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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Human Rights Congress for Bangladesh Minorities (HRCBM), 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.

[2 February 2023]

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



Pakistan's Continued Persecution Of Religious Minorities

The United States of America Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, in December 2022 designated Pakistan as a 'Country of Particular Concern' under the Religious Freedom Act over severe violations. However it must be pointed out that the United States of America has not alone to raise concerns over human rights violations, particularly those pertaining to the protection of religious freedom of minorities. (1)

In September 2022, European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) had also called on the Pakistan government to undertake timely reforms and legislative changes on human rights issues and translate them into concrete improvements, especially the prevention of any misuse of blasphemy laws. (2)

Mariyam Taher Qayyum, a legal scholar from Pakistan who worked as an intern in the Pakistani Supreme Court as well as the Islamabad High Court, in an eye opening and poignant article has written the state of being of a religious minority in

Pakistan.... "With impunity from the state, vigilante mobs continue to carry out extrajudicial killings. Blasphemy laws still have a negative impact on the nation's plurality and foster an ethos of radicalism and intolerance. Charges of blasphemy are founded on baseless allegations, motivated by the persecution of minorities and the desire to settle personal scores." (3)

Just to recap some of the events of the previous year adding to Pakistan's chequered history of religious persecution of minorities (4) :

- Mob lynching of a in Khanewal in February 2022: A mob in Punjab's Khanewal district tortured and killed a man accused of blasphemy. The local police, in order to prevent themselves, allowed the accused to leave the police station in where the mob was present. The victim was then dragged to a nearby place, tortured and killed whereas the police allegedly played the role of silent spectator. This incident was a throwback to December 2021 when an Islamist mob lynched a Sri Lankan executive falsely accused of blasphemy.
- Execution of a Christian Pastor in January 2022: Pastor William Siraj was shot dead by unidentified motorcyclists in Peshawar on January 30, 2022.
- Attack on a Christian school in April-May 2022: As per a new report, fourteen armed men raided Global Passion School in April, 2022 tortured staff and damaged their vehicles. The school, managed by Presbyterians, has provided free education and food to Christian students from nearby brick kiln families since 2018. (5)

ECLJ in its Universal Periodic Review 2022 reminded Pakistan how it had in fact supported the adoption of UDHR. Further, Pakistan was a party to ICCPR, CEDAW,

and CRC and was, thus, obligated to provide due process of law and protection of fundamental rights, including life and liberty, to all of its citizens, especially the vulnerable groups such as women and minorities. In the damning report the ECLJ gave clear cut advice to Pakistan stating "It must not succumb to the pressure from the extremist members of the society in doing the right thing". (6)

We beseech the Council to immediately intervene and address the continuous persecution of religious minorities in Pakistan. Further Pakistan should be circumspect about its treatment of religious minorities and its inability to address continued and relentless acts of violence.

1 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2393613/religious-minorities-in-pakistan-a-chequered-year>

2 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2378346/eu-asks-pakistan-to-tackle-human-rights-challenges>

3 <https://www.jurist.org/news/2022/10/pakistan-dispatch-persecution-of-religious-minorities-continues-under-current-blasphemy-law/>

4 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2393613/religious-minorities-in-pakistan-a-chequered-year>

5 <https://www.ucanews.com/news/christian-school-attacked-in-pakistan-punjab-province/97108>

6 <http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Universal-Periodic-Review-of-Pakistan---42-UPR-Session-ECLJ-July-2022.pdf>