomprehensible persecution and brutality. The UK provides millions in aid each year but ignores the unspeakable persecution of Christians in Pakistan. Asia Bibi's "so called" blasphemy case was sadly not an individual case.

The Pakistani Government have failed to protect Christians from a series of extremism and terrorism, Christians are regarded as the agents of the West by hardliners in Pakistan. However, the services of Christians in the sectors of education and health are praiseworthy and their love and dedication for Pakistan is matchless. The Netherlands, Canadian and US Embassies appear to provide help for Christians, but the British Government is lagging behind.

The British High Commission is inactive and reluctant, to elevate the issues of persecution and marginalization of Christians and the Pakistani Christian community don't receive any substantial support.

Following the suicide bombings on a Church in Peshawar where 106 were killed, a group of churches in the UK assisted with medical aid. The Christian community was very isolated and abandoned and the world didn't do much. QR visited the bomb victims on behalf of Churches and found mothers and fathers had lost their children, orphans and widows facing challenges of girding poverty for their medical treatment.

The UK based churches have assisted with post trauma counselling - they realised after several years that this was essential and one successful outcome of this counselling has been that one child spoke for the first time following the attack.

The FCO said they needed to work diplomatically. The Pakistani Government didn't do much in terms of aid and rehabilitation of bomb victims of All Saint, Quetta Church attack and Lahore suicide blast on Easter. There was no response from the British government after these attacks which is shameful.

Every day we hear the stories of persecution; forced conversions, sexual assaults, misuse of blasphemy law and acts of violence against Christians in Pakistan. The poor Christian families are sold to powerful landlords since they are considered "unclean" end up serving at brick kilns and agricultural farms for the rest of their lives in slavery. Thousands of Christian families have been locked in a cycle of debt and poverty for decades.

In April 2018 when a Christian girl refused marriage to marry a Muslim, she became the victim of an acid attack and died from her injuries. Our perception is that there is an "ABC" policy for people receiving aid - "Anybody But Christian!"

We believe that the FCO here in London could do more. The diplomatic answer we usually get is that "they are raising issues with the Minister for Human Rights and other office bearers in Pakistan" but

part of the problem in Pakistan is that there are 24 Federal and 5 State ministers in the Cabinet, but none are Christians.

There is not much press coverage and attention from the UK of Christian persecution in Pakistan and there was a lack of principal standing following the All Saint, Quetta Church in 2013 and Lahore 2016 suicide blast at Easter. It is not described as "persecution" by the British.

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