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Follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by Association Un Enfant Un Cartable Du Burkina Faso, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[17 August 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Christian Teenagers at the Risk of Death Penalty for Blasphemy in Pakistan

In Pakistan people, persons of minority faiths, particularly Christians experience grave insecurity when someone is accused of blasphemous content or remarks. They are the most vulnerable section of the Pakistani society.

On May 18, 2023, two Christian boys, S. M. (14) and Adil Babar (18) were arrested and charged with blasphemy after a minor altercation with a police constable named Zahid Sohail in the city of Lahore. They are charged under blasphemy law of Pakistan for having insulted the Prophet Muhammad and risk the death penalty under Pakistan's strict blasphemy laws.

According to Pakistan's strict blasphemy law, people who have been charged cannot be released on bail. The FIR report reveals the same against the boys.

However, when senior members of the neighborhood asked Sohail to substantiate his accusation with evidence, he was unable to answer them properly, reported Stefanus. Later, police raided the house later that evening and arrested Adil and Simon.

This is yet another tragic outcome of Pakistan's controversial and unjust blasphemy laws. The fact that one of the boys is a teenager, the charge and arrest of these two teenagers could have lasting consequences for their lives and their families and their communities. Now, they and their families are exposed to enormous stress, social pressure and threats to their lives are immediate.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws foster an environment of intolerance and impunity, and lead to violations of a broad range of human rights, including the obvious rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, as well as freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention; the right to due process and a fair trial; freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; and the right to life and security of the person and property.

Association Un Enfant Un Cartable Du Burkina Faso urge Human Rights Council to take cognizance of the issue and remind Pakistan that its blasphemy laws are completely incompatible with freedom of religion and belief and international human rights law norms.

References:

1. Troubling Trend of Harassing Christians under Blasphemy in Pakistan
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3. <https://www.stefanus.no/aktuelt/pakistan-skjerper-beryktet-blasfemilov>