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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Africa Culture Internationale, 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.

[22 August 2023]

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



Discrimination and Intolerance in Sindh, Pakistan

Religious intolerance in Pakistan is never ending feature. Whether they are Hindus, Christians, or Ahmadis, all are being considered as second grade citizens.

Jaranwala Incident Against Christian in Punjab Province of Pakistan:

Recently A Muslim crowd attacked a Christian community in eastern Pakistan on Wednesday 16 of August. The attack took place in Jaranwala in the industrial district of Faisalabad. The two Christians were accused of blasphemy. A violent mob of hundreds ransacked and torched five churches, attacked the residences of members of the Christian community and the office of the local assistant commissioner too. Although the current pick and choose government has recently assured to give severe punishment to those elements who were involved in this incident and never allow anyone in the future to repeat the incident, but it has been long history of these kind of claims of various governments unfortunately they have never turned to a reality.

In addition to the religious minorities who are the first target of the violence, Pakistan's liberal and secular voices are also now in danger, as are those who stand up for them.

Fatima Murder Case:

Meanwhile, a 10-year-old girl named F. was found brutally tortured to death inside the palatial mansion of an influential local religious leader in Ranipur, near Gambat, Khairpur Sindh. She was working as a slave for petty income to serve her religious masters.

A peer (religious clerk) named Asad Shah apparently raped and murdered her and Sindh police tried to brush the case under carpet because of political influence of peer. A heart wrenching cctv footage released shows the minor without clothes in disheveled state and slowly life leaves her body while the culprits watch over her in ignorance.

The Ranipur incident has sent shockwaves across Sindh, calling into question the performance of the police and the dominance of influential religious and political leaders in our society.

The brutal murder of F. of Nosheroferoz in the palatial mansion of an influential religious leader shows how blatantly the laws and the fundamental rights are being violated in Sindh and across the country. The deceased girl F. was working as a domestic maid in that palace.

News reports circulating on different news channels suggest that as many as 17 under aged girls and boys are still working in the same mansion without any remuneration and their parents due to abject poverty are unaware of the conditions of their children who are working as bonded labourers in that palace. Local police tried to give protection to the accused involved in the brutal murder, however police high-ups intervened in the case due to pressure from the media. Post-mortem is a mandatory requirement of law as per the provisions of police rules in cases of suspicious deaths, but local police did not bother to issue medical letter to the bereaved family. On the other hand, the legal fraternity as well as the human rights commission of Pakistan are not satisfied with the FIR lodged against the accused in this case. As it doesn't include several sections relevant to child protection and bonded labour.

As many as 91 women, lost their lives in the incidents of honor killing and domestic violence during the last six months of 2023, as per the data collected by a social and women rights body Sindh Suhai Organization (SSO). Sindh police reported 71 cases related to sexual violence against children in the first 10 months of 2022.

These included 41 cases of sodomy – 13 in Hyderabad range and 11 in Sukkur range. Another 30 cases involved general sexual abuse of children with no specification of the nature of crime. More than half of these (60%) occurred in Karachi range.

In Pakistan laws related to protection of women have been enacted by the parliament but we rarely see any sort of implementation of these laws and the core reason behind that is lack of awareness among the subjects of these laws. The investigation agency can play a vital role in making this case an example by ensuring Justice for F. People of Sindh have turned up against this incident.

False blasphemy case on Professor Notan Lal:

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are extremely biased and have often triggered violence against the persecuted minorities, particularly Hindus as was observed in this Professor Notan Lal's case too.

On September 15, 2019, a mob vandalized a Hindu community in the town of Ghotki, Sindh, after a student accused his school principal, Notan Lal, of blasphemy: "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God." Riots erupted, during which Hindu temples and homes were damaged. Notan was taken into "protective custody" and an investigation was launched. The student then filed a complaint under Article 295-C of Pakistan's penal code, alleging that Lal insulted the Prophet, Muhammed. Article 295-C prescribes a death sentence for "whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)".

To be accused of blasphemy in Pakistan is a condemnation to years of harassment at its best—and a death sentence at its worst. The accused is trapped within a Kafkaesque legal system that, in a misguided attempt at keeping them safe, ties them up in its bureaucracy, holding them behind bars to protect them from the mob waiting to carry out vigilante justice upon their release. No prescribed death sentence has yet to be carried out officially by the courts. And yet, ironically, that does not diminish the risk of death for the accused.

"According to the United States Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), more than 75 people have been put to death since 1990 in connection with allegations of the crime and more than 40 are either serving lifetime imprisonment or are on death row for blasphemy in Pakistan"

These laws are often misused in the Islamic nation. Last year, a Sri Lankan man Priyantha Diyawadana was tortured and set afire by an Islamist mob on charges of 'blasphemy'. He had allegedly taken down and torn a poster that contained salutations ("Durood") on the prophet of Islam.

In what is nothing but a travesty of justice, an 8-year-old Hindu boy became the youngest to be charged with blasphemy. A member of the boy's family pointed out that the boy didn't even understand what his crime was and why he was being kept in prison. "We have left our shops and work; the entire community is scared and we fear backlash. We don't want to return to this area. We don't see any concrete and meaningful action will be taken against the culprits or to safeguard the minorities living here," the family member said back then.

The sentencing of Notan Lal highlights once again why the international community needs to stand up.
