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ON THE CATALOGUE OF INJURIES FACED BY RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

AFTAB ALEXANDER MUGHAL 25 January 2018

Religious minorities have been living in Pakistan for centuries, but still they are not considered equal citizens. They are persecuted by both state and society. Why?

Since the birth of Pakistan, religious minorities have been demanding safety and equal rights. Though government officials promise time and again to take necessary measures to protect them, injustices and persecution are ongoing. Just a week ago, five Hazara (ethnic minority) Shia Muslim were killed by extremists. Recently, in two different incidents, two young Christian boys were killed in Punjab province, Pakistan's most populous region. Just a week before Christmas, on 17 December, 4 suicide bombers from ISIS attacked a church in Quetta, Baluchistan Province. They killed at least nine Christian men, women, and children, and wounded 56 others. On 9 October, Arslan Masih, who was 14-year-old, was beaten to death by six policemen in Sheikhpura. And, on 27 August, Sharoon, 17, was killed in the classroom by his classmate in Vehari. According to Sharoon's mother, her son was killed because of his Christianity. He was warned against drinking from a glass used by Muslim students who called him a 'choora' (a derogatory term which often used for Christians in Pakistan).

Pakistan is an Islamic country, which was arrived on the world map on 14 August 1947. When British rulers left the Indian subcontinent, they divided the region into two independent states: India and Pakistan – created as a state for subcontinent Muslims. According to Pakistan's constitution, non-Muslims are considered a minority, including Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Ahmadis, Kalash, Zoroastrians, and so on. At the time of partition, they constituted 20% of the total population. Today, however, minorities constitute only 3% of Pakistan's 207 million people because of their continual emigration. According to government statistics, almost 97% of Pakistanis are Muslim - about 80 percent Sunni and nearly 20 percent Shia.

Hindus are the country's largest minority, and around 80% live in Sindh province. They carry the burden of historical prejudice. They face land-grabbing, attacks, and kidnapping. Forced conversions, temple desecration, rape, and murder are also reported regularly. Christians are the second major minority community across the country, and about 80% live in Punjab province. They are the poorest section of society and often falsely accused of blasphemy against Islam and face constant violence. During just the first two weeks of 2016, five attacks on churches and Christians were reported by the media.

“Violence against minority groups is deeply embedded within political and social processes in Pakistan,” said Umair Javed, a columnist for Dawn, a liberal Pakistani newspaper. Sadly, many Pakistanis portrayed Hindus as enemies, and Christians as agents of the west. Both communities are also considered infidels, which makes their position more vulnerable.

Even within the Muslim population some groups are considered minorities. The Hazara, for instance, is an ethnic group within the Shia Muslim community which has been

brutally attacked by militant sectarian organisations in Baluchistan province. In the first 10 months of 2017, at least 14 Hazaras were killed in targeted attacks. Since 2002, at least 2,679 Shia Muslims, most of them Hazara, have been killed in Pakistan, according to Al Jazeera. The Kalash is another tiny, peaceful community of about 3,000, which follow pre-Islamic customs. They were forcibly converted to Islam in the isolated Kalash valley. In one of the incidents last year, a young Kalash girl Reena, 14, was converted to Islam under duress. When she ran back to her family, Muslims attacked Kalash homes while police did not provide them substantive protection.

Because of religious prejudice, these communities are regularly discriminated against in education, employment, political, social and cultural life in the country. Asif Khan, a Muslim board member of the Shaheed Bhutto Foundation admitted that spaces in all spheres across the country were shrinking for minorities. An editorial of The Daily Times, an English newspaper in Pakistan, says, “In Pakistan, minorities feel insecure, and this is the result of the discriminatory policies of the state and society towards them. There are numerous examples of injustices that are committed against members of minority communities on an almost daily basis across the country, but the government does not seem to care.”

Recently a Church was attacked in Quetta by unknown assailants. The police failed to trace them. Last year, on Easter Sunday, a Taliban suicide bomber killed 73 people, including 29 children, the youngest only 2 years old, and injured more than 350. A majority of them were Christians. In September 2013, when the federal government was having talks with the Taliban factions, a twin suicide bombing at All Saints Church in Peshawar resulted in the killing of 127 Christians. It was the deadliest attack against Christians in creation of Pakistan.

Pakistan’s minority communities face danger not only from militants and terrorists, but often from their fellow citizens, who consider them inferior. The genesis of this attitude lies in the state’s philosophy, which is based on one particular religion: Islam. Since the birth of the country, the state has been directly and indirectly promoting an ideology which makes minorities second-class citizens in their own land. When hundreds of Muslims attack a Christian locality because of an alleged blasphemy accusation, this is not the act of just a handful of militants. It is a clear reflection of the mindset of the Pakistani public and the general attitude of local society, which is increasingly becoming less tolerant towards minorities. Their message is loud and clear that Pakistan was created only for Muslims. As former President of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Pakistan, Archbishop Lawrence John Saldanha stated, “Pakistan has become a state only for Muslims.”

Pakistan’s minority communities face danger not only from militants and terrorists, but often from their fellow citizens, who consider them inferior. The genesis of this attitude lies in the state’s philosophy.

Yet Pakistani scholar Farahnaz Ispahani is of the view that Pakistan’s founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah wanted to make a homeland for South Asia’s Muslims, not an Islamic state. As Pakistan was created in the name of religion, in many parts of India and

Pakistan, large-scale violent incidents started among Muslim, Hindus and Sikhs. At least two million people lost their lives in conflict and around 14 million people were displaced along religious lines on the both sides of the border.

To minimise religious conflict, Jinnah, the first Governor General of Pakistan, appointed Jogendra Nath Mandal, a Hindu, as Federal Education and Law Minister, and Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, an Ahmadi, as Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Minister. In the first two years, Pakistan's Constituent Assembly held meetings without any religious symbolism. Yet the nature of governance changed quickly. In 1949, just a year after Jinnah's death, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan introduced the Objectives Resolution. Islam was declared as the state religion. The resolution tried to establish Pakistani nationhood according to a principle of religious conformity. Thereafter, religion took centre stage in Pakistani society through state policies and its direct interventions. As a consequence, non-Muslims' status as equal citizens was threatened, and began to diminish.

In 1956, when the country adopted its current name, the 'Islamic Republic of Pakistan,' the lives of minorities changed in another significant way. History tells us that all governments of Pakistan used Islamic ideological card to hold political power. However, the process of 'Islamification', introduced and stringently enforced by the late dictator General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1977 – 88), furthered this process of discrimination against minority communities. Islamic policies proliferated madrassas, which promoted hard-line ideology, introduced controversial blasphemy laws and instituted Sharia courts in the country. State and society increasingly rejected rationalism and humanism, amping up hostility towards vulnerable minorities.

The ill-treatment of minorities is two-fold: biased legislation and social intolerance. These two forms of discrimination do not operate in isolation; rather, they work together and are mutually reinforcing. The law also contributes to these discriminatory practices. Though the constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal rights for every citizen under Article 25, the same document prohibits non-Muslims from becoming president or prime minister. The same standard applies to other high positions within the government.

This constitutional provision has a trickle-down effect and causes institutional prejudice for minorities. As a result, Christians and low-caste Hindus are often forced into low-paying menial positions as agriculture workers, sweepers and brick-kiln workers. Many are trapped in the net of bonded labour. Such a situation leads to further social stigmatisation and reinforces their economic marginalisation. It is difficult, for instance, for non-Muslim groups to find jobs in restaurants or working as street vendors because most Muslims refuse to accept food cooked or touched by them. Consequently, the majority of these communities live in abject poverty, and are forced to face the worst forms of social and economic discrimination, and social and political isolation.

Despite all these challenges, minority communities are playing a major role in the development of the country. For example, Christians continue to make significant contributions to the country's health, education and social development sectors. Ironically, while the Christian community has a long service in promoting education across the country, its own literacy rate is just 19% compared to Pakistan's overall literacy rate of 58%.

Among minorities, Christian, Hindu and Kalash girls and women are victims of the worst forms of religious persecution. Apart from other forms of violence, the number of forced conversion cases of girls and women are rapidly mounting. The Movement for Solidarity and Peace in Pakistan reported that every year around 700 Hindu women and girls, many of whom are minors, are abducted, forcefully converted, and then forcibly married to Muslim men, usually their abductors. Christian and Kalash girls face a similar situation. And yet the state is a silent spectator on this critical issue, clearly lacking any appetite to address it.

In addition to social intolerance, minorities face persecution of a more threatening kind: being accused of blasphemy. Aasia Bibi's case is a prime example of this. A poor, illiterate Pakistani Christian woman and mother of five, Aasia was accused of blasphemy in 2009 during an argument with her Muslim fellow field workers, who refused to drink from a bucket of water which she had touched as they said she had defiled it by being Christian. She was convicted by a Pakistani court, received a death sentence, and is now on death row. Both Punjab Governor, Salman Taseer, a progressive Muslim, and Federal Minister for Minority Affairs, Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian, were assassinated for speaking up for her.

The media, especially Urdu newspapers and magazines, and public schools' syllabuses are also playing a role in intensifying intolerance against minorities. A study conducted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute Pakistan has pointed out that textbooks contain a distorted presentation of national history. The views in these textbooks encourage prejudice and bigotry towards women and religious minorities, glorify war and incite violence. Dr Riaz Sheikh Szabist University maintains that the social construction of Pakistani society is based on the religious hatred of people of other faiths. "This is why societal marginalisation in Pakistan has increased where the majority has the power over minority communities, whose space in society has shrunk," he says. Not surprisingly, then, the Minority Rights Group International (MRG) categorises Pakistan as one of the world's most dangerous countries for religious minorities. According to Amnesty International's latest report, "State and non-state actors continued to discriminate against religious minorities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, in law and practice."

Against this backdrop, there is clearly no quick and easy solutions. Though the situation is not encouraging, there are still some reasons for hope. After terrorist attacks on several churches in Peshawar in 2013, and Lahore in 2014, some Muslim members of civil society made human chains outside churches in many cities during Sunday prayer services to show solidarity with their fellow Pakistani citizens. In its June 2014 verdict on a suo moto case – on its own motion – pertaining to the Peshawar church attack in 2013, the Supreme Court of Pakistan found "that the incident of desecration of places of worship of minorities could (have been) warded off if the authorities concerned had taken preventive measures at the appropriate time." It is the responsibility of federal and provincial governments to take necessary actions to implement the judgment of the country's highest court. Sadly, neither the federal government nor the provincial governments, particularly the provincial government of Punjab, seem to have the will to do this. Last year, the National Assembly approved the Protection of Minorities Bill, which addressed forced conversions. However, it has not yet been approved by the Senate.

Minorities maintain little hope in the present Conservative government, the Pakistan Muslim League-N, whose success has mainly depended on the support of the right-wing

religious vote bank. Nevertheless, after taking office in August, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that the protection of minorities was a priority.

But because of their experiences, minorities do not trust these kind of statements. If the government is to deliver on minority rights, it should make minorities feel they belong in Pakistan as much as any Muslim does. The government needs to align all its laws with international conventions which would help promote tolerance and religious freedom in the country if it wishes to become an honourable member of the international community. Time has proven that the existing laws are clearly discriminatory in their nature, and policies have not brought any relief to the country and its people; rather they have divided the nation. To turn Pakistan into a diverse and tolerant society, there are fundamental steps that need to be taken – and democratic voices, struggling for a more pluralistic society, should be heard. Link: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/aftab-alexander-mughal/on-catalogue-of-injuries-faced-by-religious-minorities-in-pakistan>

'PAKISTAN SCHOOLS TEACH HINDU HATRED'

How to Have Cheaper Insulation for Your Home Windows and Doors (DrPrem)

AP Updated Oct 01, 2014 08:27pm

<http://www.dawn.com/news/672000/pakistan-schools-teach-hindu-hatred>

ISLAMABAD: Text books in Pakistani schools foster prejudice and intolerance of Hindus and other religious minorities, while most teachers view non-Muslims as "enemies of Islam," according to a study by a US government commission released on Wednesday. The findings indicate how deeply ingrained hard-line Islam is in Pakistan and help explain why militancy is often supported, tolerated or excused in the country.

"Teaching discrimination increases the likelihood that violent religious extremism in Pakistan will continue to grow, weakening religious freedom, national and regional stability, and global security," said Leonard Leo, the chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom. Pakistan was created in 1947 as a homeland for the Muslims of South Asia and was initially envisaged as a moderate state where minorities would have full rights.

But three wars with mostly Hindu India; support for militants fighting Soviet-rule in Afghanistan in the 1980s; and the appeasement of hard-line clerics by weak governments seeking legitimacy have led to a steady radicalisation of society. Religious minorities and those brave enough to speak out against intolerance have often been killed, seemingly with impunity, by militant sympathizers. The commission warned that any significant efforts to combat religious discrimination, especially in education, would "likely face strong opposition" from hardliners.

The study reviewed more than 100 textbooks from grades 1-10 from Pakistan's four provinces. Researchers in February this year visited 37 public schools, interviewing 277 students and teachers, and 19 madrases, where they interviewed 226 students and teachers. The Islamisation of textbooks began under the US-backed rule of army dictator Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, who courted Islamists to support his rule. In 2006, the government announced plans to reform the curriculum to address the problematic content, but that has not been done, the study said. Pakistan's Islamist and right-wing polity would likely oppose any

efforts to change the curriculum, and the government has shown no desire to challenge them on the issue. The report found systematic negative portrayals of minorities, especially Hindus and to a lesser extent to Christians.

Hindus make up more than one per cent of Pakistan's 180 million people, while Christians represent around two per cent. Some estimates put the numbers higher. There are also even smaller populations of Sikhs and Buddhists.

"Religious minorities are often portrayed as inferior or second-class citizens who have been granted limited rights and privileges by generous Pakistani Muslims, for which they should be grateful," the report said.

"Hindus are repeatedly described as extremists and eternal enemies of Islam whose culture and society is based on injustice and cruelty, while Islam delivers a message of peace and brotherhood, concepts portrayed as alien to the Hindu." The books don't contain many specific references to Christians, but those that "that do exist seem generally negative, painting an incomplete picture of the largest religious minority in Pakistan," the report said.

Attempts to reach Pakistan's education minister were not successful. The textbooks make very little reference to the role played by Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in the cultural, military and civic life of Pakistan, meaning "a young minority student will thus not find many examples of educated religious minorities in their own textbooks," the report said. "In most cases historic revisionism seems designed to exonerate or glorify Islamic civilisation, or to denigrate the civilisations of religious minorities," the report said. "Basic changes to the texts would be needed to present a history free of false or unsubstantiated claims which convey religious bias." The researchers also found that the books foster a sense that Pakistan's Islamic identity is under constant threat. "The anti-Islamic forces are always trying to finish the Islamic domination of the world," read one passage from social studies text being taught to Grade 4 students in Punjab province, the country's most populated. "This can cause danger for the very existence of Islam. Today, the defense of Pakistan and Islam is very much in need." The report states that Islamic teachings and references were commonplace in compulsory text books, not just religious ones, meaning Pakistan's Christians, Hindus and other minorities were being taught Islamic content.

It said this appeared to violate Pakistan's constitution, which states that students should not have to receive instruction in a religion other than their own. The attitudes of the teachers no doubt reflect the general intolerance in Pakistan.

The 2011 Pew Research Center study found the country is the third most intolerant in the world, but because of the influence they have, they are especially worrisome.

Their views were frequently nuanced and sometimes contradictory.

[2. 5,000 HINDUS FLEE PAK EVERY YEAR DUE TO PERSECUTION?](#)

Omer Farooq Khan, TNN | May 14, 2014, 03.47AM IST

Around 5,000 Hindus migrate from Pakistan to India and other countries every year due to religious persecution



ISLAMABAD: Around 5,000 Hindus migrate from Pakistan to India and other countries every year due to religious persecution, ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) lawmaker Ramesh Kumar Wankwani has told the Pakistani National Assembly.

"During last two months, six incidents of religious desecration happened only in Sindh province. In all incidents, religious books of Hindu minority and their places of worship were burnt," said Wankwani, who also heads the Pakistan Hindu Council.

He said the government has so far neither made arrests nor taken action against any extremist group involved in attacks. "No one from the minority community feels safe in Pakistan," he said on Monday while commenting on law and order situation in the country.

He blamed the government for failing to control frequent attacks against Hindus and maintained it was the community's constitutional right to practice its religion freely in Pakistan.

"But the rights of Hindus have never remained a priority here. The problems of Hindus are multiplying in Pakistan instead of decreasing. Are we not part of this country?" he questioned.

He said it was the teaching of all the religions to respect other faiths but the minorities had failed to get equal rights in Pakistan.

The lawmaker informed the house that scores of Hindu women have been abducted in last few years in Sindh province and later married to their kidnappers after forcible conversion. He urged the government to take steps to counter it.

Wankwani asked why issues of minorities never came up for discussion in the house. "When Jinnah's residence was attacked and destroyed in Ziarat town of Baluchistan, the National Assembly had debated on the issue for four consecutive days," he said.

"I request the house to spare some time for taking up the problems faced by minorities." He said Hindus are also equal citizens of Pakistan and their holy books should also be considered equally respectful.

Wankwani suggested the government to set up a parliamentary committee to discuss issues related to minorities in this regard.

There was a pin-drop silence in the house as all legislators attentively listened to his emotional speech.

Later, minister of state for parliamentary affairs Sheikh Aftab Ahmed said the government will ensure the protection of minorities at all cost as it is mentioned in the Constitution.

HINDUS FEEL IGNORED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

A Reporter

Published Dec 25, 2014 06:32am

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1153020>

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Hindu Council has shown its reservations for not including minority lawmakers in Parliamentary Action Committee.

The council termed it an attempt to keep minorities away from decision-making process.

After the Peshawar incident Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif constituted a committee headed by Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali Khan to give proposals for dealing with terrorism.

The committee submitted its recommendations on Wednesday. President of Pakistan Hindu Council, Chela Ram Kewlani in a statement said the government decision not to get input from minorities will make the counter terrorism campaign more difficult. "A large number of Hindus and other minorities are being targeted in the ongoing terror activities across the country, but it is shocking that there is not even a single minority member who can represent the community in the committee," he said. He said that in the context of current situation ignoring the minorities would make it harder to defeat the terrorism. Pakistan Hindu Council considers the attacks against minorities, forced conversions and marriages as dangerous internal security threats. Chela Ram also noted with regret that in the electoral reforms committee, Evacuee Property Trust Board and other matters related to minorities, the community representatives were not included which, according to him, was not a good sign. While talking to Dawn he said minorities were shocked and pained by the Peshawar incident. "We held protests all over the country but it is unfortunate that no one gives importance to the minorities. Even government is not willing to give rights to minorities," he said.

Published in Dawn, December 25th, 2014

[PAKISTAN: A HELL FOR HINDUS AND RELIGIOUS SHRINES - IS NAWAZ SHARIF LISTENING?](#)

<http://opsudraniacom.blogspot.com.au/2014/05/pakistan-hell-for-hindus-and-religiuss.html>

Population of Hindus in Pakistan keeps dwindling as they migrate to avoid persecution. Hindu exodus in India especially from Pakistan is a regular phenomenon but the UPA Government never paid any respect to their cause. This is despite the promise made by Jinnah himself.

[HINDUS IN PAKISTAN – A PEOPLE WITHOUT A VOICE](#)

April 4, 2010 by [Editor](#) [65 Comments](#)

By Jai Rustgi

<http://www.chakranews.com/hindus-in-pakistan-a-people-without-a-voice/672>

Lahore, Pakistan (CHAKRA) - Not only are Pakistani Hindus a people without a voice but also a people without an identity or existence to the outside world. Most people are not even aware of the fact that about 2.5 million Hindus (about 2% of the total population according to the last census but this number is decreasing rapidly due to fear and is soon expected to be less than 1%) exist in the Muslim majority Pakistan. The dwindling

numbers of Pakistani Hindus are the result of a quiet and steady cultural genocide in a state that has little 'Separation of Church and State'. Just before the end of colonial rule and independence in 1947, the land, which is now Pakistan comprised of about 26% Hindus out of its total population. However, after the partition of India, the largest forced migration in human history resulted, during which large scale massacres took place. Unfortunately, the 26% had dropped down to only 15% Hindus in Pakistan. With such a high death toll and even greater rate of forced resettlements, many Hindus still chose to remain in their ancestral homeland and were promised protection by the Pakistani government. Needless to say, the Hindu population of Pakistan, got no such protection, but instead were subject to persecution and had to live a daily life in fear—something they live with even to this very day.

The constitution and legal system created for Pakistan, openly discriminated against Hindus with a high level of crime and harassment against them. Moreover, periods of tension between India and Pakistan were the worst times for Hindus in Pakistan, during which large numbers were killed and expelled by the Pakistani people, who were supported by the government. Furthermore, in 1965 a law (The Enemy Property Act) was passed, which openly legitimized the confiscation of the property of Hindus whether it was their homes or temples that were destroyed. This also resulted in a great drop of the Hindu population. During 1970 and 1971, a huge undocumented number of Hindus were massacred by the Pakistani army in which the estimated death toll was up to 3 million. However, an actual study has never been done to determine the casualty figures. In addition, during this time, millions of Hindu women were raped and killed. It was not only one of the largest but also one the most ignored massacres in human history.

In 1977, Islamic Law was introduced by General Zia ul-Haq, who led a military coup in Pakistan. This further excluded the Hindu minority in Pakistan creating an arena of open discrimination and hatred against people in their ancestral homes.

According to the facts of history, one would assume that there no longer remains a Hindu population in Pakistan. Surprisingly, Hindus still exist in Pakistan, most of whom reside in the province of Sindh. The Hindus of Pakistan, still today are threatened by constant discrimination and fear of the Pakistani people and their government. Their security, property and lives are at risk on a day to day basis. Hindus in Pakistan are forced to live in a state in which they cannot openly identify themselves as Hindus. Their low profile existence, not only affects their self-identity but also, results in a misrepresentation of the number of actual Hindus in Pakistan, hence there is no exact percentage that is completely accurate. They have become a people without a true identity. Without an identity there exists no real voice. Hindus in Pakistan are a people without a voice. Unfortunately, human rights groups around the world and the international community takes no interest in helping these Hindus without a say. Due to this, the Hindus of Pakistan remain a forgotten people for whom no help is available to voice their views and fears. If the outside community does not raise awareness and concern for the Hindus of Pakistan, they will remain a voiceless people and eventually cease to exist within the Pakistani population. We must come together and help these Hindus without a voice.

Many Hindus chose to flee Sindh and move to Punjab and Kutch. Those who stayed behind were asked to convert to Islam and those who refused to convert to Islam had heavy taxes and penalties levied against them, and their properties were taken from them just to punish them for not being Muslims.

1,400 HINDU SITES IN DIRE NEED OF GOVT PROTECTION: PAKISTAN HINDU COUNCIL

Updated Nov 22, 2014 06:07pm

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1146178>

Ash is scattered round a barely visible idol on the raised platform and the floor of the small temple which was torched in Tando Mohammad Khan in the early hours of Friday. KARACHI: Patron-in-chief of the Pakistan Hindu Council and Member National Assembly Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani has strongly condemned the torching of Hanuman temple in Tando Mohammad Khan, according to a press release by the Pakistan Hindu Council.

In a statement issued on Saturday, Pakistan Hindu Council requested the government for provision of security of Hindu worship places at national level, adding that around 1,400 Hindus religious sites across the country were in dire need of protection by the government. Dr Ramesh furthermore regretted the burning of Holy Books Geeta and Ramayan during the tragic incident. He emphasised that if the Supreme Court's orders regarding protection of minorities' rights were strongly implemented, then such incidents could be avoided.

He further questioned as to why innocent minorities were left at the mercy of anarchists. Earlier on Friday, a small Hindu temple of Hanuman in Tando Mohammad Khan town was torched, sparking protests by the enraged Hindu community and nationalist parties

HINDU COUNCIL URGES PM TO PREVENT ATROCITIES AGAINST MINORITIES

Published Nov 09, 2014 09:33pm

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1143353>

MNA Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani addressing a press conference to condemn the increase in number of crimes against minorities. -Press release photo

KARACHI: Protesting over increasing attacks on minorities and forced conversions, the Pakistan Hindu Council on Sunday proposed the establishment of an active committee at the federal level under Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to prevent atrocities against minorities. This was unanimously endorsed in an urgent meeting called by the executive body of the council, which also assigned Member National Assembly Dr. Ramesh Kumar Vankwani the task of contacting other representative parties for their support. The meeting was chaired by Chela Ram Kewlani to review mounting atrocities against minorities across the country.

Condemning the brutal killing of a Christian couple in Punjab, the council deplored the kidnapping of Hindu citizens, particularly of minor girl Anjali from Dherki, Kiran from Nawab Shah and Jeoti from Hyderabad.

The council demanded the prime minister and provincial chief ministers implement effective and practical legislation to protect minorities, adding that interfaith harmony and Hindu marriage laws were needed. Chela Ram said that oppressed minorities saw a ray of

hope with the Supreme Court order to protect minorities' rights, but unfortunately state institutes due to a negligent approach have failed to implement the apex court's order.

“Minorities are still as vulnerable as they were one-and-a half years ago and to add to their misery, the land mafia is actively engaged in illegally occupying religious places of minorities and the kidnapping of Hindu girls is still happening. “The minorities are losing hope with the incumbent government,” Ram stated. Dr Ramesh Kumar said the Constitution of Pakistan guaranteed minorities rights. "Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah on 11 August 1947 clearly said in his speech that the first duty of the state is to provide welfare for its citizens... minorities' rights should be protected without discrimination,” he added.

The Pakistan Hindu Council also proposed names for inclusion in the interfaith committee; including Pir Amin-ul-Hasnat Shah (State Minister for Religious Affairs), Maulana Shirani (JUI-F), Mir Hasil Bazanjo (BNP), Khawaja Sohail (MQM), Abdul-Qehar Khan Wadan (PMAP). Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani from Hindu Community and Kamran Michael from the Christian community. They also suggested the inclusion of at least one member from each religious party, including the Jamaat-i-Islami.

“Kidnapping of innocent Hindu girls, forced conversions and marriages are issues regularly faced by Hindus, mainly due to the absence of a Hindu marriage registration act,” said Dr Ramesh.

He regretted that the Sindh Government has failed to address minorities' issues, including the protection of places of worship and cemeteries

Dr Ramesh said that misuse of blasphemy laws on a larger scale has resulted in the harassment of minorities, further stating that the laws are manipulated to settle personal disputes. Expressing grave concerns on the burning alive a Christian couple, Dr. Ramesh said the incident had created a sense of panic among minorities.

He said that it has increased insecurity among minorities, leaving them to question the performance of state institutions at the national and international level. Dr Kumar also warned that the fire ignited today, which is affecting the lives of innocent minorities, would wrap all Pakistani citizens in the near future.

OUR HOPES WERE DASHED, SAY PAKISTANI HINDUS

The Hindu

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/our-hopes-were-dashed-say-pakistani-hindus/article5486193.ece>

Hindus from Pakistan demonstrating at Jantar Mantar on Friday. Photo: Shiv Kumar Pushpakar

A group of 29 Hindus from the Sindh province of Pakistan have been demonstrating at Jantar Mantar here for the past four days to demand that the Indian Government provide them food, shelter and jobs. On October 5 this year, the group entered India legally, seeking a better future for themselves. However, they were allegedly asked by customs officials at Munabao in Barmer district of



Rajasthan to hand over the jewellery they had carried. According to Panju Mal, who sold off his farm in Hyderabad and bought jewellery with the money, they entered India in the hope that they would be accepted. “But all our hopes were dashed when the customs officials at Munabao, which borders Pakistan, insisted that the women remove their jewellery items like bangles and earrings. They told us that jewellery was taxable. Since we did not have Rs. 5 lakh to pay, we had to leave them there,” he told *The Hindu*. The group went to a local police station and had an FIR filed. “But the FIR was filed on behalf of four women and not all eight whose jewellery is with the officials. The FIR is in Hindi, which we cannot read. We were given phone numbers which nobody picks up,” he said. He added: “We want the Indian Government to give us jobs so that we can feed our families. Wherever we go people ask to show our identity cards. Our month-long tourist visa has expired and we have no money.” He is worried about his mother, a senior citizen, whose blood sugar level has increased alarmingly but he cannot buy medicines for her. At the moment, there are 1,114 Hindus, of which 50 are children and 30 are women, from Sindh at Jantar Mantar who came to India on tourist visas at different days. Conversant in English, Parthi, who studied Humanities from the Government Girls College in Hyderabad, said the job prospect for Hindus in Pakistan is pretty bleak.

“In Government jobs, 95 per cent are reserved for the majority. And the minorities have only five per cent jobs. We have no future there and this was the reason we have come to India.” Like others, Narain Das too sold off his shop and used the money earned from it to prepare jewellery.

“Now our deplorable condition has become similar to beggars. We do not have a house to live in and our women and children are braving the inclement cold weather of Delhi. We plead the Indian Government to give us *roti, kapra and makan*.”

Pointing out that an important reason for abandoning Pakistan was that Islam was taught in schools, Mr. Das said from nursery to Class V it is compulsory for all schools to teach Quran.

“After a three year gap, students are again taught Quran from Class IX to XII. Our children can recite the holy text of Muslims but we do not want our children to convert to another religion.”

He said the Panchayat in Hyderabad had paid Rs.13 lakh to authorities to construct a cremation ground for the Hindus. “But it was not constructed. In 1947,

Hindus in Sindh were living in large numbers but now only 13 lakh are staying. We could not migrate to India because we were working under zamindars.” He shows a photocopy of his passport to show that he has permission to stay in Delhi, Jodhpur and Mathura. A burly man, Khemchand was a commission agent at a vegetable market in Karachi but is now living in a hand to mouth condition.

“But we are happy to be in India. The truth is that majority of Hindus in Pakistan want to settle down here. But only a limited number of people get visas.”

Incident	Date	Location	Type	Source
Armed men abducted 5	5/28/14	Balochistan	Kidnapping	http://www.dawn.com/news/110910

Hindu children between the ages of 5 and 10.				8/five-hindu-children-abducted-in-balochistan
Several violent incidents against Hindus.	5/5/14	Various parts of Pakistan	Several casualties	http://www.mobile.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSBREA440SU20140505
3 Hindu traders kidnapped.	7/27/12	Quetta, Pakistan	3 kidnapped	http://tribune.com.pk/story/414520/lawlessnessin-balochistanthree-hindutraderskidnap
Ruash Kumar, a Hindu trader, gunned down.	7/12/12	-	Killed	http://tribune.com.pk/story/414520/lawlessnessin-balochistanthree-hindutraderskidnap ped-inkalat/
Maharaj Ganga Ram Motiya, temple committee chairman, kidnapped.	4/1/12	Lasbela, Balochistan	Kidnapping	http://www.rediff.com/news/report/templecommittee-chairmankidnapped-inpakistan/20120409.htm
Marvi Sarmad, a columnist and activist for Hindu, Christian, and Shia rights, was attacked by gunmen who opened fire at her car.	11/2/12	Islamabad	Target shooting	http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-18579-Columnist-Marvi-Sarmadescapes-attempton-life
Four men abducted Roop Chand, a Hindu trader, while	12/19/12	Quetta, Pakistan	Kidnapping	http://www.hindustantimes.com/worldnews/Pakistan/Hindu-

he was on his way home.				traderkidnapped-in-Pakistan/Article1-976637.aspx
Kiran Kumari allegedly abducted, forced to convert to Islam and marry a Muslim man.	8/1/12	Rahimyar Khan, Punjab	Alleged kidnapping; alleged forced conversion; alleged forced marriage; rape	http://herald.dawn.com/2012/10/16/leap-of-faith-2.html
Ramesh Kumar, a Hindu trader, was abducted from the van.	8/7/12	Quetta, Pakistan	Kidnapping and theft	http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/hindu-traderabducted-inpakistan-276736

VOICES OF TWO MINORITY GROUPS ECHO AT KPC ON THURSDAY

By Our Correspondent

Published: November 7, 2014



Members of the Christian community protest outside the Karachi Press Club on Thursday.
PHOTO: ONLINE

KARACHI:

The press club echoed with the voices of two minority groups on Thursday evening as Christians protested against the burning of a couple in Punjab while Hindus demonstrated against the alleged forced conversion for a girl in Daharki.

The protesters raised their voices to demand justice for the minorities and shouted slogans against the Sindh and Punjab governments, and the Punjab police.

Forced conversions

The Pakistan Hindu Seva's protest call was answered by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Hindu Panchayat Karachi, Tehrik-e-Niswan and the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) as their members also showed up to protest the abduction of Hindu girls in rural Sindh and their allegedly forced conversion to Islam.

” When I appear in court for cases of forced conversions, I see happiness on the faces of the lawyers representing the abductors
Human rights activist Amarnath Motumal

Human rights activist Amarnath Motumal claimed that influential people exploit religion for personal gains. The girls who are forced to convert to Islam are later sold, he pointed out, adding that they have raised the issue several times but the government has always ignored them.

“When I appear in court for cases of forced conversions, I see happiness on the faces of the lawyers representing the abductors,” he said. “The girl looks frightened and the only people who cry in court are the helpless parents of the abducted girl.”

According to Motumal, on average of 20 to 25 Hindu girls are forcibly converted to Islam which makes the Hindu community of Sindh feel orphaned. “Why are the elderly Hindu women or young Hindu men not forced to convert? Why are only girls of ages 10 to 15 years embracing Islam?”

Pakistan Hindu Seva’s president Sanjesh Sunny Dhana complained how no one has been arrested in cases of forced conversions, which is why the cases are increasing. When Pakistan came into being there were 30 per cent Hindus in the country but now their percentage has dropped down to 1.9 per cent, he pointed out, adding that people from Sindh are migrating to India.

Zulfiqar Shah, the joint director of Piler, urged the Pakistan Peoples Party to take the matter seriously. “No one can live when their honour and respect are jeopardised,” he said. “People can stand by when you capture their property but no one can tolerate if you play with their honour.” Performing artist Sheema Kirmani also demanded the government take the matter seriously for the sake of Pakistan’s reputation in the world.

Couple burnt alive

The Christian Resource Welfare Centre, the Minority Women Forum for Justice and people from almost all the churches of Karachi also protested the misuse of blasphemy law against Christians in Punjab. They demanded justice for the blasphemy accused, Shahzab Masih, and his wife Shama Bibi who were burned by a mob in Kot Radha Kishan on Tuesday.

“This is the extreme. They burnt a pregnant mother in front of her children,” said Ghazala Shafiq, one of the protesters who represented the Christian Resource Welfare Centre. “Three thousand people gathered and accused a poor Christian of blasphemy and then beat the family to death. Islam is a religion of peace but this is not peace.”

The protesters demanded a separate province for minorities on the grounds that Christians cannot live together with Muslims. “We want the government to punish those who exploit

the blasphemy law and set example for others,” said Jamal Din Rajput, president of the Christian League.

Published in The Express Tribune, November 7th, 2014.

CHRISTIAN COUPLE BURNED TO DEATH OVER ‘BLASPHEMY’

Press Release

November 06, 2014

11 COMMENTS



KARACHI: In a recent addition to a rising list of attacks on minorities, a Christian couple has reportedly been burnt to death in a brick kiln in the city of Kot Radha Kishan, Punjab, on November 4.

The couple was accused of desecrating the holy Quran, however, some news reports contradicted the allegation by claiming that there was some dispute between Shahzad and Shama, the couple and the kiln owner.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) had also reported an increase in attacks on minorities and mentioned 2013 as one of the darkest years for the Christian community in Pakistan. Attacks on churches and Christian population and forced conversions were some of the highlights of the year.

The incident in Kot Radha Kishan appears to be another outcome of blasphemy law, which has already resulted in many innocent deaths in the past. Any call for the review of this law has always been replied with threats, attacks and at worst, death. None of the governments have tried to revisit this law. Salmaan Taseer, former governor of Punjab (2008-2011), had labelled the blasphemy law as ‘black law’ and soon after, he was killed by his own gunmen.

The killer is now behind the bars but was reported to have been inciting the fellow prisoners and even those on duty to kill the blasphemy convicts in the jail. Despite a number of reports which appeared in media recently, no action was taken by the jail authorities or the provincial government.

The Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) had condemned the

murder of the couple.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, PILER Chief Executive Karamat Ali demanded the Punjab government to arrest the accused.

The Supreme Court, in its recent landmark verdict in a suo motu case, has directed the federal government to form a national council for minorities' rights with the mandate to tailor policy recommendations to safeguard and protect minorities' interests.

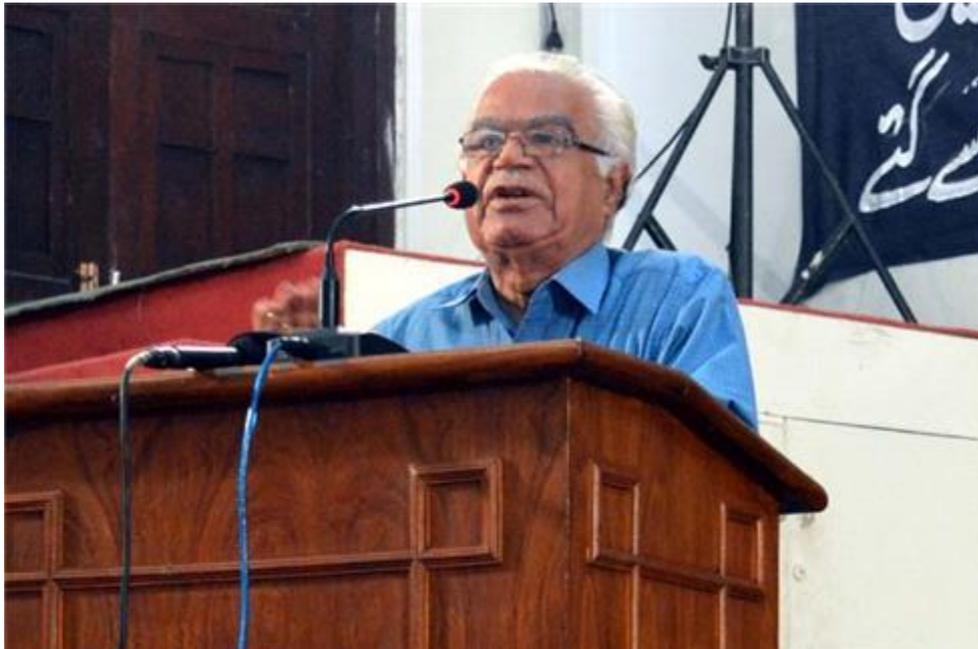
Following the kidnappings of Hindu community members in Sindh, the National Assembly agreed to form a fact-finding committee on attacks against the minorities. However, any progress on both the mentioned reports never appeared anywhere.

HINDU GIRLS SUBJECTED TO FORCED CONVERSION: MOTUMAL

Source: Pakistan Herald

Post Date: Friday, August 15, 2014

Updated Date: Friday, August 15, 2014



KARACHI: Amarnath Motumal legal adviser of Pakistan Hindu Seva Welfare Trust (PHSWT) and President of Hindu Panchayat Karachi division on Wednesday stated that Hindu girls subjected to forced conversion were deprived of justice due to failed judiciary, corruption and improper representation of minorities.

While addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club along with PHSWT's President Sanjesh S Dhanja and Vice President Chander Kohli, who shared their recent experiences from the fact finding mission on the issues faced by Hindu community which was conducted in seven districts of Sindh by PHSWT in collaboration with Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD).

Motumal said “This act experienced in Sindh in the name of Islam was not conversion but the abduction and trade of Hindu girls, conversion to any religion should be after dialogues and sensible discussion instead of using force and criminal tactics.”

According to him when a Hindu girl was converted instead of going through its complications, considering the factor of force and blackmailing and inefficient counselling the authorities was mostly seems happy with this act of forced conversion by defending it. Hindu community in Pakistan was scared as they could nether express their grievances nor they could provide information as there was no one to secure them from the consequences of going against the powerful groups working in the name of religion.

Considering force conversion as the most saviour issue being faced by the Hindu minority Amarnath said. Describing the conditions of the girls subjected to conversion Amarnath said mostly the girls were either teen-age or they were not provided with proper counselling as their families were unable to trace them.

In those cases where the victims were traced, the cases were exploited in the courts and the culprits finally remained undeterred while many forced converted girls were scared to get back home as they feared the consequences they and their family might face. Motumal showed concern on the approach of the state authorities.

30 October 2014 | [News Desk](#)

Tags: [12 years old girl kidnapped](#), [abduction of hindu girls in pakistan](#), [atrocities on hindus in pakistan](#), [hindu girls kidnapped in pakistan](#), [hindu to give jaziya to ppp](#), [jaziya to bilawal bhutto](#), [jaziya to ppp](#), [raj kumar](#), [rinkel kumari](#), [rinkel kumari's family](#)

Ready to pay Jaziya to Bilawal, Raj Kumar reiterates as one more under teen Hindu girl abducted



October 30, 2014; Karachi, Pakistan; CW News Desk: “We don’t trade in daughters, we can pay any ransom to get our daughters back,” reiterates Raj Kumar, uncle of Rinkel Kumari whose abduction is the most infamous religious abduction and communal sex crime in Pakistan. Yesterday Raj Kumar told CW that they will pay ransom and Jaziya, the Islamic tax the non-Muslims are supposed to pay in an Islamic nation. “If PPP and Bilawal needs, we will pay Jaziya but we want our rights to live,” commented Raj Kumar, the representative of Secular Sindh Forum.

Today one more 12 years old Hindu girl was abducted from Daherki area. Anjali Meghwar, daughter of Kundan Meghwar was abducted and reportedly kept in a Madrasa for her forced conversion into Islam. earlier this week Kajal Bheel was also abducted and was forced married to a middle aged man and to justify this marriage a marriage certificate was released on which Kajal’s left thumb impression was present rather than signature. Despite Kajal’s birth certificate proves she was just 12 years old, she was married off and her age was claimed to be more than 18 years in the Nikaahnama (marriage certificate).

“Jyoti Kumari was kidnapped on 23rd September and nobody cares. Then Kajal and now Anjali. What will happen now? Do we have the rights to live?” questioned a visibly started Raj Kumar. With a religious zeal the Pakistani Hindu girls are abducted every day but nobody cares, neither Indian media nor Pakistani media. “The Indian-Pakistan friendship is based on negating our grief and suppressing it,” commented Raj Kumar over the hypocrisy of the alleged liberalists of the two nations.

When asked whether the Jaziya proposal is his or of the organization's, he told CW; "It is not my personal decision, rather it is the organizational decision of Secular Sindh Forum (SSF). We are collecting money from the Hindus here and will submit to Bilawal and PPP as protection money." So is it just symbolic or did they ask for protection money? To answer this question Raj Kumar furthered that though the PPP officially or Bilawal never asked such protection money, his party men or goons involved in such hate crimes always ask for such protection money. "If Bilawal can't protect us from his own party men, I think it's necessary to offer the protection money to Bilawal," Raj Kumar said.

Most of the Pakistani Hindus are extremely below poverty line and they don't even have proper resources to feed their children three times. Will they be able to pay this protection money? "We don't trade in daughters; we can die of hunger but will do everything to sustain the honor of our daughters. Chastity is paramount to us, even than life," Raj Kumar assured informing along that those economically lower class Hindus are also donating money in the collection campaign by SSF despite their inability. Even some Sindhi Hindus now settled in India are also reportedly donating money to this Jaziya campaign. Fear, insecurity and dishonor, that now make the lives of Hindus in Pakistan.

See more at: <http://www.covertwires.com/index.php/articles/ready-to-pay-jaziya-to-bilawal-raj-kumar-reiterates#sthash.qaYRnvV6.3Veosp47.dpuf>

<http://www.covertwires.com/index.php/articles/ready-to-pay-jaziya-to-bilawal-raj-kumar-reiterates>

FORCED CONVERSIONS: EDITORIAL IN DAWN, NOVEMBER 7TH, 2014

by admin

"WE only facilitate their wish. We don't impose our own will on them." The bland statement masks a world of obfuscation as a result of which the marginalised of the country receive what, sadly, experience has taught them to expect: to be either directly victimised, or live in circumstances in which they feel victimised. The statement by the spokesperson for the Bharchundi Shareef shrine in Daharki, Sindh, was in reaction to questions raised by the family of Anjali Kumari Meghwar about the attached seminary's possible involvement in the girl's abduction, forced conversion to Islam from Hinduism, and subsequent forced marriage. After nine days of making a fruitless attempt to convince their area's local authorities to focus on their plight, Anjali's family came to Karachi and met the city police chief on Wednesday.

Her father insists that she was kidnapped from her home in broad daylight, and that hers was not a conversion by choice. He has with him Nadra and school documents that put her age at 12. In the context of Anjali's family, and many others like them, it is true that free choice stands compromised. It can only be conjectured how much pressure is felt by members of minority religions in a society where issues of faith are increasingly becoming the focus of violence.

Caste too can effectively become a stigma that holds entire communities in oppression. And, while it is as yet too early to pronounce upon Anjali's case, it is a matter of record

that the same complaint of forced conversion has been voiced before, that the caretakers of this particular shrine have also faced this accusation previously, and that an immediate and thorough investigation is needed. That said, the case of 12-year-old Anjali should be very simple to resolve: forcing underage marriage has been criminalised in Sindh since last year, and the family have named the man to whom they claim the girl was married. For any government even halfway committed to the cause of the marginalised, the equation should not prove too difficult. <http://www.dawn.com/news/1142761/forced-conversions>

'FORCED CONVERSIONS CAUSING INSECURITY AMONG MINORITIES'

News Desk

Saturday, November 08, 2014

From Print Edition

Pakistan Hindu Seva Welfare Trust (PHSWT), Hindu Panchayet Karachi (HPK), Global Human Rights Defence, and Coalition for Rights of Minorities on Friday strongly condemned the incident of forced conversion of two minors Anjali Meghwar Kajal and Neelan Kolhi in Sindh.

President PHSWT Sanjesh S Dhanja while sharing a research on issues of minorities in Sindh at a press conference, held at the Karachi Press Club, cited four previous cases in which girls were forcibly converted to Islam. He added that recurrence of such incidents had caused a serious sense of deprivation among the minorities residing in Pakistan.

HPK President and Legal Advisor PHSWT Amarnath Motumal while discussing the issue of forced conversions said several minor girls in Sindh had been abducted and forced to convert whereas majority of the cases were not highlighted due to improper representation of minorities in the province.

He further added that the Hindus of the country were Pakistanis first and should be treated as equal citizens.

PHSWT Vice President Chander Kolhi shared the details of the case, and added that atrocities against the community were increasing day by day. Discussing 12 case studies, compiled during the previous two months, he said most of the victims were living under influential land owners.

Cases of murder, severe beating, rape, bonded labour, lack of nutrition and healthcare were common issues faced by the community in the province, he added. Temples were not being provided security whereas several incidents of desecration of temples also went unnoticed. He demanded of the government to consider the rights of religious minorities as they contribute in the development of the country.

Minority front restored

Minorities leader and former MPA Michael Javed has announced to restore the Pakistan Minority Front (PMF) which he had set up for struggling for the rights of minorities in Pakistan.

He declared this at a press conference on Friday at the Karachi Press Club (KPC). Condemning the burning of an innocent Christian couple in Pujnab, he said, "It was now imperative to restore the PMF which has struggled for the right of minorities from 1985 to 2000."

He said he realised the hardships being faced by minority communities in the country and as the PMF's chairman he was ready to work with zeal and commitment against their victimisation.

In this regard, he said, PMF's first convention will be held on November 15. On the occasion, he nominated Khadim Wilson Khadim as the organisation's spokesman and urged the government to have five percent quota to minorities in government jobs.

"The government is duty bound to maintain the sanctity of all places of worship of minorities and provide them with financial assistance for housing schemes and construction of churches or temples," he said.

The government should also set up separate dispensaries for members of the minority communities, he added.

[HINDU TEMPLE SET ON FIRE IN PAKISTAN OVER BLASPHEMY](#)

By Syed Raza Hassan





1 of 3. A Hindu temple burns after it was attacked in Larkana, southern Pakistan's Sindh province, March 15, 2014.

Credit: Reuters/Faheem Soormro

(Reuters) - Hundreds of angry Pakistanis attacked a Hindu temple and set it on fire in southern Pakistan overnight following a rumour that a member of the Hindu community had desecrated the Koran, police and community leaders said on Sunday.

The incident took place just before midnight on Saturday after locals in Larkana district alleged that Sangeet Kumar, 42, had torn out pages of Islam's holy book and tossed them down on the street from the roof of his home.

"Our Dharamshala (community centre) has been gutted and the temple has been partially damaged. All the statues have been destroyed by the attackers," Kalpana Devi, chairperson of the local Hindu committee, told Reuters.

Hundreds of students from local Islamic seminaries attacked the temple holding batons, one witness, Javed Shah, said. Police arrived quickly to protect Kumar from the angry crowd.

"They acted smartly and took him out after making him put on a police uniform to save him from the wrath of the crowd," said Shah.

"It took nearly 20 minutes to break down the doors (of the temple) before they entered the compound and set it on fire. They also set fire to the temple before ransacking it."

Sindh province, where the attack took place, is home to most of Pakistan's small Hindu community which numbers about two million among a population of about 180 million.

Pakistan's rocky relationship with neighbouring India, a predominantly Hindu country, has fed tension between the two communities in smaller towns but outright acts of violence are rare.

Police said they were investigating the matter.

"The situation is not satisfactory," Deputy Inspector General of Larkana, Khadim Rind, told Reuters. "Sanjeet Kumar has been accused of desecrating the holy book by the locals. The accused is in our custody."

Tensions were high in the region following the incident, with Muslim protestors taking to the streets in several towns and setting fire to shops belonging to Hindus in the city of Usta Mohammad.

The Hindu Panchayat Council, a representative body of Hindu minorities, has appealed on Hindus to keep a low profile while celebrating the ongoing Holi festival of colours.

(Additional reporting by Gul Yousafzai, Writing by Maria Golovkina, Editing by Angus MacSwan)

[ARSON ATTACK ON HINDU TEMPLE IN HYDERABAD TRIGGERS PROTEST](#)

Gohar Ali Khan

Published Mar 29, 2014 06:57am

6 Comments

HYDERABAD: A Hindu deity statue was broken and a small temple was partially damaged in early Friday morning arson attack near Fateh Chowk on Tando Mohammad Khan Road, sowing the feeling of insecurity among the religious minority community and triggering street protests.

Only a couple of weeks ago, a Dharamshala was set ablaze and some statues of Hindu deities in an adjacent temple in Larkana were damaged in protest against alleged desecration of the Quran.

The recent arson attacks on worship places are seen as an attempt to fan flames of communal violence in Sindh.

There are one big and two small temples — Kalimata Mandir, Shiv Bhulai Nath and Hanuman — on Tando Mohammad Khan Road near Fateh Chowk where around 3,000 people from the religious minority community lived, mostly in small houses in the vicinity of the large Kalimata Mandir.

According to residents, it was around five o'clock in the morning when four persons travelling in a car arrived at Hanuman Mandir. Three of them got out of the car and entered the temple. They broke the deity of Hanuman and sprinkled petrol all over the place before setting it on fire. A child, Darshan Kumar, who resisted the move, was pushed away at gunpoint, said Laxman Kumar, Mohan Lal Rathore and other residents.

While the arsonists fled, a hue and cry by the child drew the attention of the residents who rushed out of their homes and extinguished the fire. However, by then they said the temple was partially damaged.

Soon after the incident, the residents converged on the main road where they staged a sit-in in protest against the attack on the temple.

They also burnt tyres and junk on the main road leading to Tando Mohammad Khan blocking traffic for some hours. The law-enforcement agencies reached the area and convinced the protesters to call off their sit-in. The protesters, who were also joined by representatives of the Sindh National Party, condemned the attack on the place of worship. They also raised slogans against the authorities concerned which failed to ensure protection of the religious places of the minority community.

Speaking to Dawn outside the temple, Kalimata Mandar Committee chairman Mohan Lal Rathore and SNP chief Ashraf Noonari demanded that the government ensure protection of the lives and properties of Hindus who felt insecure. They condemned the incident and said that some people wanted to fan flames of communal violence in Sindh by carrying out such arson attacks on religious places.

FIR registered

An FIR (36/2104) was lodged on a complaint of Kirshan Kumar Meghwar, chairman of the Kali Mata Sheva Mandli Committee, under Sections 6/7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act and 295-A (Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by

insulting Its religion or religious beliefs), 436 (Mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy house, etc) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code against three unidentified persons at the SITE police station.

Hyderabad DIG Dr Sanaullah Abbasi suspended Site SHO Abdullah Bhutto and transferred him to Sujawal district. He also recommended the suspension of Site DSP Sikandar Ali Korai to the police chief.

Dr Abbasi said that he beefed up security around 154 temples in the Hyderabad police range, including 34 Hindu temples in Hyderabad district only.

The DIG said he met a delegation of Hindu people and assured them of security and protection of their properties and lives. He suggested to the delegation to install closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras on temples.

He said that police were investigating various aspects including minority, internally displaced persons (IDPs), local, national and economic interest of people.

Meanwhile, Hyderabad Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Nawaz Soho assured a delegation of Hindu people, who called on him in the evening, that every possible effort would be made to avert such incidents in the future and ensure protection of the holy places of all religious minorities.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan representative in Hyderabad Dr Ashothama said that Hindu religious places and properties were being attacked one after another. He said that there was unrest and a feeling of insecurity prevailing in the community.

He suspected that both religious fanatics and land grabbers could be involved in such crimes. Religious extremists were destroying peace and harmony and the secular status which Sindh was famous for across the world, said rights activist and writer Zulfikar Halepoto. He appealed to the government to check an influx of internally displaced persons from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into Sindh.



Injustice With Hindus In Sindh, Pakistan
October 24, 2013 · 🌐

A young boy Ravi Kumar of age 23, who belongs to Daharki dist ghotki, was kidnapped from the way back to daharki from sukkur. 3 days have been passed no action taken by police. No one knows where and how he is.

This is how hindus are behaved in Pakistan. No action taken by government or security services.

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👍 182 people like this. Top Comments ▾

📄 94 shares

Muhammad Ismail Rajput yar muslims ki kon khabar char karta, yhan usi ka pocha jata he jis k pas pesa hota he, na k religion k base par... Paise phenko, phr kam hojaye ga.... 😞

Like · Reply · 📄 12 · October 24, 2013 at 5:32am · Edited

💬 3 Replies

Anjee Makhija 😊
Just Pray 4 My JEeej 😞 Plizz..

[HINDU COMMUNITY OF PAKISTAN MOVES COURT FOR PROTECTION OF TEMPLE.](#)

Posted by [hinduexistence](#) on October 19, 2014

Construction of Mosques one after another in India and destruction of Hindu temples in Pakistan one by one! What a tolerance and greatness on Hindus!! Suicidal Hindu race!!!

Hindu community moves court for protection of temple in Pakistan.

Say that if urgent repairs are not carried out, walls of the temple might collapse putting in peril the building, lives of worshipers who visit it as well as the religious idols and symbols



150-year-old Shree Ratneswar Mahadev Temple in Pakistan near Kothari Parade in Clifton in Bahria Township in Karachi.

Karachi | PPI & PT | Oct 14, 2014:: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Tuesday appointed a court official as commissioner to verify whether or not the work for preservation of 150-year-old Shree Ratneswar Mahadev Temple in Clifton has commenced.

Headed by Chief Justice Maqbool Baqar, a division bench was hearing a petition filed by member provincial assembly Mukesh Kumar Chawla and All Pakistan Hindu Panchayat secretary general seeking the court's directives to provincial authorities for safeguarding the historic structures.

The petitioners submitted that Bahria Town had undertaken a project from Park Tower traffic intersection to AT Naqvi Roundabout, which included the construction of a flyover in front of Park Towers and underpasses near Kothari Parade in Clifton.

They said that the construction project had created unrest amongst the Hindu community as it posed a serious threat to the foundation of 150-year-old Shree Ratneswar Mahadev Temple.

“With the commencement of the project, the historic temple –which is also a national heritage – is in danger,” the petitioners stated.

They said that if urgent repairs were not carried out, walls of the temple might collapse putting in peril the building, lives of worshipers who visit it as well as the religious idols and symbols.

Earlier, the court had directed authorities concerned to ensure full and effective safety and security of the subject building and carry out work for preservation of subject heritage site under the supervision of qualified and reputed civil engineers.



A man walks past the construction of an underpass and a flyover near the 150-year-old Shri Ratneshwar Mahadev temple

During the hearing on Tuesday, petitioners’ counsel Haider Waheed said that despite repeated and categorical orders of the court and undertakings by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC)’s counsel, work had not yet commenced. However, Bahria Town counsel Khalid Jawed Khan told the judges that KMC had engaged the civil structural engineer and after certain paper work the work for the structure’s preservation would commence.

In order to verify the claim, the court appointed a court official as commissioner to visit and inspect the subject site and report to the court as to whether the work as mandated by the court had commenced or not and the pace and progress of the work if it had commenced as claimed.



Pakistan Hindu SEVA (Welfare Trust)
April 5 · 🌐

Hindu Community Protest attacks on Hindu Temples in Sindh 2014

Protestors from the Hindu community, and their supporters, are seen outside the Karachi Press Club, April 4, 2014, in protest of the recent temple attacks. Organized by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Pakistan Hindu Seva (PHS), Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD), Hindu Schedule Caste Unity, and many others organization rally calls attention to the series of attacks on temples in the southern Sindh province, including Larkana, Hyderabad, and Karachi, which happened within the last month. — in Karachi, Pakistan.

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Pakistan Hindu SEVA (Welfare Trust)
April 5 · 🌐

Mr.Amarnath

Protestors from the Hindu community, and their supporters, are seen outside the Karachi Press Club, April 4, 2014, in protest of the recent temple attacks. Organized by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Pakistan Hindu Seva (PHS), Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD), Hindu Schedule Caste Unity, and many others organization rally calls attention to the series of attacks on temples in the southern Sindh province, including Larkana, Hyderabad, and Karachi, which happened within the last month.

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Pakistan Hindu SEVA (Welfare Trust) Protestors from the Hindu community, and their supporters, are seen outside the Karachi Press Club, April 4, 2014, in protest of the recent temple attacks. Organized by the Human Rights

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The Nation

MUHARRAM 14, 1436
SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 8, 2014

INJUSTICES AGAINST MINORITIES PLAYED

BY
OUR STAFF REPORTER
KARACHI

Civil society activists on Friday protested against the injustices related incidents taking place against the minorities including the killing of a Christian couple in Kot Bahra Kishan and forced conversion of Hindu girls in Sindh.

The protests were held outside the Press Club, condemning the injustices, where the speakers demanded end of discrimination of people on the basis of their religious identity.

Addressing a protest organised by National Trade Union Federation, Pakistan Workers Confederation Vice President Rafiq Baloch said that the state and ruling class should change their attitude towards the atrocities on non-Muslims and end killings and forced conversion of non-Muslims.

He said that in Pakistan living conditions for workers have been deteriorating with every passing day. "They have been tormented in the parts of religious, ethnic and linguistic terrorism. The laws of land and the State apparatus have failed totally to give protections to these oppressed workers."

He said that hundreds of thousands of working families, especially Christian workers have been toiling like modern day slaves at brick kilns where they find forced labour.

"In Sindh province, the Hindu farmers are living a

miserable life. Recently, the dead body of a Hindu farmer Bhoora Bhael was hurled and thrown out of the graveyard." He said adding that the Hindu girls are being kidnaped and forcibly married and tragedy of 12 years old Anjali Mengwar is a recent example in this regard.

Other speakers including Nasir Mansoor De jony General Secretary National Trade Union Federation, Dr Riaz Shaikh, teacher SZABIS, prominent lawyer Yasmin Akad, Mustafa Laidani, Usruil Hasan, Salahuddin Gondapur, labour leader Riaz Abulasi, Zehra Khan general secretary Home Based Women Workers Federation and other also spoke to the demonstration.

They said that the minorities were bought and sold like slaves and face physical and sexual violence. "The recent example of this brutality is burning alive of Shahbaz Masih and his wife Shavina Masih at Kot Bahra Kishan," they said adding that the couple used to work as bonded labour at brick kiln and it was in fact a business dispute that was turned into blasphemy by the kiln owner. They demanded arrest of responsible people and held within compensation to the each victim. Addressing a press conference at KFC, former Sindh Assembly legislator Michael Javed said that Shahbaz and his pregnant wife were killed after the kiln owner refused to let them participate in Shahbaz's father's funeral and locked them inside a room.

"After the couple abjured for help, the other employees blamed them for blasphemy and announced

from a nearby Mosque that the couple had committed blasphemy and burned them to death," he said.

He asked as to how long it would continue to happen that minorities would be killed in the name of blasphemy without any court proceedings and evidences. "Even the policemen present at the occasion did not stop the mob from burning the couple," he said adding it was unfortunate that the state had failed to safeguard the interest of the minorities and those involved were allowed to move freely.

He demanded for legislation to stop ill use of blasphemy laws and said that a case should be filed under terrorist act against kiln owner and its employees so that those involved should learn a lesson. He also announced to reactivate Pakistan Minority Front that was working from 1920 on minority issues and worked with All Pakistan Minority Alliance in 2000. He said that the first convention of the front would be held on 15 November where important decision for the safeguard of the minorities would be announced.

Addressing another press conference organised by Hindu Seva Welfare Trust, President Hindu Panchayat Anamath Motin said that atrocities against Hindus was increasing day by day in Sindh and said that murders, sexual beating, rape, bonded labour, malnutrition and health issues were common for this community. He also pointed out at lack of security at temples and said that it had caused several incidents of temples destruction in recent past.

<http://nation.com.pk/E-Paper/karachi/2014-11-08/page-14>

[burning temples 2014](#)

<http://opsudraniacom.blogspot.com.au/2014/05/pakistan-hell-for-hindus-and-religious.html>

<https://iaoj.wordpress.com/tag/daharki/>

http://tns.thenews.com.pk/hindus-say-love-pakistan-cant-live/#.VGSDisIC6_I

<http://maloykrishnadhar.com/hindu-sikh-minorities-in-pakistan-the-vanishing-communities/#more-372>

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/04/08/national/1000-christian-hindu-girls-forced-to-convert-to-islam-report/>

<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/08/forced-conversions-torment-pakistan-hindus-201481795524630505.html> (issued on 18 Aug 2014 09:41)

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/sindh/15-Aug-2014/forced-conversion-grieves-hindu-community-in-sindh> (issued on August 15, 2014)

Many Hindus chose to flee Sindh and move to Punjab and Kutch. Those who stayed behind were asked to convert to Islam and those who refused to convert to Islam had heavy taxes and penalties levied against them, and their properties were taken from them just to punish them for not being Muslims. (Source:

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/24-Aug-2014/what-is-forced-conversion> issued on August 24, 2014)

<http://www.pakistanchristianpost.com/headlinenewsd.php?hnewsid=5014> November 13, 2014, 5:50 am

Minority Rights Group International, *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples - Pakistan : Hindus*, 2008, available at:

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cd23c.html> [accessed 13 November 2014]

Citing Forced Conversions of Girls, Hindus Flee Pakistan

(<http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/article/25391888.html> issued on Thursday, November 13, 2014 Local time: 17:33)

FORCED CONVERSIONS IN PAKISTAN - "EESHWAR KAUN HAI, ALLAH BOL ALLAH!"

(Infidel, unclean woman! Say Allah! Who is this Eeshwar? Your daughter has been chosen by Allah. We will make her recite the Kalima so that she becomes pure and then we might get her married off to some Muslim boy. Be thankful to us! If you so much as utter a word about this to anyone I'll strangle you! Killing infidels will earn me rewards!)

Source: <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/24739/forced-conversions-in-pakistan-eeshwar-kaun-hai-allah-bol-allah/> By Fatima Raza Published: November 8, 2014

PERSECUTION OF HINDUS IN PAKISTAN, HINDUS CONTINUE TO BE TARGETED WITH RAPE, KIDNAPPINGS, AND INTIMIDATION IN THE MUSLIM NATION.

(source: <http://chersonandmolschky.com/2014/06/23/persecution-hindus-pakistan/> issued on June 23, 2014)

Recent attacks on Non-Muslims in Pakistan http://www.eopm.org/eopm_news.html (2014)

18 members of Pakistani Hindu family convert to Islam

http://www.hindujagruti.org/news/17512_18-members-of-pakistani-hindu-family-convert-to-islam.html October 4, 2013

More news <http://www.hindujagruti.org/news/newscategories/fanatics-conversions/page/2> 2014-2013

BURNING HINDU TEMPLES IN PAKISTAN

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Larkana_temple_attack March 15 2014

Hindu temple in Hyderabad broken into, set on fire

(<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688544/alleged-desecration-hindu-temple-in-hyderabad-broken-into-set-on-fire/> issued on March 29, 2014)

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — An angry crowd set fire to a Hindu community center in southern Pakistan after allegations circulated that a Hindu had desecrated Islam's holy book, police said Sunday. <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2014/03/pakistan-enraged-muslim-mob-burns-hindu-center-over-rumors-of-quran-desecration> issued on Mar 16, 2014 at 7:23am

Historic Hindu temple faces demolition to make way for army barracks in Pakistan

source: <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-historic-hindu-temple-faces-demolition-to>

[make-way-for-army-barracks-in-pakistan-2013530](#) issued on Monday, 25 August 2014 - 6:30pm IST

Hindu temple attacked, set on fire in Pakistan source:

<http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-hindu-temple-attacked-set-on-fire-in-pakistan-1973290> issued on Saturday, 29 March 2014 - 3:29pm IST

'5,000 HINDUS FLEE PAK EVERY YEAR DUE TO PERSECUTION'

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/5000-Hindus-flee-Pak-every-year-due-to-persecution/articleshow/35084313.cms> issued on May 14, 2014, 03.47AM IST

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1143353/hindu-council-urges-pm-to-prevent-atrocities-against-minorities> issued on Nov 9 2014

'PAKISTAN SCHOOLS TEACH HINDU HATRED'

Updated Oct 01, 2014 08:27pm

ISLAMABAD: Text books in Pakistani schools foster prejudice and intolerance of Hindus and other religious minorities, while most teachers view non-Muslims as "enemies of Islam," according to a study by a US government commission released on Wednesday.

The findings indicate how deeply ingrained hard-line Islam is in Pakistan and help explain why militancy is often supported, tolerated or excused in the country.

"Teaching discrimination increases the likelihood that violent religious extremism in Pakistan will continue to grow, weakening religious freedom, national and regional stability, and global security," said Leonard Leo, the chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Pakistan was created in 1947 as a homeland for the Muslims of South Asia and was initially envisaged as a moderate state where minorities would have full rights.

But three wars with mostly Hindu India; support for militants fighting Soviet-rule in Afghanistan in the 1980s; and the appeasement of hard-line clerics by weak governments seeking legitimacy have led to a steady radicalisation of society.

Religious minorities and those brave enough to speak out against intolerance have often been killed, seemingly with impunity, by militant sympathizers.

The commission warned that any significant efforts to combat religious discrimination, especially in education, would "likely face strong opposition" from hardliners.

The study reviewed more than 100 textbooks from grades 1-10 from Pakistan's four provinces.

Researchers in February this year visited 37 public schools, interviewing 277 students and teachers, and 19 madrases, where they interviewed 226 students and teachers.

The Islamisation of textbooks began under the US-backed rule of army dictator Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, who courted Islamists to support his rule.

In 2006, the government announced plans to reform the curriculum to address the problematic content, but that has not been done, the study said.

Pakistan's Islamist and right-wing polity would likely oppose any efforts to change the curriculum, and the government has shown no desire to challenge them on the issue.

The report found systematic negative portrayals of minorities, especially Hindus and to a lesser extent to Christians.

Hindus make up more than one per cent of Pakistan's 180 million people, while Christians represent around two per cent. Some estimates put the numbers higher.

There are also even smaller populations of Sikhs and Buddhists.

"Religious minorities are often portrayed as inferior or second-class citizens who have been granted limited rights and privileges by generous Pakistani Muslims, for which they should be grateful," the report said.

"Hindus are repeatedly described as extremists and eternal enemies of Islam whose culture and society is based on injustice and cruelty, while Islam delivers a message of peace and brotherhood, concepts portrayed as alien to the Hindu."

The books don't contain many specific references to Christians, but those that "that do exist seem generally negative, painting an incomplete picture of the largest religious minority in Pakistan," the report said.

Attempts to reach Pakistan's education minister were not successful.

The textbooks make very little reference to the role played by Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in the cultural, military and civic life of Pakistan, meaning "a young minority student will thus not find many examples of educated religious minorities in their own textbooks," the report said.

"In most cases historic revisionism seems designed to exonerate or glorify Islamic civilisation, or to denigrate the civilisations of religious minorities," the report said.

"Basic changes to the texts would be needed to present a history free of false or unsubstantiated claims which convey religious bias."

The researchers also found that the books foster a sense that Pakistan's Islamic identity is under constant threat.

"The anti-Islamic forces are always trying to finish the Islamic domination of the world," read one passage from social studies text being taught to Grade 4 students in Punjab province, the country's most populated.

"This can cause danger for the very existence of Islam. Today, the defense of Pakistan and Islam is very much in need."

The report states that Islamic teachings and references were commonplace in compulsory text books, not just religious ones, meaning Pakistan's Christians, Hindus and other minorities were being taught Islamic content.

It said this appeared to violate Pakistan's constitution, which states that students should not have to receive instruction in a religion other than their own.

The attitudes of the teachers no doubt reflect the general intolerance in Pakistan.

The 2011 Pew Research Center study found the country is the third most intolerant in the world, but because of the influence they have, they are especially worrisome.

Their views were frequently nuanced and sometimes contradictory.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/672000/pakistan-schools-teach-hindu-hatred> Oct 01, 2014 08:27pm

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1144575/no-safeguards-to-protect-people-from-govt-snooping>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29008267>

BBC NEWS Stories of forced conversion to Islam in Pakistan 1 September 2014 Last updated at 00:07 BST

What are Pakistan's blasphemy laws?

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12621225> 6 November 2014 Last updated at 19:10

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-29694584> 20 October 2014 Last updated at 15:46

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/801966/enforced-disappearances-family-searching-for-missing-muet-student/> kidnapping Hindu boy Published: December 5, 2014

HINDU TODAY, MUSLIM TOMORROW

What reports of forced conversion in Pakistan say about the country on the 70th anniversary of its creation

SABA IMTIAZ

AUG 14, 2017

For the first 16 years of her life, Ravita Meghwar was a Hindu girl living in a village in Pakistan. But today her name is Gulnaz Shah, and she is married, and a Muslim. Her family members believe that kidnappers drugged them and abducted their daughter, and that she was forcibly converted to Islam. She says she eloped and married of her own choice.

A decade or two ago, Meghwar's case would have gone unreported. But in recent years, case after case involving Hindu girls converting to Islam have emerged in courts in Pakistan's southeastern Sindh province, home to the majority of the country's Hindus. The allegedly forcible nature of the conversions, the almost identical pattern of the cases, and the targeting of minor girls have deeply unsettled the Hindu population, which constitutes about 2 percent of Pakistan's approximately 200 million people. This sense of alarm feeds into a broader reckoning: 70 years after the partition of the Indian subcontinent, some Hindus are reassessing their place in Pakistan.

While Pakistan was created as a Muslim state in 1947, the country's founder, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, said that religious minorities should have the freedom to live there and practice their faith. But today Pakistan's identity is that of an Islamic nationalist state, hardline religious groups are a formidable force, and religious minorities have little voice in society. As influential Islamic shrines and religious groups work to convert people to Islam, some Hindus are leaving their villages and moving to cities in Pakistan, or leaving Pakistan altogether and moving to India.

RELATED STORY



When Nuns Tried to Kick-Start India's First Transgender School

Cases of forced conversion are mostly reported from the Sindh province, as Meghwar's was this year. Although Pakistan became a Muslim-majority state post-partition—with Muslims dominating politics, the economy, and society—Hindus managed to retain a degree of social influence in the Sindh province, where they were known as successful merchants. According to the most recent available census, more than 6 percent of Sindh's population is Hindu.

But lower-caste and low-income Hindus in Sindh toil on farmlands for powerful, rich landowners, sometimes in a form of economic servitude. They face social discrimination and are often cut off from the Hindu community at large. A 2015 report by the South Asia Partnership-Pakistan argued that social, cultural, economic, and religious factors have combined with feudal power structures in rural areas to enable forcible conversions.

Lajpat Meghwadh, Ravita Meghwar's brother-in-law, believes she was targeted because her family was part of a larger political dispute in their village over the use of a well. "The person who Ravita has gone off with has no connection to the family, except that they had a dispute. He has never come to our house," he said.

While Hindu activists and families allege that young girls are abducted, coerced into converting to Islam, and married off to Muslim men in an organized manner, Muslim

religious activists and leaders are defensive about conversions, believing that converting someone to Islam is a way of earning blessings. These conversions are often backed by powerful shrines, seminaries, and clerics, as well as local politicians. Seminaries and shrines protect the couple and say the girl willingly eloped, converted, and married.

This poses a challenge for lawyers and activists, who have to figure out if these marriages are born of free will or are marked by threats and violence. And almost invariably, the girl's testimony that she exercised her right as an adult to marry settles the case, while her parents continue to insist she is being pressured by the influential followers of the shrine where she converted to Islam.

Forced conversions became a national talking point in 2012, when three Hindu girls were reported to have been forcibly converted to Islam and married to Muslim men. The cases went to Pakistan's Supreme Court. One of them involved a girl called Rinkle Kumari, whose conversion took place at a shrine associated with a legislator who was then part of the Pakistan Peoples Party, which governed the country at the time.

In court, the women said they wanted to live with their husbands, though activist Mangla Sharma, a member of the Pakistan Hindu Council, told me Kumari wanted to go back to her parents. The court said the women were free to be with their Muslim husbands.

"I went with Rinkle all the way to the Supreme Court," Sharma said. "And I was very disappointed for a long time, that nothing can happen. ... After Rinkle's case, there was a sense of disappointment in the community. A lot of people were thinking about migrating at that time. Of course, some people have government jobs and can't leave. Or there are people like me who think that there are just a few people left to raise a voice. If we leave, then what will happen to those who can't protest?"

Young girls aren't the only ones being targeted for conversion. Mass conversions of Hindu families are taking place in Sindh.

After Kumari's case and a wave of activism around conversions, the Sindh legislature passed a bill in 2016 outlawing forcible conversions and conversions before the age of 18. The landmark legislation faced instant criticism from hardline religious groups—including Jamaat-ud-Dawa, widely believed to be the public face of the militant network, Lashkar-e-Taiba, which is accused of carrying out the 2008 attacks on landmarks in Mumbai. Right-wing groups banded together to form an opposition movement. In a statement at the time, Muzammil Iqbal Hashmi, then-head of Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Karachi, said, "It is not even conceivable to think of impediments to entering the fold of Islam." The outcry led to the Sindh governor declining to sign the bill into law. Farooq Azam, a spokesperson for Jamaat-ud-Dawa, told me their opposition was to the entire legislation, and that the conditions it sought to establish were unacceptable.

"What we're really fighting against is the mindset," Sharma, the member of the Pakistan Hindu Council, said. "You don't give a minor any other rights—yet you give a minor the right to suddenly change their life. When there were reservations [about the law] from religious elements, they said 'There is no age in our religion to convert.' My technical point is: There isn't any age in your religion, in your law, but that doesn't apply to *our* kids. We're making this law for *our* children."

In the absence of a law explicitly banning forced conversions, activists and lawyers are zeroing in on the cases of minor girls, using a different law that outlaws all marriage in Sindh below the age of 18. In the case of Meghwar, for example, Ali Palh, a lawyer associated with the Sindh Human Rights Defenders Network, intervened on the grounds that her elopement violated the law on underage marriage. “The girl is underage and can’t make up her own mind,” Palh said.

But a high court judge ruled that Meghwar could live with her husband. Judges, Palh told me, don’t look at the implicit compulsion at play in a case of a forced conversion that leads to a marriage.

Young girls aren’t the only ones being targeted for conversion. Mass conversions of Hindu families are taking place in Sindh, and many are reported to be lower-caste Hindus. Seminaries and clerics offer money and housing to new Muslim converts; they issue press releases when they convert someone to Islam, believing this to be a considerable achievement.

It’s unclear how and when forced conversions became such an organized movement. Most activists say this change took place over the past 15 years. They point to the enduring legacy of former president General Zia-ul-Haq’s regime in the 1970s and 1980s. The Haq government sought to make sharia the supreme law of Pakistan in an effort to Islamicize the country.

FORCED CONVERSIONS IN PAKISTAN: “EESHWAR KAUN HAI, ALLAH BOL ALLAH!”

By Fatima Raza Published: November 8, 2014

Source: <http://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/24739/forced-conversions-in-pakistan-eeshwar-kaun-hai-allah-bol-allah/>

Scuffles and screams rang through the dark night. They were three and they were burly. They had her in a firm grip with her mouth gagged with a rough cloth. It was probably 11 or 12 o’clock at night. Not very late for a summer night but half the village had no electricity, so people turned in early.

Her screams could have woken up the neighbours, if they had any. Theirs was a mud hut in a lone corner of the *basti*. She desperately tried to make as much noise as possible but it was of no use. The men had tied her daughter up completely now.

In the faint glow of the oil lamp, Kumari looked at her. Her eyes wide with horror, Kumari silently pleaded her mother to free her. Reshma Bai attempted to attack one of the captors yet again with renewed fervour but she was knocked down. They carried Kumari across the small courtyard and to the gate; Reshma Bai struggled back to her feet as quickly as her arthritic knees would allow and ran screaming after them,

“Hamari bachi ko na le jao bhaiya jee! Eeshwar ka wasta tumko bhaiya jee! Kumarrii!”

(Don’t take our girl away brother! For God’s sake, brother!)

Paying her little heed, they put Kumari in the back of the car. One of the men turned back, striding towards Reshma Bai; he slapped her hard across the face. The bearded man said to Reshma, scathingly:

“Kafir napaak aurat! Allah bol Allah! Eeshwar kaun hai? Teri beti ko Allah nay chunna hai. Usko Kalima parha kar paak karlengay hum aur phir shayed kisi Muslim larkay se shadi bhi krwa dein. Shukriya adaa kr hamara! Agar tu nay kisi sey shikayat ki tou main gala ghont doonga tera! Kafir munkir maar kar sawaab milay ga!”

(Infidel, unclean woman! Say Allah! Who is this Eeshwar? Your daughter has been chosen by Allah. We will make her recite the Kalima so that she becomes pure and then we might get her married off to some Muslim boy. Be thankful to us! If you so much as utter a word about this to anyone I’ll strangle you! Killing infidels will earn me rewards!)

Seeing him up close, she recognised his face from somewhere but she couldn’t recall and then they drove away with her only daughter. As Reshma Bai sat down on the ground sobbing, she called out for her husband who had gone to the town but deep down she knew, at this point nobody could have saved her daughter.

Reshma Bai is one of the many mothers living in rural communities of Pakistan who have seen their children being abducted by the forceful men of the region to convert them forcibly to Islam. These people are the lowest link of the societal ecosystem which makes such blatant exploitation possible to happen to them. They are the lower caste Hindus living in rural areas of Pakistan. Their lives are a round-the-clock misery that involves abject poverty and a lifetime of insult at hands of all other dwellers of the region as their own kin look down their noses at them.

Their rights in the constitution make them entitled to equal or even more rights as citizens but in reality, their plights are untreated and worse, unheard. Alongside the already bleak circumstances, they are also falling victim to cases of forced conversions and marriages of their women specifically. Reshma Bai’s account is a fictional depiction of the helplessness of a lower caste Hindu mother in saving her daughter from being snatched away.

The real case in question these days is that of the Meghwar family. Their adolescent daughter has been abducted and forcibly converted to Islam. After the conversion, she was married to a much older man. This revolting behaviour on parts of our fellow countrymen is appalling to the extreme.

Our society unknowingly suffers from a terrible disease. The syndrome of tenacity and antiquity, which grips our minds, is a deadly force that stagnates our thinking to such degree that we lash out to destroy everything that is even slightly different from our perceived notions. This impairment causes some of us to point fingers, malign, judge, argue with or in extreme cases such as the above mentioned one, force the other person to convert to our set of beliefs.

I am aware that people will argue and criticise this as ‘degrading the country as a whole’ for the actions of ‘a few individuals’, and that my write up is ‘depicting Pakistan in a negative light once again’. But my question to them is, why are you sitting silently and allowing such atrocities to take place? Is this silence not tacit approval? If we are not fighting it, have we not accepted it? And if we have accepted it, we have permitted it. And

that is exactly why all of Pakistan is responsible for the act of the few that indulge in this atrocious crime.

This disease is the reason that each and every one of our daily interaction involves judging others against a list of high end morals and traits that we generate to straddle our giant egos. In some cases, it stops at making stinging remarks, and in others, it can go as far as physically forcing someone to embrace our beliefs.

This type of conversion is its own example in idiocy and nonsense. Not to mention, it is an outrageous violation of the amicable teachings of our religion.

But however dreary the situation may seem, there are still many who are holding up the skies above their heads. There are still people who embed amity among one another because they recognise people not by skin colour, language or religion but by their humanity. The problem lies in our recurrent sense of apathy though. We lie back in comfort listening to such incidents on television, shaking our heads in disapproval but in for all practical purposes, we are doing nothing. Unless we highlight the issue at multiple forums loudly and clearly, the message will be smothered into abysmal depths of ignorance.

In order to broadcast the message of Islam, the only conversion required is in our own behaviours. I strongly condemn this act of cowardice by our people against a downtrodden minority. It is disgraceful for us as a nation and as Muslims. It has to be stopped.

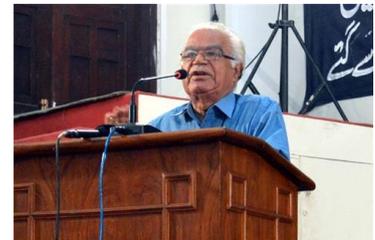
HINDU GIRLS SUBJECTED TO FORCED CONVERSION: MOTUMAL

Source: Pakistan Herald

Post Date: Friday, August 15, 2014

Updated Date: Friday, August 15, 2014

KARACHI: Amarnath Motumal legal adviser of Pakistan Hindu Seva Welfare Trust (PHSWT) and President of Hindu Panchayat Karachi division on Wednesday stated that Hindu girls subjected to forced conversion were deprived of justice due to failed judiciary, corruption and improper representation of minorities. While addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club along with PHSWT's President Sanjesh S Dhanja and Vice President Chander Kohli, who shared their recent experiences from the fact finding mission on the issues faced by Hindu community which was conducted in seven districts of Sindh by PHSWT in collaboration with Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD). Motumal said "This act experienced in Sindh in the name of Islam was not conversion but the abduction and trade of Hindu girls, conversion to any religion should be after dialogues and sensible discussion instead of using force and criminal tactics."



According to him when a Hindu girl was converted instead of going through its complications, considering the factor of force and blackmailing and inefficient counselling the authorities was mostly seems happy with this act of forced conversion by defending it. Hindu community in Pakistan was scared as they could nether express their grievances nor they could provide information as there was no one to secure them from the consequences of going against the powerful groups working in the name of religion.

Considering force conversion as the most saviour issue being faced by the Hindu minority Amarnath said. Describing the conditions of the girls subjected to conversion Amarnath said mostly the girls were either teen-age or they were not provided with proper counselling as their families were unable to trace them.

In those cases where the victims were traced, the cases were exploited in the courts and the culprits finally remained undeterred while many forced converted girls were scared to get back home as they feared the consequences they and their family might face. Motumal showed concern on the approach of the state authorities.

READY TO PAY JAZIYA TO BILAWAL, RAJ KUMAR REITERATES AS ONE MORE UNDER TEEN HINDU GIRL ABDUCTED

- Source:

<http://www.covertwires.com/index.php/articles/ready-to-pay-jaziya-to-bilawal-raj-kumar-reiterates#sthash.qaYRnvV6.3Veosp47.dpuf>



October 30, 2014; Karachi, Pakistan; CW News Desk:

“We don’t trade in daughters, we can pay any ransom to get our daughters back,” reiterates Raj Kumar, uncle of Rinkel Kumari whose abduction is the most infamous religious abduction and communal sex crime in Pakistan. Yesterday Raj Kumar told CW that they will pay ransom and Jaziya, the Islamic tax the non-Muslims are supposed to pay in an Islamic nation. “If PPP and Bilawal needs, we will pay Jaziya but we want our rights to live,” commented Raj Kumar, the representative of Secular Sindh Forum.

Today one more 12 years old Hindu girl was abducted from Daherki area. Anjali Meghwar, daughter of Kundan Meghwar was abducted and reportedly kept in a Madrasa for her forced conversion into Islam. earlier this week Kajal Bheel was also abducted and was forced married to a middle aged man and to justify this marriage a marriage certificate was released on which Kajal’s left thumb impression was present rather than signature. Despite Kajal’s birth certificate proves she was just 12 years old, she was married off and her age was claimed to be more than 18 years in the Nikaahnama (marriage certificate). “Jyoti Kumari was kidnapped on 23rd September and nobody cares. Then Kajal and now Anjali. What will happen now? Do we have the rights to live?” questioned a visibly started Raj Kumar. With a religious zeal the Pakistani Hindu girls are abducted every day but nobody cares, neither Indian media nor Pakistani media. “The Indian-Pakistan friendship is based on negating our grief and suppressing it,” commented Raj Kumar over the hypocrisy of the alleged liberalists of the two nations. When asked whether the Jaziya proposal is his or of the organization’s, he told CW; “It is not my personal decision, rather it is the organizational decision of Secular Sindh Forum (SSF). We are collecting money from the Hindus here and will submit to Bilawal and PPP as protection money.” So is it just symbolic or did they ask for protection money? To answer this question Raj Kumar furthered that though the PPP officially or Bilawal never asked such protection money, his party men or goons involved in such hate crimes always ask for such protection money. “If Bilawal can’t protect us from his own party men, I think it’s necessary to offer the protection money to Bilawal,” Raj Kumar said.

Most of the Pakistani Hindus are extremely below poverty line and they don't even have proper resources to feed their children three times. Will they be able to pay this protection money? "We don't trade in daughters; we can die of hunger but will do everything to sustain the honor of our daughters. Chastity is paramount to us, even than life," Raj Kumar assured informing along that those economically lower class Hindus are also donating money in the collection campaign by SSF despite their inability. Even some Sindhi Hindus now settled in India are also reportedly donating money to this Jaziya campaign. Fear, insecurity and dishonor, that now make the lives of Hindus in Pakistan.

ARSONISTS BLAMED FOR HINDU TEMPLE BURNING IN HYDERABAD

Published Nov 21, 2014 11:35pm

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1145998>

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS – THE CONCEPT LONG IGNORED BY EMPLOYEES (DRPREM)

Mohammad Hussain Khan

HYDERABAD: A Hindu temple was burnt in Tando Mohammad Khan district behind Barrage Colony area by unidentified persons. The incident is reported to have taken place on late Thursday night. A deity and religious books in the temple were reduced to ashes in the suspected arson attack. Police have confirmed the incident while local Hindu community leaders informed that a case has been lodged against unidentified persons who were seen fleeing from the area on two motorbikes. SSP Tando Mohammad Khan, Naseem Aara Panwhar confirmed the incident but denied that it was a full-fledged temple. According to her, an elevated surface or platform had been built where the community was keeping their religious books and deities.

"We had asked them not to keep these things in this manner and at least raise proper boundary walls. But they did not care," she said. The Hindu community leaders including Dr Girdarilal Mirchomal Gul and Mohan Lal insisted that it was an old temple where residents used to worship till late at night.

"On Thursday night at around 11:30pm, devotees ended their prayers after which the people and the caretaker left," said Dr Girdarilal. He said that when they returned early Friday morning they found a deity and books completely burnt.

SSP Panwhar said that a witness told police that he had seen four people riding two motorbikes fleeing from the area. "There was no sense of people visiting the area at that hour, so we believe that those four persons are actually involved in the incident," she said. According to Mohan Lal, Sindh minority affairs minister also sent a team from the ministry which inspected the site. He said that the temple didn't have proper boundary walls and anyone could enter it easily. Reports said that people belonging to Hindu community held a meeting on Friday under the aegis of Hindu Panchayat and vowed to remain peaceful. They however demanded protection and arrest of those involved in the incident. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MPA Ejaz Shah Bukhari, who is from the area, visited the temple and met with Panchayat leaders. He said that PPP would fully cooperate with them. Activists of different nationalist parties also staged protests to demand arrest of culprits. Earlier this year, a Kali Mata temple in Hyderabad was burnt on March 28 near

Fateh Chowk. A deity was also burnt in the incident, leading to an outcry by the Hindu community calling for protection.

4. 5,000 HINDUS FLEE PAK EVERY YEAR DUE TO PERSECUTION'

Omer Farooq Khan, TNN | May 14, 2014, 03.47AM IST

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/5000-Hindus-flee-Pak-every-year-due-to-persecution/articleshow/35084313.cms>

Around 5,000 Hindus migrate from Pakistan to India and other countries every year due to religious persecution

ISLAMABAD: Around 5,000 Hindus migrate from Pakistan to India and other countries every year due to religious persecution, ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) lawmaker Ramesh Kumar Wankwani has told the Pakistani National Assembly.



"During last two months, six incidents of religious desecration happened only in Sindh province. In all incidents, religious books of Hindu minority and their places of worship were burnt," said Wankwani, who also heads the Pakistan Hindu Council.

He said the government has so far neither made arrests nor taken action against any extremist group involved in attacks. "No one from the minority community feels safe in Pakistan," he said on Monday while commenting on law and order situation in the country.

He blamed the government for failing to control frequent attacks against Hindus and maintained it was the community's constitutional right to practice its religion freely in Pakistan.

"But the rights of Hindus have never remained a priority here. The problems of Hindus are multiplying in Pakistan instead of decreasing. Are we not part of this country?" he questioned. He said it was the teaching of all the religions to respect other faiths but the minorities had failed to get equal rights in Pakistan.

The lawmaker informed the house that scores of Hindu women have been abducted in last few years in Sindh province and later married to their kidnappers after forcible conversion. He urged the government to take steps to counter it. Wankwani asked why issues of minorities never came up for discussion in the house. "When Jinnah's residence was attacked and destroyed in Ziarat town of Baluchistan, the National Assembly had debated on the issue for four consecutive days," he said.

"I request the house to spare some time for taking up the problems faced by minorities." He said Hindus are also equal citizens of Pakistan and their holy books should also be considered equally respectful. Wankwani suggested the government to set up a parliamentary committee to discuss issues related to minorities in this regard.

There was a pin-drop silence in the house as all legislators attentively listened to his emotional speech. Later, minister of state for parliamentary affairs Sheikh Aftab Ahmed

said the government will ensure the protection of minorities at all cost as it is mentioned in the Constitution.

HINDU TEMPLE IN HYDERABAD BROKEN INTO, SET ON FIRE

TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR GARDEN PLANTS IN FROSTY WINTERS (DRPREM)

Published: March 29, 2014

Source: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/688544/alleged-desecration-hindu-temple-in-hyderabad-broken-into-set-on-fire/>

Rangers stand guard outside a temple in Site on Friday.

PHOTO: INP

HYDERABAD:



A small temple belonging to the Hindu scheduled-caste community was desecrated on Friday morning.

Three unidentified attackers entered the temple of the Hindu deity, Hanuman, in the SITE area of Latifabad at around 7am. The men prayed for two minutes and then broke Hanuman's idol before setting the temple on fire. This temple is located in the same compound as the more popular temple of Kali Mata.

**” We have been living here for centuries because of Kali Mata's temple. Never in the past were we attacked this way
Krishan Kumar, who represents the colony's community**

“They asked me to let them in because they wanted to pray,” said Darshan, a student of class five, who has been looking after the temple for the last five months. “But, once they entered, they broke the idol, sprayed kerosene oil and set everything ablaze.” The temple's caretaker, Revo Meghwadh, died five months ago, after being bitten by a snake inside the temple.

According to Darshan, the faces of the attackers were partly covered so he will not be able to identify them. They escaped without facing any resistance, he added. The fire, which gutted the photos of the Hindu deities hanging on the walls, was put out by the locals.

The temple is located in Kali Mata Colony on the foothills of the Ganjo Takkar mountain range. The colony, inhabited by around 500 to 600 scheduled-caste families, is named after the historic Kali Mata temple, which was located in a mountain cave before the new temple was built. Hanuman's temple is situated at the colony's entrance, some 350 to 400 feet away from the Kali Mata's temple. The attack came weeks before the April 14 fair organised at the temple every year.

According to Krishan Kumar, who represents the colony's community, Hanuman's idol was placed at the colony's gate. Last year, a family gave a small room to shift the idol. He refused to accept that Friday's attacks were caused due to any rivalries. The people of this area mostly belong to the labour class, he said, adding that they neither fight with neighbouring communities nor have they received any threats. "We have been living here for centuries because of Kali Mata's temple. Never in the past were we attacked this way."

The attack triggered protests at Fateh Chowk, Tando Wali Muhammad, Liaquat Colony, Cantt, Bombay Bakery and GOR Colony areas. These protests were, however, attended only by the scheduled-caste Hindus. Those belonging to other castes did not show up at the protests but did issue statements to condemn the attack. Some representatives also visited the temple.

According to DIG Sanaullah Abbassi, the initial investigations suggest the attack did not happen due to any communal strife. Nevertheless, the local DSP and SHO have been suspended and an FIR has been lodged against three unidentified attackers on the complaint of Krishan Kumar.

Meanwhile, deputy commissioner Muhammad Nawaz Soho met the community leaders and assured them that his district administration will pay to remake the idol and the temple.

[MEGHWAR FAMILY FLEES TO KARACHI AFTER GIRL'S 'CONVERSION'](#)

Saher Baloch

Updated Nov 06, 2014 07:27am

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1142588>

MEMBERS of the Hindu community protest outside the Hyderabad Press Club on Wednesday over alleged forced conversion and marriage of a Hindu girl in Daharki a few days ago.—Dawn

KARACHI: Taking refuge in the city after receiving threats by a powerful group in Daharki, the parents of a recently converted 12-year-old girl, Anjali Kumari Meghwar, met the Karachi police chief on Wednesday to speak about their daughter's case. Daharki, a city of Ghotki district, has been witnessing a wave of protests since Anjali was kidnapped from her home in Mustafa Abad Mohalla in broad daylight and converted within a day, according to her parents.

"Nobody listens to the poor. But to be from a lower caste on top of that, worsens the matters for our community," said Kundan Mal Meghwar, father of the girl, while speaking to Dawn on Wednesday. As was seen in most conversion cases in the past, the activities of the Bharchundi Shareef shrine in Daharki was once again questioned, with the parents alleging that their girl was converted and married off under the patronage of the shrine caretakers. Soon after the incident, the caretakers came up with a statement that they had nothing to do with the kidnapping and forcible conversion of the girl. "We only facilitate their wish. We don't impose our own will on them," said a spokesperson for the shrine.

Kundan refused to admit that her daughter converted and married of her free will. For proof, he had with him documents issued by the National Database and Registration Authority and her school certifying that a girl had studied in there till class four, and at present, she was aged 12.

“Riaz Sial, the man Anjali was forcibly married to, is still roaming around the area and has not been arrested so far,” Kundan continued, “whereas my daughter was handed over to the police on Friday after we requested help from an influential man in the area.”

“It’s been nine days since my daughter was taken away,” he said, “but there’s no indication about what might happen. I’m hopeful, but deep down I also know that most lawmakers representing us in the assemblies are from the upper caste, and they’ll try and protect their own first.”

Sent to shelter home

On Sunday, a civil court in Daharki, where Anjali was supposed to record her statement under Section 164 of the code of criminal procedure, sent her to a shelter home in Karachi. The family’s lawyer, Kanji Rano Bheel, however, said Anjali’s statement was not recorded, “because the statement of a girl or a boy under the age of 18 is considered illegal according to the law.” Speaking about the case and possible punishment to those suspected to be responsible, the lawyer said: “The accused can be arrested because, firstly, the girl is underage. And according to the Child Marriage Restraint Act passed in the provincial assembly in 2013, they can be arrested and tried in a court of law. Secondly, she was kidnapped and later forcefully converted. The proof of the kidnapping is the account of her mother, Haleema, who was present when the men jumped in the courtyard of their home and dragged Anjali away.”

Explaining, he spoke about a recent case in Mithi where a girl was gang-raped and later brought to the Civil Hospital Karachi for treatment. “The girl who was raped was from a Meghwar caste. In another case, a girl was kidnapped from Mitiari. So far, an FIR has not been registered in both cases. My point in bringing up these two cases is that these girls, just like Anjali, belong to a lower caste, which makes kidnapping and forcefully converting them much easier for those who wish to exploit them,” he said.

On contacting the shelter home in Karachi, initial findings of the organisation indicated that it was not a case of forced conversion.

Speaking to Dawn, PPP Senator Hari Ram stated: “We are trying our best to contact the high-ups. I have personally requested the chairman and co-chairman of the PPP to look into the growing incidents of forced conversions in the province and to specifically help the cause of the scheduled community.”

[DOZENS OF PAKISTANI HINDUS SEEK ASYLUM IN INDIA: REPORT](http://www.dawn.com/news/748210/dozens-of-pakistani-hindus-seek-asylum-in-india-report)

Published Sep 09, 2012 02:11pm

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/748210/dozens-of-pakistani-hindus-seek-asylum-in-india-report>



A Hindu woman weeps while seeing off a relative at the railway station. – File photo by INP

ISLAMABAD: A group of Pakistani Hindus arriving in the Indian state of Rajasthan says that they will not return to their home country, according to a report published by the BBCUrdu.

The group of 171 people arrived in Rajasthan's Jodhpur city via the 'Thar Express' train on Sunday.

Although the passengers in the group traveled to the Indian state on pilgrimage visas for religious purposes, they claim they will not return to Pakistan.

The Seemant Lok Sangthan (SLS), an organisation for Hindus from Pakistan settled in India, has appealed to the Indian government to grant the group immigrant visas.

According to a spokesman of the organisation, all 171 people in the group have arrived in Jodhpur from Pakistan's Sindh province, and "they all belong to Sanghar or Hyderabad."

The group comprises of 32 women and children of whom a majority belong to the low-caste Bheel community of Hindus.

"You can not understand our pain. My father recently passed away; I could not even find a place to perform my father's last rites," the BBCUrdu quoted one of the people arriving with the group. "We will not go back to Pakistan. You may kill us if you wish, but we will not return."

The news follows media reports earlier last month of hundreds of Pakistani Hindu nationals from Sindh allegedly migrating to India over concerns of religious persecution and security fears. A committee was formed by President Asif Ali Zardari to look into the reports of mass migration. However, the committee rejected the claims that members of the minority community were leaving Sindh.

Later in August, authorities in Rajasthan state announced that around 900 Pakistani Hindus had become eligible to apply for Indian citizenship. The people included those Pakistanis who had traveled to India prior to December 31, 2004 and refused return to their home country.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HINDUS IN SINDH

Published Dec 05, 2011 09:37pm

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/678539/discrimination-against-hindus-in-sindh>

THE media has continuously been reporting about violence, abduction, threats and forced conversion of Hindus in Sindh for the past couple of years. Recently Anil Kumar and his family were beaten and threatened at Tharari Mohabat, Dadu district. Thirty-seven members of five Hindu families migrated to India from Thul, Jacobabad district, owing to discrimination, and three Hindu doctors, all brothers, were murdered at Chak, Shikarpur district.

Lots of similar incidents were happening daily, some of which are not even reported, proving that some vested interests were trying to create the worse atmosphere for Hindu families so that they leave Pakistan.

A recent survey conducted by the Pakistan Hindu Seva shows that at least 10 to 14 families migrate from Sindh to India every month, which is alarming. Another survey conducted by the Scheduled Caste Rights Movement revealed that out of 640 Hindu families, including Bheel, Menghwar, Balmeeki, Arya, about 527 families complained that they were served in separate utensils at hotels in their localities. It is rather surprising that the Peshawar Cantonment Board had also issued a notice under illegally-occupied government property to 70 Hindu families to vacate their houses in 1993.

They had been living there for the past 130 years.

It seems that they are facing discrimination, violation, abduction, and threats from everywhere despite being in the majority within a minority. It is a pity that the government is also ignoring them though there are five Hindu PPP members in the Sindh Assembly, three of whom are with ministries, including a minority minister, Mohan Lal Kohistani. However, no one has taken interest in providing security to the Hindus. Migration of Hindus will be a great loss of brain-drain to Sindh as doctors, engineers, agriculturists, businessmen and intellectuals have been migrating to India. It is also a violation of human rights and the fundamental rights of Hindus to force them from this land by different means.

I appeal to the government to take this issue seriously and announce a commission to look into the matter and provide full-time security to Hindu families in Sindh. RUBAB JAFRI
Chairperson Human Rights Forum Office Dadu

HINDU TEMPLE DESECRATION

Published Mar 31, 2014 07:55am

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1096810>

INCIDENTS of communal violence targeted at Sindh's Hindu population are occurring with disturbing regularity. On early Friday morning a Hindu temple in Hyderabad was set on fire by unidentified arsonists, resulting in damage to an idol and the structure itself. Earlier this month a dharamshala in Larkana was attacked by rioters after a Hindu man in the town allegedly desecrated the Holy Quran. These attacks send ominous signals to Sindh's Hindu community while they indicate that the pluralistic atmosphere of the province is deliberately being poisoned. Sindh is not immune to the tide of fanaticism that has overwhelmed Pakistan. And unless consistent efforts are made by the state and society to address such violent incidents, the situation will only deteriorate. A number of suspects were picked up on Saturday while Sindh police officials are looking into different angles to unmask the culprits behind the temple attack. Apart from the involvement of extremists, the possible role of IDPs and land-grabbers is also being examined. Unless proper investigations are conducted, this case, like many before it, will remain unsolved, which will not bode well for religious harmony in Sindh.

As historian Dr Mubarak Ali stated in a lecture in Karachi on Friday, to sit quietly as intolerance grows against non-Muslims is akin to acceptance of communalism. Political parties and civil society in Sindh have spoken out against the acts of desecration. Yet more needs to be done to promote interfaith harmony amongst the people and to actively oppose the communal narrative. It is not enough to simply say that Sindh is the land of Sufis; society must indicate through its actions that the message of amity and brotherhood preached by the mystics of yore is still alive in today's Sindh and that the hateful narrative of zealots has no place here. The state, on its part, must bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice to show non-Muslims it is serious about protecting their places of worship and to send a strong message to communalists.

FORCED CONVERSIONS TORMENT PAKISTAN'S HINDUS

Hindus in Pakistan live in fear as girls from minority community forced to marry Muslim men amid official apathy.

Maham Javaid Last updated: 18 Aug 2014 09:41

Source: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/08/forced-conversions-torment-pakistan-hindus-201481795524630505.html>

Pakistan is home to about two million Hindus, most of whom live in Sindh province [Maham Javaid /Al Jazeera]

Hyderabad, Pakistan - About two months ago, a Muslim businessman approached Dharmo Sochi and put a gun to his head, demanding his Hindu daughter's hand in marriage. The businessman, Jameel Solangi, allegedly threatened the family with abduction and murder unless they acquiesced. Sochi's 16-year-old daughter, Madhuri, had previously been harassed by Solangi but was too traumatised to tell the family about it, according to her aunt, Sri Devi. "I'm terrified he will kidnap me, force me to accept Islam and marry him. He is not Hindu. I will die before I marry him. Madhuri, 16-year-old Hindu girl "Dharmo dared him to shoot," Sri Devi told Al Jazeera. "He thought it better to die than allow this unholy union between Hindu and Muslim. Somehow we pushed Solangi out of the house and no one was hurt." From that day onwards, Madhuri - who works as a panhandler, the traditional profession for women from her Sochi caste - was too fearful to leave the house.

Pakistan is home to about two million Hindus, most of whom live in the southern province of Sindh and belong to lower castes, including Sochi. While upper-caste Hindus complain of their traders being kidnapped for ransom, lower-caste Hindus say their daughters are being targeted. "Our community can bear looting and the kidnapping of our men, but the abduction of our daughters and wives is too painful," Bhawan Das, who holds a National Assembly seat reserved for minorities, told Al Jazeera.

"Unfortunately, the frequency of these crimes is increasing due to religious extremism." According to a report from the Movement for Solidarity and Peace, about 1,000 non-Muslim girls are converted to Islam each year in Pakistan. Every month, an estimated 20 or more Hindu girls are abducted and converted, although exact figures are impossible to gather, said Amarnath Motumal, the vice chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) In Madhuri's case, Solangi claims to love the young woman and does not understand why she refused to marry him. "Right now she goes from house to shop begging for charity," he told Al Jazeera. "I can provide her with so much more." Asked why he threatened to shoot Madhuri's father, he said: "What else am I supposed to do? I

can't give up on her." While religion appears to be a secondary issue for Solangi, it is a chief concern for Madhuri, who would have to convert if she married a Muslim. "I'm terrified he will kidnap me, force me to accept Islam and marry him," she told Al Jazeera. "He is not Hindu. I will die before I marry him." 'Vulnerable' HRCPC chairperson Zohra Yusuf said Muslim girls in Pakistan are also abducted and married against their will or sold into prostitution.

If you compare the number of kidnapped Hindu and Muslim girls, in relation to their population in Pakistan, you will see that Hindus are more vulnerable. Zohra Yusuf, Chairperson, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. However, "if you compare the number of kidnapped Hindu and Muslim girls, in relation to their population in Pakistan, you will see that Hindus are more vulnerable" - especially poorer ones such as Madhuri



The HRCPC doesn't have a research to back its claim. No other organisation has the statistics on it because a large majority of the crimes go unreported. One official who wished to remain anonymous said that the HRCPC has been planning to do a countrywide survey of abducted girls in the last 10 years, "but it's not high on the priority list". The Meghwar community, low-caste Hindus living on Hyderabad's Kali Road, are also said to face discrimination. Amar Meghwar, a community activist, said such cases are rarely reported to the police because "our screams fall on deaf ears". Sanaullah Abbassi, Deputy Inspector General of Police for Hyderabad told Al Jazeera: "We do what we can. Sometimes the girls run away by choice, what can we do in such cases?" Sumbal Bai, a Hindu worker at a local thread-making factory, said her daughter, Sanam, was abducted two years ago at the age of 18. "One of Sanam's co-workers, a Muslim boy, drugged her into unconsciousness and whisked her to Khanewal, Punjab," she told Al Jazeera. When Sanam's father and brother attempted to rescue her, they discovered the abductors had financial clout and political connections. "We have nobody to fall back on," Sumbal Bai said. "We have lost one daughter and we risk losing another if we make too much noise."

Sindh province's top police official Sharjeel Kharral, told Al Jazeera that the lower tier of the police force is not sensitised to the discrimination faced by Hindus.

"It's true that they don't prioritise the community without pressure from the media or civil society." Kharral said Hindus in Pakistan are a scared and vulnerable minority and forced conversion is an example of their vulnerability, especially when it occurs to their women "The problem is that while some cases are actually forced conversions, others are love marriages and there is no way for us to differentiate between them." With little support from authorities as well as civil society, thousands of Hindus are forced flee to neighbouring India. India offers Pakistani Hindus safe haven.

Marriage facilitation: Some Muslim leaders consider it an honour to convert non-Muslim girls. Muslim cleric Mian Abdul Malik - who leads the Bharchundi Sharif Shrine, famous for conversions of young Hindu girls - discounted the complaints of the Hindu community. "There's no such thing as forced conversions in Islam and in Pakistan," he told Al Jazeera. This year, Malik has converted two Hindu men and 15 Hindu women. Asked about this ratio, he said: "Hindu women come readily to us because after conversion we facilitate their marriages to Muslims." Jai Prakash Moorani, editor of the Sindhi daily, *Ibrat*, told Al Jazeera that forced conversions are indeed taking place amid

Pakistan's permissive legal system. "When Hindu girls are kidnapped, forcibly converted and married to Muslims, the police, government and courts all turn a blind eye," Moorani said, noting this encourages more abductions and forced conversions. Civil-rights activists maintain that because there has never been a court ruling on forced conversions in support of the aggrieved Hindu families, there is no precedent to deter the crime. "Pakistan was built in the name of Islam," Sanauallah Abbasi, the Deputy Inspector General of Police of Hyderabad, told Al Jazeera. "This makes it easy to exploit religious minorities in our country," he conceded.

For the Hindu community, their problems are at the bottom of the priority list. They may try to break the status quo, but no conscious effort from the government is being made to resolve the issue of forcible conversions amongst Pakistan's small minority.

LEAVE YOUR FAITH OR LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY'

Manesh Kumar

Updated Nov 10, 2014 06:04pm

Source: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1143524>

5,000 Hindus are migrating from Sindh to India every year. — Reuters/file

"We are not Muslim, we are not Hindu, but first and foremost, we are Sindhi. There is a conspiracy to force Sindhi Hindus to leave Sindh, but we will not allow nefarious elements to succeed," a political activist was sloganeering in English outside the Hyderabad Press Club. Like most nationalists, he was hoping his message would be heard not only everywhere in Pakistan but also all across the world. But the sad reality is, all these protests are of no use; the messages all fruitless. Despite their community's strong resistance, the situation is very much the same as it was yesterday. Hindu girls were converted in the past, are being converted today, and I'm sure, will be converted down to the very last Hindu remaining on the soil of Sindh. It is true that whenever a Hindu girl in Sindh is kidnapped or converted, a large number of Sindhi Hindus – in the face of fear and hopelessness – are forced to migrate to India.

After the alleged kidnapping of Anjali Bai Meghwar from Daharki, Kajul Bheel from Matiari district and Karin from Nawabshah (most people not aware of these names), many people including my dear friend Ajeet Kumar are forced to consider the idea of migration. "As a last resort we have decided to migrate to India," Ajeet told me a few days ago.

"We are completely insecure here. We are looted but our voice is not heard by the people in the saddle, our temples are attacked in broad daylight but no one takes action, our girls are kidnapped and forcibly converted only to hear more empty promises of justice.

"Nothing happened in the last 65 years and we don't expect any improvement in future. Things will only become worse."

All the political parties have condemned and protested the forced conversion of 12 year-old Anjali and subsequent marriage to a young man. But while Bilawal Bhutto, the ruling party's chairman, has taken cognizance of it, most PPP leaders have kept mum as they know there is no way to turn the situation around. Intolerance of faith differentials has

gone so far in this country that not only Hindus but Christians, Ahmadis and Shias are equally targeted every now and then.

The situation is chilling.

In a place where Khursheed Shah was recently charged with religious contempt just because of his usage of the word “Muhajir”; where naming a road after Bhagat Singh, a true Pakistani, can cause so much trouble; where murderers, like Mumtaz Qadri, are welcomed with roses; people being forced to leave their faith and embrace the dominating one does not look odd at all.

“In the coming few months we will leave our motherland,” said Ajeet. “See, they have brought conditions to this point; they want us to give up the faith or leave the country.”

What can one do in these circumstances? Every new incident of forced conversion increases the feeling of trepidation and insecurity, and the desperateness to flee this land. Even well-heeled families are migrating as they think there is no other option left.

Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, member of PML-N told National Assembly that over 5,000 Hindus are migrating from Sindh to India every year. Hindus constitute five per cent of Sindh's population. Vankwani's figure suggests that 22.22 per cent of the total Hindu community of the province migrate to India every year.

How many years before Sindhi Hindus are completely expelled?

Everyone knows that the Sindh government passed a law last year which criminalised underage marriages. But has the government taken any action against those who have converted Anjali? Or even just against those who forced an underage Anjali to marry someone? Anjali Meghwar's father Kundan Lal has presented her NADRA and school documents in the court before the authorities. These documents certify her age as 12. But much like the inertia of previous PPP governments, I think this incident will lead to zero action as well. I mean, PPP has not even managed to oust people like Mian Mithu (allegedly involved in Rinkle Kumari and Anjali Meghwar's cases) from its ranks. Everyone and everything from the police, the courts and the elected assembly members can be controlled with astonishing ease, as it happened in the case of Rinkle Kumari – a girl from the same district converted by the same people last year. A video was released showing assailants brandishing weapons inside the court. Back then, MPAs and MNAs from the district did not utter a single word in support of the victims. Nor have they done so now. So when people like Ajeet give up all hopes of improvement, they are very much in the right; because when a state cannot even pass the Hindu Marriage Act, how can it protect them and their assets? How can it prevent their girls from being forcibly converted? It can't. This is the sorriest state for a state.

"It is indeed difficult to leave Sindh. It is our homeland, it has borne us. But we also can't stop subscribing to our faith. So leaving is the only option left."

Good bye, Ajeet.

[I LOVE PAKISTAN, BUT I CAN'T LIVE HERE](#)

Samra Syed May 25, 2014 12 Comments

Source: <http://www.hinducurrents.com/articles/share/162467/>

Population of Hindus in Pakistan keeps dwindling as they migrate to avoid persecution Daleep Kumar, a businessman from interior Sindh, pays extortion money every month to insure the safety of his wife and 7-year-old daughter. If he doesn't pay, he places his loved ones at risk.

“Influential big wigs from my area came to my place of business and demanded a handsome portion of my income. As a Hindu and minority in this country, I have to pay whatever they demand,” Kumar said while talking to this scribe. When his daughter is at school, he prays for her safe return. Fear of kidnapping always is on his mind.

“I love Pakistan, which is my motherland, but I can't live here with peace of mind” said Kumar, with tears rolling down his cheeks. He is considering migrating to India for a better and safe future. Thousands of Pakistani Hindus face a similar dilemma. They love their homeland but face problems on several fronts, including practicing their religion freely, sexual harassment, kidnapping for ransom, forced marriages outside their faith, targeted killings, and religious discrimination in society. Many Hindus have already fled to India to escape persecution and many are planning to migrate. According to Minority Rights Group International (MRG), census figures of 1951 showed that Hindus made up 21 per cent of Pakistan's population. By 1998, that declined to 1.7 per cent and today that number has fallen to 1.2 per cent of the total population. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) reported that around 600 to 1000 Hindu families migrated to India in 2012-2013. An advocate of Sindh High Court and human rights activist, Kalpana Devi, claimed that forced conversion of Hindu girls is a major factor compelling Pakistani Hindus to flee. She alleged that the trend of selling kidnapped Hindu girls has also increased in the last few years.

Quoting a story of 24-year-old Hindu girl, Kalpana said that she was kidnapped by an influential of the area who allegedly forced her to change the religion. According to Kalpana, the girl was sold twice in one-and-a-half years. When her parents tracked her down, they went to court and demanded her release. Even after the court's decision in favour of the abducted girl, her parents had to pay money to the abductors for her safe return; she said and added that she had migrated now. On request of anonymity, another 19-year-old Hindu girl narrated her miseries after she eloped with a police officer and became Muslim. “I was feeling so lucky that a well-settled, handsome guy loved me and agreed to marry me,” she said and added that she had no regret for leaving her family and religion. She left her home, religion and family to marry him but after sharing bed for a couple of months, he forced her to marry his father.

“After marrying his father, he re-sold me to another local who abused me both physically and mentally. One day, he brutally tortured me and cut off my long hair. I attempted to rejoin my family and even tried to migrate but failed in both cases. Then a third Muslim man bought me. We got married and now I am living a better life with my husband and two kids in the same city but life is vulnerable for Hindus in Pakistan,” the woman said. Naumana Suleman, Programme Coordinator National Commission for Justice and Peace in Pakistan, claims in her 2013 research paper titled *'Fact-Sheet Forced Conversion and Marriages in Pakistan'* that 729 Pakistani Hindus were forced to convert to Islam during 2000-2012.

A Hindu doctor, Partap Rai, was shot and injured in his private clinic for not attending to a child patient quickly as per the wish of the child's family. According to police reports, the father of child shot six bullets and fled away from the scene. Doctors managed to save the life of Dr Partap, but could not save him from paralysis.

The annual report of HRCP for 2013 noted, "Pakistan has become a more difficult country for religious minorities and many Hindus have raised their concern about girls' abduction and forced conversion to Islam. Those from the 'scheduled' castes faced discrimination even at the hands of 'upper caste' Hindus in Pakistan."

A 2013 report from Human Rights Monitor shows that 13 Hindus were killed during 2011-2012 in Pakistan and 25 were kidnapped for ransom. The monitor report states that these are only the cases which had been filed and reported otherwise actual numbers would be much higher.

Many Hindu temples have been set on fire in different cities of Pakistan. The latest incident occurred on March 15, 2014 in Larkana when an angry mob set a Hindu temple and Dharamshala on fire in response to alleged desecration of the Holy Quran. According to police report, a Hindu allegedly burned the scripts of Holy Quran. According to Hindu religious clergies, extrajudicial acts are unconstitutional, therefore, the accused should be produced before the court of law instead of attacking religious places and killing innocent Hindus.

At the time of Pakistan's independence in 1947, nobody could imagine that in a country like Pakistan with two major colours in its flag — green for Muslims and white for non Muslims — minorities would feel threatened. Ramesh Lal Motwani, a Hindu member of National Assembly, says that some extremists are violating the constitution and law by attacking Hindu temples and forcefully converting abducted Hindu girls to Islam. Motwani demands safety for Pakistani Hindus which is necessary to erase the negative impression of religious extremism from Pakistan.

FORCED CONVERSIONS : FAMILY CLAIMS RAKHI BROTHER KIDNAPPED POOJA (SANGHAR)

By Amar Guriro February 05, 2014

Source: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/sindh/05-Feb-2014/forced-conversions-family-claims-rakhi-brother-kidnapped-poojaafp>

KARACHI: Despite the presence of 18 Hindu parliamentarians in Pakistani parliament including National Assembly of Pakistan, Senate and four provincial assemblies, cases of forced conversion are still being reported from Sindh. The sufferings of Hindus in Sindh continue despite tall claims made by the government. Young teenage girls from minorities are still being kidnapped and brought in front of the court or media as new converts to Islam.

Recently, another Hindu girl went missing from Sanghar district just two days before her wedding. The parents of the teenage girl have alleged that one of their Muslim neighbours, whom she tied a Rakhi and made him her brother, has kidnapped her and forced her to convert to Islam, so that he can marry her. Dileep Kumar Lohano, elderly brother of Pooja Bai, after getting disappointed from the local police, authorities and minorities parliamentarians, rushed to Karachi and approached Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) Sindh chapter to help him get his sister back.

"My sister Pooja Bai is around 17 years old and on January 16, she left house with some clothes to give those to a tailor master in our area. She never came back," Kumar told Daily Times in HRCP office Karachi on Tuesday. He alleged that a young member of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and close relative of DIG Mirpurkhas Ameen Yousafzai's close relative Gohar Ali Yousafzai, who lives in their neighbourhood kidnapped his sister. His mother, who was at home, informed Kumar of the incident. After receiving the information, he rushed back home and started contacting his relatives in the town, but did not find her. The disappointed family contacted the police and lodged an FIR at Sanghar police station (FIR No-21/2014) under section 365B and 34 Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). Pooja's brother-in-law Kanhiya Lal said that right after the incident, Yousafzai contacted the family and informed that she is in Jamia Binoria Masjid. He offered us that conduct a Skype conference with Pooja, so her relatives could confirm she had converted to Islam and was a Muslim now. "Yousafzai arranged a fake certificate with the help of District Officer (Education) Yaar Muhammad Baladi and mentioned in the certificate that she was born in 1994 whereas she was actually born in 1997 and they increased her age to prove in the court that she is an adult and can take decisions," he said.

He also alleged that Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) leader Mohammad Shoukat Rujaheni is supporting the opponents.

When Daily Times contacted Hindu parliamentarian, leader of PML-F and MPA Sindh Nand Kumar Goklani who is also from Sanghar to get his viewpoint he gave a completely 'strange' statement. "I was recently made a member of committee by minister of education to find ghost teachers, so I was calling DO Sanghar, but he didn't bother to receive my call, therefore I have submitted a privilege motion in the last session of Sindh Assembly," said Goklani. When asked what exactly he did to help the victim, he said that he was with them during the entire case.

The Hindu

Hindu refugees from Pakistan in a camp on the Jhanwar road in Jodhpur. Photo: Rohit Jain Paras

Influx from Pakistan could pose hard challenges for governments on both sides

Early this month, Chetan Ram abandoned his home in Pakistan for a flapping, cloth shack, held up with bamboo poles against the searing desert wind. Around his shack, six kilometres outside Jodhpur on the Jhanwar road, many others too camp — a stark symbol of the growing exodus of Hindus, faced with Islamist violence, from Pakistan that could pose hard challenges for governments on both sides of one of the world's most fraught borders.



The largest group of refugees, made up of 184 people, came in by the India-Pakistan Thar Express on the second Sunday of September. Last Sunday saw another 48 Pakistanis arrive on pilgrim visa, and then refuse to return home. There are now over 300 people housed in the camps on the town's suburbs. Ram and his extended family fled Pakistan in the face of religious persecution. His father, Soomro (70), died just nine days before the team left for India. Soomro was buried at Mitho Khoso in Tando Adam of Hyderabad district, 40-45 km from the place of his death. The grieving family says it had no option

but to take the body that far and bury it as cremation — the traditional way of disposal of the body for Hindus — was not allowed.

“Life there is worse than death,” says Ram. “The main reason for our decision not to go back is the insecurity to our women and the religious persecution.” There are social and economic hardships too like bonded labour, non-payment of wages and lifting of livestock belonging to the minority population. Asked about the reported instances of kidnapping of Hindu girls that have figured in the Pakistani media in the recent months, Dharma Ram, Suraj Mal, Devji Ram, Longa Das, Lokumal and Kanwar Ram claim that the average is of 30 cases in a month in Sindh alone. They said a 14-year-old Puna was kidnapped from their locality 10 days prior to their departure. “The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has conceded these figures,” says Hindu Singh Sodha, head of the Seemant Lok Sangathan, an organisation working for refugees from Pakistan. Lobbying by Mr. Sodha has enabled Indian citizenship to as many as 13,000 in 2004-5.

Most of the refugees, landless labourers from Sanghar, Matiari and Hyderabad districts in the Sindh province of Pakistan, have their origins in the western Rajasthan districts of Jaisalmer, Barmer and Bikaner. Many have relatives in the region. Bheel adivasis and Meghwal Dalits live on both the sides of the border and share a similar lifestyle — a word perhaps inappropriate to the desperate hardship that characterises their lives. While the wars between the two neighbours in the 1960s and early 1970s drove them in hordes out of Pakistan — 90,000 reached Rajasthan in 1971 — the fencing of the border in the past two decades had almost put an end to the illegal crossing over to this side.

Initially, Ram’s group stayed on the Dali Bai temple premises, but it had to vacate the place for making space for pilgrims on way to the Ramdeora Fair in Jaisalmer. “The government has done precious nothing for these people. We are feeding them two times with the help of individuals while keeping the political parties and vested interests at a distance,” says Mr. Sodha. “A minimum of 800 cups of tea which need 30 kg of milk, and provisions worth Rs.15, 000 for two meals a day is a tall order for us and these nowhere people,” notes Prem Chand, a *raddhiwallah* (waste paper vendor), who came from Sanghar a few years ago and has now turned a local.

Collector disputes claims

Jodhpur Collector Siddharth Mahajan disputes these claims, insisting that the administration had offered the migrants both shelter and food but the local “patrons” did not want it to happen for “some reason.” A visit to the camp and other locations such as Ramdeo Nagar inhabited by migrants gives the impression that the administration, though sympathetic, has not done much. This is despite Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot himself promising them help. No one is certain what the long-term prospects of the refugees to stay in India might be. “Though India is not a signatory to the U.N. Convention on Refugees, 1951 and 1961, it cannot turn a blind eye to these people’s plight as it is a humanitarian issue. India is after all a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” argues Mr. Sodha.

“We have asked them to fill the forms for permanent stay,” says Mr. Mahajan. “We are in a dialogue with the Centre.”

Source: <http://www.chakranews.com/at-least-25-hindu-girls-abducted-every-month-in-pakistan/655>

April 1, 2010

By Antony Thomas

Karachi, Pakistan (CHAKRA) – An activist and council member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Amarnath Motumal, stated that at least 20 to 25 girls are abducted and converted to Islam against their will every single month. Hindus are targetted due to many local muslims seeing them as kafirs(non muslims) and therefore of lower class as well as evil.



Motumal further stated that this number is lower than the actual numbers because many cases go unreported due to fear of families and loved ones being killed. “A large number of Hindu girls in Karachi alone are being kidnapped on a routine basis.” Threats are commonly given by the dangerous kidnapppers that if they are reported, the families will hear of their daughter’s death. Motumal said that the word “Hindu” has become an insult and almost a shame for all Hindus in the Islamic state of Pakistan because of impoverished state 90% of Hindu families live in. He addressed that the government and others in power are to blame for the lack of rights available to the Hindu community. Only a few families come to Motumal for help while the majority keep their losses to themselves hoping that not speaking up will devoid them of future misfortunes. A former MPA, Bherulal Balani said that Hindu girls in specific scheduled classes are the ones mostly being abducted from the Lyari area. “Once the girls are converted, they are then sold to other people or are forced to do illegal and immoral activities,” Balani said. He also added that the hostage takers are very powerful and that is primarily why reports are going awry if they are even made to begin with.

The interior South of Pakistan is where the number of kidnappings has increased within the last three months including nine reports which have been made ranging from kidnappings, to forced conversions, rapes and murders. In the Nagarparker area, a 17 year old girl was raped and in another incident a 15 year old girl was abducted from Aaklee village, Tharparker followed with a forced conversion. Almost 71 families travelled from the village to protest against the abuse against the girl. Even on the festival of Holi during celebrations, two Hindu girls, Kishni and Anita were kidnapped from Kotri. On the same day, Ajay and Sagar, two other boys were also kidnapped from an area close by. Amir Gul, was murdered by her landlord at the beginning of March in Tando Haider. Later in March, Kishan Kumar was kidnapped from Kandhkot, Jacobabab. MPA Pitamber Sewani said that one of the reasons these acts against Hindu minorities are taking place is because the culprits believe that the minority will support the government in “local body” elections so they want to harass these Hindus to alleviate the support level in upcoming elections.

President of the Pakistan Hindu Council, Ramesh Kumar criticized the minority Hindu community representatives for not standing up and letting their voices be heard at important forums. He said that these leaders were simply representing their parties and not the poor people and their real issues. He also added that the dire economic conditions,

especially in Kandhkot and Jacobab have led to kidnappings and other abuse of the minority Hindus. Coordinator HRCPTask Force Sindh Dr. Ashothama Lohano said that according to a report, the most pinpointed and harassed communities in the area are of Hindu and Christian communities. He stated that “The recent wave of extremism is one reason, which has destroyed the harmony of the land of Sufis. Another reason is the destruction of the agriculture sector and small markets that has led to frustration and lawlessness. Yet another reason is that the elected representatives are working only for the party and not for the community.”

He further stated that the minority Hindu community was an easy target because they did not stand up or speak up against the violations due to fear. At the same time though, if they chose to speak up and take action they were accused of having Indian connections or killed by local Islamic groups.

PROTEST IN SINDH AGAINST THE KILLING OF HINDU LEADER

Leader of Hindu Sindhi Sujag Tahreek Shri Wazir Mal Marwari Murdered in Sindh:
Protest Rich & Powerfull of Interior Sindh responsible for the killing of Hindu leader in Sindh : Protesters Protest in kandharkot, Thal, Khaipur, Mirpur Khas against the killing of Hindu Leader in Sindh. Hindus being forced to migrate : Ali Hasan Chandio. Hindus to be protected at all cost : Awami Tehrek. US congressmen had already written letter to President Zardari on Rinkle Kumari case : BBC. US Administration should reach out to Sindhis. They are more in numbers compared to Urdu Speaking in Pak : US Senator Brad Sherman. Funds to be collected for Sindhi language development : Brad Sherman. I will take up Sindh issues in US congress : US Senator Brad Sherman

YET ANOTHER CASE OF ABDUCTION OF HINDU GIRLS IN SINDH

Dhabechi, Sindh Pakistan : Reports suggest 20 yrs old Sunita Maheshwari been missing possibly kidnapped. Relatives doubt to be case of abduction. As per latest news 20 yrs old Sunita Maheshwari daughter of Panhoo Maheshwari went missing while on her to provide tuitions. As she did not return as per the regular scheduled time concern relatives started a search operation. As relatives failed to recover her a case have been registered against Bhudi Khuso and 6 others for Abduction

PLIGHT OF HINDUS : THE BELEAGUERED MINORITY COMMUNITY OF SINDH, PAKISTAN

Posted on October 8, 2012

This report was published in Awami Awaz. The translated version is being published now.
Source: <https://hindusofsindh.wordpress.com/tag/ethnic-cleansing-of-hindus-of-sindh/>

Take a call – Either allow us to live or let us leave, Migration in Sindh in real terms had bitten even 1947 records : Hindu Member to Standing committee of Human Rights in National Assembly Pakistan

Awami Awaz:- Report-Sakheel Naich—The Standing committee of Human Right had recommended to the Govt. of Sindh that forcible conversation be stopped and action be taken against the responsible and legislation be drafted to in order to stop the migration of Hindus. Further legislation be drafted to stop incidents of Karo-Kari and Prison manual be

modified in line with the present times. These were the main points discussed in the meeting of standing committee of Human Rights which was presided over by Ryaz Fatiyana who holds the chair of the commission as well. Incidentally in the meeting the data related to Forced Conversion and Migration of Hindus as being put up by I G Sindhi from Sindhi were out rightly rejected by the Minority Hindu members of the commission . Speaking on the data put up by I G Sindh Falak Khurshid, Hindu MNA (Member of National Assembly Pakistan) said the level of Migration in Sindhi in the last 5 years have been much more compared to that of mass migration in 1947!! In Mirpur Khas alone there are reports of Hindered being already migrated. Additional IG Sindh said Hindus being a hardworking community and have of an progressive which is the reason why they are specifically targeted. President Zardari have already instituted a three member parliamentary committee to look into the issue. MNA Aresh Kumar Singh said that the data are far for being true. Indian minister had publically confirm that 500 families are already in India and have expressed their willingness of staying here on long term. Majority of those Migrated once have refused to return. In Sindhi many more have been killed. If Hindus migrate it would spell disaster for us. Mr Mangal Sharma of Minority Alliance said in September alone as many as 12 Hindu Girls have been forcefully converted to Islam. Among these 12 only one girl have been return to her family. As many as 7500 family have been migrated and in the last 20 yrs the data for migrated once put up the figure at One and half lacks. Not even 5% of the jobs are with Hindus. There is no Hindu personal Law Board as well. Mr Tikam Mal of Pakistan Hindu Council said forced conversion is the single most reason of Hindu Migration. We need to believe only on Hard facts. The Girl after being kidnapped for 20 days is being presented as Muslim , we are asking why a girl had to be made wife why nor a daughter or Sister ? We will earn money anyway but about humiliation that we go through? In case a law is drafted to make easier of Hindus being converted we would have no other option but to Migrate to India. "Either you let us live or let us leave" Additional IG Sindh on his part said that we are bonded by law of Land. As per law the boy and the Girls are presented to the court and it is up to the courts to issue the verdict . We merely comply with the court order. Mr Kashoor Zahiri MNA from MQM said Hindus love this country more than what we do. The present situations demand an through rethink of our attitude towards minority. This is a serious issue. This issue had tarnished the image of the country internationally. We need to draft a legislation so as an deterrent for such cases. Ramesh Singh of Minority Itihad said there are serious issue facing Hindus and so in the migration. Indian Minister says 1290 Families have migrated while 790 have already been awarded citizenships. Massive migration is on in Sukkur. In case ransom is the only solutions where is the role of Police !! Security should be provided to places of Worship belonging to Minority community. Satram Singh Domak of Baluchistan Assembly & Ram Sindg Sodha of Sindh had already migrated. If elected representatives don't feel secure then who cares for common Hindu ? Give us the Rights what Quid Azam had promised. Immediately after the formation of Pakistan, Quid had the parliament presided by an Hindu Jogindernath Mondal. In Pakistan it was Hindu M P singh would used to speak of Sacrifice for the state of Pakistan. In case Pakistan is in distress it is the minorities who would stand tall. Aresh Kumar Singh MNA said that let police clarify where they have received any Government policy to expedite the exodus of Hindus from Pakistan. Let police clarify we won t raise hue and cry on the issue. MNA Inayat Allah said act against Hindus is an terrorist act, it is indeed shameful that Hindus are migrating. We have been hearing since the last 20 years of the presence of Private prisons. Hindu personal Law must be enacted. Cases against the Hindus needs to be tried in Special courts similar to that of terror courts like ATC. Minorities are our assets. We can't tolerate their exodus. Special Secretary Home Mudasar

Iqbal said in order to secure minorities as have constituted committee in every district of Sindh under Dy Commissioner which would include five minorities members apart from SSP. In the meet chairman of the commission Rayaz fathyana said there is no doubt that non Muslims have equalrights as Muslims . Quaid in his 11 August Speech have clearly laid out the principles of equality. The venom of Militant Islam was speed by Gen Zia and we are facing the consequences of his adventurism. Legend has it that when in Chertal , Kashas community was being forcefully converted to Islam by some fanatics , then great prophet had issues stern dictates that henceforth all should have equal rights. Today if Hindus are being kidnapped, their daughters being forcefully convert, it is the duly of the STATE to provide security to the Hindus. When some Christians were terrorized in Gungarawala we protested in strongest possible terms. This commission recommends to the government of Sindh to install secrete CCTV in religious places belonging to the minority community and those cameras should be connected to nearest Police stations. Security of all religious places belonging to the minority community is State responsibility. We recommend a separate legislation to prevent forced conversation of Hindu Girls. The existing criminal Law should be amended to provide safe custody of the girls for a month. Within that period nobody should be allowed to meet her. Additionally we recommend that religious places be in charge of an officer belonging to minority community. Minority community leaders should meet Spl Secretary Home for 2-3 hours on Monday. Henceforth a strong message should be communicated that atrocities will not be tolerated. Hindus should not be forcefully converted. A separate cell is to be created to redress the issue on force conversion. A Quota of 5% reservation of Jobs for Minority is to be implemented. We will meet again in 2-3 months to take a stock of the situation. In the Meeting Riyaz Faiyana complemented that Sindh Police had opened a cell to redress the issue. Sindh Government should start some form of communication with religious leaders. Civil society too should be in the loop. Media should be asked to cover such activity so that Executive & Judiciary could take notice of the menace of Karo Kari. We appreciate the work of UNDP who had done a commendable work for its eradications. This committee expresses deep concern for the incidents of Honor killings in the name of Karo Kari. As regards the prison reforms Ryaz Fatyana said that a recommendation is being sent to Sindh govt through Prison dept. secretary to immediately change Prison Manual. Inmates should be provided with telephone services. Those who are for smaller crime should be provided with opportunity of bail where ever possible. Inmates should be provided with access to lawyers. Games should be allowed in Jails. Television should be allowed in Prison with a large screen. The committee recommends written request for major newspaper to supply of News paper . Additionally dept should provide newspaper stand. Regular medical checks should be carried out in prisons including Hepatitis B and other disease .

PAKISTAN: TWO MINOR HINDU GIRLS MARRIED TO ELDERLY MUSLIM MEN AT GUNPOINT

Source: <http://www.examiner.com/article/hindu-girls-aged-13-14-abducted-converted-one-forcibly-married-to-man-62>

November 30, 2014 1:00 PM MST

Two Hindu girls aged 13 and 14 were abducted at gunpoint Thursday and then married to Muslim men, one of them 62 years old, in southeastern Sindh province in Pakistan.



Veerji Kolhi

The Hindu girls were identified as Baby Mavi, 13 daughter of Venjho Kohli, and Baby Badal, 14, daughter of Shambo Kohli by the All Pakistan Hindu Panchayat. The abduction took place in the dead of night at 3 am at village Rehmatullah Arain in Distract Badin. Mir Muhammad Arain, Khameeso Arain and Meero Dal allegedly entered their hut and abducted the two girls at gunpoint.

The All Pakistan Hindu Panchayat has condemned the abductions and forced marriages. A case with the police called the first information report (F.I.R.) was registered at police station Gulab Leghari. Police official Abdul Rasheed Bhatti said police raided different places but were unable to free the Hindu girls from the custody of an Islamist leader Pir Ayub Jan Sarhandi. On Friday the two abducted Hindu girls were presented at the Sindh High Court Hyderabad by abductor Mir Muhammad Arain. According to the petition filed by Arain's lawyer, the two Hindu girls were "legally" married to Mir Muhammad Arain and Khameeso Arain on November 27 -- the day they were abducted --and were converted to Islam at the home of Pir Sarhandi. The date of birth of one of the grooms Mir Muhammaad Arain is 62 years, according to court documents. Sindh human rights defender Veerji Kohli was at the home of the grieving parents. "The thing that hurts much is that a girl of only 13 age is abducted and has been forcibly married to a 62 year old person," Kolhi said Sunday. "Think for a while what will be the situation of their poor and disadvantaged parents."

Veerji Kolhi, who is a convener with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, himself was kidnapped some years ago for defending the voiceless Hindus.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan more than two dozen Hindu girls are forcibly converted to Islam each month. Hindus like Kolhis, Bheels, Megwars, who mostly work in the fields in southern Sindh, are specially targeted by the Islamists as they are on the lowest rungs of the social ladder

On Friday, the girls could not be presented before the judge for their statements so their parents went back without meeting them. According to the lawyer for the abductors, the two Hindu girls will be presented in the court for their statement on Monday. In most cases, the abducted Hindu girls and girls from other minorities such as Christians are blackmailed and threatened that if they do not tell the judge they left their homes, converted to Islam and got married on their free will, their entire families will get killed.



Pakistan Hindu SEVA (Welfare Trust)
April 5 · 🌐 · 📍

Mr.Amarnath

Protestors from the Hindu community, and their supporters, are seen outside the Karachi Press Club, April 4, 2014, in protest of the recent temple attacks. Organized by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Pakistan Hindu Seva (PHS), Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD), Hindu Schedule Caste Unity, and many others organization rally calls attention to the series of attacks on temples in the southern Sindh province, including Larkana, Hyderabad, and Karachi, which happened within the last month.

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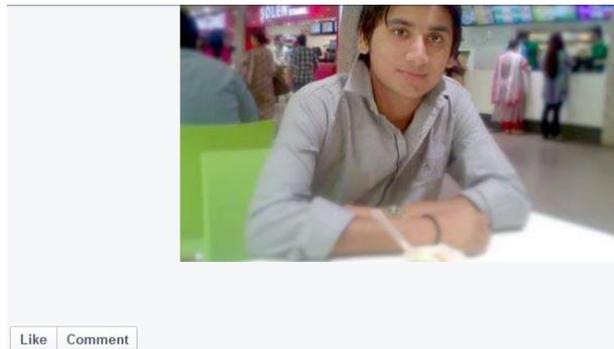
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Pakistan Hindu SEVA (Welfare Trust)
Protestors from the Hindu community, and their supporters, are seen outside the Karachi Press Club, April 4, 2014, in protest of the recent temple attacks. Organized by the Human Rights

Video link: Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=518234841618351&set=vb.140871006021405&type=2&theater>



Like Comment

Pakistan Hindu SEVA (Welfare Trust)
Appeal to the Statesman of Pakistan"
it's an appeal by the parents of Kamlesh Kumar Meghwar student of MUET Jamshoro and permanent resident of village Guwaran, Deeple; who has been abducted by some unknown person on 27 November from Jamshoro Society Phase-2, that their child be retrieved to them. They are not in any position to do anything for him. His mother is in the state of unconsciousness since last 3 days.
Government of Pakistan under the act of Minority Right is responsible for the preservation of rights and security of minorities in Pakistan.
Like · Comment · Share · November 30, 2014

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[37 HINDUS CONVERT TO ISLAM IN MATLI](#)

By [Sameer Mandhro](#)

Published: December 13, 2011

Source: <http://www.hinducurrents.com/articles/share/82503/>

KARACHI: On Saturday, 37 people from seven Hindu families converted to Islam in Matli. They claim that more families will be embracing the religion in the coming weeks.

In the last 22 months, around 93 families from the Bheel community ie Dalits or untouchables, approached the Bait-us-Salam Madrassa in Matli to convert. Most of these people work as farmers and are from Badin, Tando Muhammad Khan, Mirpurkhas or

Sanghar. “We were neither Muslim nor Hindu,” said a newly converted Abdullah Shaikh. “We had no knowledge of our religion. I haven’t even seen our sacred book and don’t even know what it’s called.” He added that Muslims and Hindus both usually stay away from them and their attitude was humiliating.

“I am happy to convert,” he said. “No one forced me to do this. My children will offer their prayers proudly and will not be discriminated against.” He told *The Express Tribune* that he was a farmer and had eight children. “We live comfortably,” he said. “My maternal cousin converted to Islam a few months ago and it really inspired me to do the same.”

Another new convert Khan Muhammad, 45, said that no one in his family had converted to Islam. It is commonly believed that these people convert as they are unable to pay the debts they owe to their landlords. As the debts keep mounting, the landlords exploit them and force them to work on their lands as bonded labour. He admitted that he owed Rs60,000 in debt and the seminary had paid it off. While talking to *The Express Tribune* about religion and tradition, he said that his brother and sister-in-law had asked a Muslim cleric to perform their Nikkah some 40 years ago because they did not know what religious norms they were supposed to follow.

Maulana Muhammad Mushtaque Magsi from the Bait-us-Salam Madrassa confirmed that 93 families had indeed converted to Islam in the last 22 months. “Some students and converts managed to convince others to follow suit,” he said. “A few people also come here because they are in debt or fed up with life. We do not force anyone to convert.”

While talking to *The Express Tribune* about how they helped the converts settle into their new lives, Maulana Magsi said that in order to help with the transition, the converts were asked to live in a colony belonging to the seminary for four to five months. He added that they were given food, medicine, Islamic education and some money when they left the seminary.

“We do face some problems because of the landlords,” he said. “They don’t want the farmers to convert and believe that we are from some banned outfit or receive financial support from abroad.” Magsi added that they did not have a hidden agenda and were only trying to help.

Bait-us-Salam patron Haji Bashir Kambho said that they had paid Rs311,000 for the seven families on Saturday.

He added that the landlords had refused to let them go without the money. “I think some of the families converted to Islam because of their debts but do not think all of them had the same intentions,” he said. “The discrimination they faced has something to do with it too. They were not given respect among Hindus or Muslims.”

[FLEEING PAK HINDUS NARRATE HORRIFYING TALES](#)

TNN | Aug 27, 2012, 04.17AM IST

Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Fleeing-Pak-Hindus-narrate-horrifying-tales/articleshow/15790628.cms?referral=PM>

Jodhpur/JAIPUR: As the exodus of Hindus from Pakistan continues, some families that arrived in Jodhpur and nearby areas have narrated horrifying tales about atrocities committed on them by their landlords or employers.

They say that they were facing a situation in which they had to either flee Pakistan or get killed. They also say that Pakistan has adopted a 'policy of discouragement' for those Hindu families that want to leave for India. All possible efforts are being made to keep these people there as they are labourers who can be bullied and forced to work on meager wages.

This trick of Pakistan is now showing results. Hindu Singh Sodha, president of Seemant Lok Sangathan, which is working for these displaced Hindus to get their rights in India, said that the number of Hindus coming via Thar Express was 400 two weeks ago, which plummeted to 10 in the last week's arrival of the Thar Express.

Reluram, a resident of Samad district in Pakistan, came to Jodhpur with his seven relatives. His brother Mahendra Mal, a driver, sought salary from his employer, an influential man. "He was tied up in iron chains and then beaten up severely for two days resulting in his death. When we approached the police, we were harassed. Fifteen of our relatives are still stuck in Pakistan, desperately wanting to migrate to India," said Reluram.

Fourteen-year-old Manisha Kumar, who used to live in Northern Sindh's Jacobabad, was abducted on August 7. When her father Rawat Mal, an iron trader, went to police, he was first humiliated and literally thrown out. Finally he filed a habeas corpus petition in the Sindh High Court. The police then produced Manisha in the court, but she was no more a Hindu unmarried girl. The police claimed that she had changed her religion and married on her will. She testified in the court, "I want to live with my husband Murtaza".

The prosecution argued that she was a minor, but the police, which was in cahoots with the abductors, proved in the court that she was 16 years through forged documents.

"A distraught Rawat Mal, after losing his daughter, has lost all interest in continuing in Pakistan", says Rakesh Lakhani, an activist, who is devoted to the cause of Pakistani Hindus.

The atrocities on Hindus in Pakistan have no bounds. "They hardly have any choice. Either they convert to Islam and live a comparatively better life or continue to wait for their turn of persecution", added Lakhani.

"Our women are not safe, our profession and trades are not safe and also our properties are not safe. For every facility or right, we have to grease the palms of the authorities. Even then there is no guarantee that the facility will last long," said Mohan Ram from Sanghar district of Sindh, who lost his agricultural land to the influential ones after denied water and fertilizers.

Activists say that several Hindu families are desperate to arrive in Rajasthan through Thar Express. But unwilling to let them go so easily, the Pakistan has now resorted to, what can be termed as a "Policy of Discouragement".

Hindu Singh Sodha said that the people there are ready to leave for India en mass with their entire family, but the Pakistani authorities are not issuing visas to the entire family. "In such a condition, some of the family members make their way to India and remaining wait there for their turn of visa," Sodha said.

"But now, making the things further worse for these hapless Hindu families, Pakistan has made it mandatory to give an undertaking to the immigration officials that they will come back", Sodha informed.

Rajnath Singh wants Centre to intervene

Senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh had recently raised the issue of Hindu migrants from Pakistan and the atrocities faced by the community in that country. He had highlighted the issue in Lok Sabha urging the Union government to take up their issues. Singh is also in touch with the organizations fighting for the welfare of the migrant Hindus. "I am collecting data about the number of Hindu migrants coming to India and their settlements back in India," he told TOI. He said that there were reports about not only forced conversions in Pakistan but also cases of atrocity.

"Centre should include the matter in the list of bilateral meetings and it should be discussed at the foreign ministers' level," he added. He said that he will raise the issue at the party forum too and request BJP leadership to take up the issue.

HINDUS NO MORE SAFE AT HOME

Source: <http://www.hinducurrents.com/articles/share/80774/>

Three Hindus - Dr Ajeet Kumar, Naresh Kumar and Ashok Kumar - were gunned down in Chak town of Shikarpur district in Upper Sindh on November 7 in an armed attack. According to media reports, they were punished because they intervened on behalf of two young men of their community who had been charged with criminally assaulting a Muslim girl. A Muslim cleric asked the Bhayo tribesmen to attack them, reports say.

Following the final rites of three men, the Hindu community across the province shut their businesses in protest and announced three days of mourning. "This is not first such incident. There has been an increase in faith-based violence in the country especially in Sindh in the last few years," said Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, former parliamentarian and head of Pakistan Hindu Council (PHC). "The government has completely failed to protect minorities especially Hindus and this is why the minorities are vulnerable to religious exploitation."

Last year in June, statues of Hindu gods in temples of Tharparkar district - where 55 percent of the populations is Hindu - were desecrated, angering the Hindu community across the world

Hindus are believed to be the largest religious minority of the country with a population of 2.7 million, according to the 1998 census. Most of them live in Sindh. Minority rights groups say that the kidnapping of Hindus and their forced conversion to Islam is rampant and unchecked in Pakistan. This was corroborated by the Senate's Standing Committee on

Minorities' Affairs (SSCMA) in a meeting held in October last year. It expressed concerns over abduction and forcible conversion of Hindus girls to Islam in Sindh.

"During the last two years, around 29 men from only Kandkhot area have been kidnapped and several women forced to convert to Islam," Pitanber Sewani, a minority MPA from Sindh, said. He said some extremists were using the name of religion to attack minority communities.

"Hate speech and violence against the Hindus community has continued unchecked for the last several years," a civil society activist said. "Often in Friday prayers, clerics call the Hindu community agents of India."

On September 8, more than two dozen armed men hailing from the Kalhoro tribe raided a Hindu neighbourhood in Pannu Aqil and attacked and robbed their property.

Last year in June, statues of Hindu gods in temples of Tharparkar district - where 55 percent of the populations is Hindu - were desecrated, angering the Hindu community across the world. Such incidents occur in Sindh on a regular basis.

In some areas, Taliban militants told local Hindus and Sikhs to pay jazyia or leave

Members of the Hindu community said many of them had migrated to India or other countries during a particularly difficult period before 1999, Vankwani said, but after that the situation improved. "The recent events have made the lives of people belonging to different minority communities miserable, and they are being compelled to abandon the country once again."

Hindu leaders said that Sindhi Hindus of Umerkot, Tharparkar and Sanghar - the districts with large Hindu populations - used to celebrate the colourful festival of Holi on a massive scale until 2009. On March 11, 2009, an angry mob attacked Hindus celebrating Holi because they said some of their signs and slogans were sacrilegious.

More than 1,000 members of the Hindu community, mostly from Sindh and Balochistan, have migrated to India and other countries this year, owing to worsening law and order and threats to their families, Hindu organisations claim. Ram Singh Sodho, a Hindu member of Sindh Assembly, is among these asylum seekers. He resigned from his seat and took refuge in India after he received threats from extremist groups. "Members of our community are migrating to India and other countries because they think no one accepts them in the Pakistani society," said a Hindu journalist.

The situation of Hindus in Balochistan is no different from Sindh. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's Balochistan chapter released a report in September that documents how minorities in the province, especially Hindus, are increasingly being kidnapped for ransom, forced to convert to Islam, and persecuted to such an extent that Hindu families even fear sending their children to school.

At least four Hindu traders have been kidnapped in the past month in Balochistan

At least four Hindu traders have been kidnapped in the past month in Balochistan. On November 4, a Hindu trader, Basant Laal, was abducted from Saryab Road, Quetta. On same day, armed men looted several shops belonging to the Hindu community in Dadhar area. Seth Ado Mal, another Hindu trader, was shot dead in Quetta on September 4.

One senator informed the SSCMA that around 500 Hindus families from Balochistan only have migrated to India for fear of abduction or threats to the lives of their family members. "We have been living with Baloch tribesmen for several centuries, but now, a sense of insecurity is widespread among our Hindu community," said Amar Laal, a Hindu political activist. He said it was a conspiracy to malign Baloch traditions and secular politics.

The situation in the militancy-hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and the tribal areas is the worst. In some areas, Taliban militants issued ultimatums to local Hindus and Sikhs: pay "jazy" (protection money) or leave. Hundreds of Hindu and Sikh families have left for other parts of the country, or India.

"We are living under the fear of the Taliban groups who warned us to convert or leave the area," said a Hindu trader in Khyber Agency. Militant groups didn't allow local Hindus in Kurram, Hangu, Orakzai and Kohat to perform the last rites of their dead at the Shamshan Ghat and they had to carry their dead to Attock for cremation, news reports said.

Dr Araish Kumar, a Hindu member of National Assembly hailing from Buner, said that threats had made lives of minorities miserable in tribal areas, especially in Orakzai and Khyber agencies. Taliban groups had not harassed local Sikhs in Swat and Buner during their influence in the region, he said.

"Minorities leaders in the parliament are simply representing their political parties and not the minorities and their issues," said Kumar. "The dire economic conditions in the Pashtun belt, especially in settled districts of KP like Mardan, have led to kidnapping and other abuse of the minority Hindus."

Abduction for ransom and various forms of discrimination against Hindus are also seen in Punjab. Last year in June, the demolition of a temple adjacent to a Shamshan Ghat in Rawalpindi triggered protests by the Hindu and Sikh communities.

Textbooks in Pakistani schools foster hatred and intolerance of minorities, especially for Hindus, civil society activists say. Teachers view them as "enemies of Islam". This is also corroborated by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in its recent report.

Human rights groups say that there is an urgent need to weed out discriminatory provisions from laws and no instance of incitement to violence against minorities must go unpunished.

Updated: February 15, 2013 11:23 IST

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/kafirs-there-pakistanis-here/article4415355.ece>

The Hindu Lost out: A makeshift existence. Photo: Mahim Pratap Singh

Though having crossed over to India to escape persecution, the woes of Hindu families from Pakistan's Sindh province, now settled in Rajasthan, are yet to be over



Random epiphanies can often lead people out of their homelands and across borders, where they are doomed to spend their lives in gloomy tent house settlements. For Chetan Bheel, a burly, middle-aged man from Pakistan's Sindh province, that epiphany came during his last visit to Jodhpur, when he went to visit a well-to-do relative. The man was sitting in his courtyard and beside him was his pet dog sitting on a chair, says Chetan. "On seeing me, he did not shoo his dog off the chair but instead asked his servant to bring another chair for me to sit on."

That was when he realised that "pet dogs are treated better in India than Hindus are in Sindh".

So last year, Chetan, along with his family and another 166 people, decided to leave Sindh and move to India, "the land of our ancestors", for a life of dignity. The 171 Hindus that arrived in Jodhpur last September comprised the single largest group to have crossed over since the fencing of the Indo-Pak border.

"But now my people curse me for leading them here. 'We left our homes and came here on your advice, now it rains and we are left facing this bitter winter out in the open', they say," rues Chetan, adding, "There they used to call us all *kafirs*, and here we are ostracised for being Pakistanis." There are five major and several other smaller settlements of Pakistani Hindu immigrants in Jodhpur and about 7,000 Hindus continue to live as asylum seekers all across the State. While spending harsh desert winters under the open sky and sleeping out the nights on wet ground make for extremely inhuman living conditions, for the 171 Pakistani Hindus, cramped in a small cluster of makeshift tents on the outskirts of Jodhpur, it is just another chapter in the story of their collective misery. At this point, the one thing they are concerned about is to get the "refugee status" from the Government of India. "Both the Centre and the State government are absolutely indifferent to their plight. All they are demanding is to be declared refugees but the government is shying away because then it will have to provide them with basic facilities like food and shelter," says Hindu Singh Sodha of the Seemant Lok Sangathan, which has been working with Hindu immigrants from Pakistan.

Unlike other refugees living in India, these people have not crossed over to the country illegally but have visas and passports, points out Mr. Sodha. He feels that the indifference might have stemmed from the fact that the asylum seekers are Bhil tribals with little or no representation in the government or the bureaucracy. "Of late, members of castes like Jats

and Malis have also started coming over. Perhaps that will make the government take notice,” he adds.

Four years ago, the Rajasthan government had constituted a high-level committee to address the lingering issue of the Pakistani asylum seekers. However, Mr. Sodha, who is also on the committee, says the panel has not met even once. Earlier, people used to cross over via Attari along the Wagah border but since 2006, the Thar Express, an international train service connecting Jodhpur to Karachi, has been the preferred mode of transport for those seeking entry into India. “Going through the Punjab border used to be a tormenting endeavour. Punjabi soldiers on the Pakistan side used to abuse us and call us *kafirs* for travelling to India. But Sindhi officers do not care as long as they get their share of bribes and cuts from the ticket prices,” says Gowardhan, who came to Jodhpur five years ago. Till a few years ago, people came to India on a visitor's visa but with visa restrictions getting tougher, the pilgrim visa has emerged as a surer way to book a berth aboard the Thar Express. Getting a pilgrim visa is easier, especially in view of the ongoing *kumbh mela*.

Getting tickets to board the Thar Express, however, is also a challenge. “The journey from Karachi to Bhagat ki Kothi station in Jodhpur costs a little over Rs. 400 but when authorities see groups of people desperate to cross over, they charge much more. We paid Rs. 700 each for 171 tickets,” says Chetan. Once they are here, most of them stay in Jodhpur; but many also fan out to remote villages spread across districts of western Rajasthan.

“We originally belong to Jaisalmer but during the 1960s drought, our families crossed over to Sindh in search of labour and settled there. For us, it was easier to go to Sindh than to Gujarat because of the distance. Also the border used to be very porous then,” says Premchand, who crossed over 10 years ago.

“In the 70s, we were given identity cards under the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto government. It was all good till the Babri masjid demolition in India, after which things took a turn for the worse and we realised we were in the danger of being persecuted,” he says.

Interviews with the asylum seekers suggest the Hindu minorities in Sindh have been living under the shadow of segregation and persecution on religious grounds. People said the harassment was manifested in Hindu children being discriminated against in government schools, Hindu residents not being allowed to buy property and bullied into leaving their establishments among others.

HINDUS ARE KAFIRS IN PAKISTAN

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Written by The Editorial Team

Source: <http://voi.org/book-reviews/editorial-hindus-are-kafirs-in-pakistan>

The Editorial Team

The plight of Hindus in Pakistan is a matter of grave concerns. While the Hindus who constitute a microscopic minority in Pakistan (around 1.6%) are daily subjected to persecution of every kind including forcible conversions, abduction, forcible marriages, attack on property and lives, there is little effort to bring their condition into the focus of world community. Hindus are treated with contempt and in most inhuman manner. The

result is that a large number of Hindus is crossing borders to India from Pakistan to save their life and dignity. In Pakistan, there is no crime if a Hindu is treated as 'Kafir' as per Islamic law and subjected to the kind of treatment that is prescribed for a 'Kafir'. Premchand, a social worker from Sanghar in Sindh in Pakistan was among the six members of the Youth Parliament killed in the recent plane crash. Friends who identified Premchand's body were quoted by news reports as saying that the coffin came marked 'kafir'. He was one of the 152 passengers killed in plane crash in Islamabad. The coffin of Premchand -was labelled 'kafir' (non-believer).

The plight of Hindus in Pakistan is a matter of grave concerns. While the Hindus who constitute a microscopic minority in Pakistan (around 1.6%) are daily subjected to persecution of every kind including forcible conversions, abduction, forcible marriages, attack on property and lives, there is little effort to bring their condition into the focus of world community. Hindus are treated with contempt and in most inhuman manner. The result is that a large number of Hindus is crossing borders to India from Pakistan to save their life and dignity. In Pakistan, there is no crime if a Hindu is treated as 'Kafir' as per Islamic law and subjected to the kind of treatment that is prescribed for a 'Kafir'.

Premchand, a social worker from Sanghar in Sindh in Pakistan was among the six members of the Youth Parliament killed in the recent plane crash. Friends who identified Premchand's body were quoted by news reports as saying that the coffin came marked 'kafir'. He was one of the 152 passengers killed in plane crash in Islamabad. The coffin of Premchand -was labelled 'kafir' (non-believer). The word literally means 'infidel' or 'non-believer'. It is seen as an insult heaped on non-Muslims as per Islamic tenets. He could have been marked as Hindu or non-Muslim, but using the word 'kafir' is the worst example of intolerance. As per Times of India report Muneeb Afzal, a member of the Youth Parliament (MYP) said, recalling that the night before the crash he had received greetings from Premchand to mark the 15th of Shabaan. Pouring out the angst felt by his friends, the post on pakistaniat.com adds: "Literally labelling someone's coffin 'kafir' and not even giving them the respect to list their religion by its proper name is a shameful and disgusting way to disrespect the last remains of anyone.

The incident is symptomatic of the condition prevailing in Pakistan. It represents the mindset of Pakistan authorities who have still not come out of the hate campaign launched by Muslim League during partition. For them Hindus are 'Kafirs' and therefore deserve to be treated with contempt. Hindus can be discriminated and even persecuted as a religious duty because they fell under the category of 'kafir' as per Islamic tenets. The civilized world should unitedly reject such mindset and act against such kinds of discriminations.

Christians and other minorities in Pakistan are bolting away from the predominantly Muslim nation by the "thousands" as Islamabad ignores harassment at the hands of Islamic extremists, reports *Asia Times*.

"Thousands of Christians, Ahmadis, and Hindus are fleeing as the government turns a blind eye to Islamic groups' harassment of other faiths and beliefs; even atheists have now gone quiet," notes the news outlet, adding "A closer look at the situation reveals that religious minorities and atheists are at a higher risk than ever."

The report comes soon after U.S. President Donald Trump's administration placed Pakistan on a U.S. watchlist for countries of "particular concern"

over “severe violations of religious freedom” after the commander-in-chief blasted Islamabad for harboring jihadists.

“This is only going to get worse,” Ibn Abdur Rehman, secretary-general of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, told *Asia Times*, referring to the persecution of religious minorities. “The state has surrendered to the radical Islamists and plans on gradually taking away every last bit of freedom from its citizens.”

Pakistan reportedly uses its controversial anti-blasphemy law, which carries a harsh sentence of life in prison or death, to target religious minorities, namely Christians. In 2017, a judge in the Islamabad High Court decreed that “blasphemers are terrorists,” reports *Asia Times*.

“Islamabad’s capitulation to the radical Islamist mob has endangered the Ahmadiyya [Muslim] community, which has been the target of death threats made openly since the party besieged the capital a few months ago,” it adds.

Asia Times learned from Pakistani Senator Ramesh Kumar that “around 5,000 Hindus leave Pakistan every year” because of religious persecution.

“This includes forced marriages and kidnapping for ransom, as well as attacks on Hindu temples,” notes the news outlet.

Pakistan and the Open Doors group also accuse “Hindu extremists” in India of persecution against Muslims and Christians. Indian and Pakistan are regional rivals.

Despite adding Pakistan to the U.S. “Special Watch List,” the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) argues that the Trump administration’s move “does not go nearly far enough,” reports *Newsmax*.

“While the Trump administration earlier this year put Pakistan on its ‘Special Watch List’ for countries that ‘engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom, it stopped short of slapping Pakistan with the much more serious Country of Particular Concern designation (CPC),” it reports, citing USCIRF.

As mandated by law, the U.S. Secretary of State deems a nation as a Country of Particular Concern when it is guilty of “particularly severe violations of religious freedom, including torture or inhuman treatment.”

“USCIRF, an independent U.S. federal government commission dedicated to defending global religious freedom, has been pushing the State Department to designate Pakistan a Country of Particular Concern for 15 years,” notes *Newsmax*.

“Given the strong stance that President Trump has taken on Pakistan recently,” USCIRF chairman Daniel Mark reportedly said, “the failure to designate Pakistan as a CPC this year comes as a surprise and disappointment.”

Pakistan has also begun to target atheists in the country. An unnamed atheist who organizes underground meetings for local skeptics and appeared in the BBC documentary *Pakistan’s Secret Atheists* told *Asia Times*:

After the social media crackdown, many of us deactivated our profiles fearing abduction, especially after secular bloggers were abducted in January last year. But there’s also a reluctance among atheists about meeting up at homes. Our homes and the internet used to be our safe spaces to share ideas, but even those have been taken away from us.

Nevertheless, the news outlet acknowledges, “While local atheists can pass off as Muslims – if that is their birth religion in Pakistan, Hindus and Christians are more visible targets [for jihadists].”

THE STATE OF PAKISTAN’S HINDUS

NOVEMBER 19, 2017 BY KIRAN WALI

Remember Jinnah’s promise?

The plight of Pakistan’s Hindus is not an unknown thing. It’s been covered by both local and international media from time to time. Sometime ago, the very well-known Aljazeera covered the story of Pakistan’s Hindu community; reporting it in following words:

“Many Pakistani Hindus flee to India to escape religious persecution, only to find even more hardship.”

The report talked about those Hindus who left Pakistan to lead their lives in India hoping that life would be easier for them in a Hindu-majority country only to be welcomed by more adversities. In words of one of the migrants:

“We don’t live like humans [in India]”

The plight of these people is not only hurtful and a matter of global shame for Pakistan but also an embarrassing reminder that our state has failed to protect the rights of our minorities, the promise that was made to them when Pakistan came into being.

This painful story reminded me of my own experience of interacting with the youth of our Hindu community sometime back in an inter-faith harmony camp. They shared how their girls had been abducted and converted to Islam and made to marry Muslim men forcefully without their will. Most of the times, it were the so-called religious figures of the locality that were involved in such crimes. That is where the greatest irony lies, because if we talk about Islam, it nowhere teaches to impose your beliefs on others:

“There is no compulsion in religion.” ~ Al-Quran

Another teen told:

“Whenever there is a cricket match between India and Pakistan, my Muslim acquaintances assume that I must be supporting India because I am a Hindu. It hurts to hear such comments. I am a Pakistani, not an Indian.”

In the camp, I had witnessed the same Hindu youth expressing their love for their land despite all that they have to suffer in their lives only because they are Hindus. It literally made my heart cry to hear them chant ‘Pakistan Zindabad’ with such zeal and enthusiasm even when they are not treated so well in their own Pakistan.

Sharing their practices of inter-faith harmony, they told how their women discontinue wearing sindoor during Muharram – some of them even wear black clothes — to show their respect for the month and be part of the Muslim community’s mourning. What a beautiful act of co-existence that deserves nothing else but praises and appreciation!

A short camp promoting inter-faith harmony gave them so much of love and respect that actually made them feel equal citizens of the country, to such an extent that one of them expressed his delight in the following words:

“We feel so good here. We do not feel neglected or discriminated. We wish to be treated in the same way in our country where no person is looked down upon based on their religious beliefs.”

These Hindu participants of the camp mostly belonged to the rural areas of interior Sindh. The ones living in urban areas like Karachi have comparatively far better stories to tell where they even blog about being happy and proud Pakistanis. Their stories give some hope that things can be made better for the rest as well. But of course, it requires effort, willingness and sincerity by the state to make the lives of its citizens prosperous.

Steps like the recent approval of Hindu Marriage Bill prove that the state can indeed work for the prosperity of its minorities though it is unfortunate that it still took us seven decades to come up with such a bill.

Minorities of any country are significant in making their societies more inclusive and tolerant where they bring colours of co-existence in the countries they live in. Pakistan is yet to come to the point where it can be called a completely inclusive society. But it is not unachievable.

There are also other groups of minorities that have their own grievances among which, the Hindus who are the biggest minority of Pakistan are still facing miseries after decades of Pakistan's creation which should be a matter of great worry. Pakistan itself was created because a group of people with a common religious belief were discriminated against and kept deprived of equal rights based on religion only. Hence, Pakistan was never meant to be repeating the same mistake with its own people. Pakistan was meant to be better, and it has to be better. For what was promised 70 years ago when Jinnah said “We are all citizens, and equal citizens, of one State” must not remain unfulfilled. It is the responsibility of the state to protect the rights of its citizens, which also means working hard to keep Pakistan from becoming anything closer to a hardliner state. After all, letting its citizens leave the country because of persecutions should be the last thing any inclusive country should be tolerating.

INDIA'S 'PEOPLE OF NOWHERE'

Thousands of Hindus from Pakistan have fled to India, but face high barriers to citizenship and a decent life.

by Showkat Shafi

21 JUN 2013

Jodhpur, Rajasthan- India and Pakistan won their independence in 1947, but the year also left deep scars by leaving hundreds of thousands without a nation to call their own.

Millions of people migrated and fled their homes during the partition that led to the formation of the two countries. Even after six decades of independence religious minorities, mostly Hindus, have been fleeing [Pakistan](#) and migrating to India, claiming harassment. Some

left for better economic opportunities. Most of the families have stationed themselves in India's western state of Rajasthan, which borders Pakistan.

For Halmal Bheel, 54, who had migrated in 2000, settling down in [India](#) has been tough. "This is our land, and we are not refugees here," he said. "My father migrated to Pakistan, but our ancestral land and the remains of our old house are still here. So it really hurts when someone calls us refugees or Pakistanis."

Hindu Singh Sodha, an activist working with Hindu immigrants from Pakistan, said "nobody is bothered about plight of these people. Both central and state government prefer to ignore their situation ... The only thing these people have been demanding is the grant of a refugee status. The government does not want to take the ownership, so as to avoid the provision of basic facilities like food and shelter to the immigrants."

The Indian government has toughened the requirements to attain citizenship: migrants must now live in the country for seven years before being eligible to become a citizen, up from five years; and the application fee for citizenship has greatly increased.

And the places where these immigrants live often lack basic necessities like water, good food and electricity. "It is very hard to live in such conditions. We do not get cooking gas connections, electricity connections, and cannot even apply for a driving license. The basic human needs are also not provided to us," said Gordhan Bheel. "All we want is either a refugee status or grant of Indian citizenship."

Khushala Ram, 50, who came to India in 2009 on a pilgrim visa and has remained in the country, said: "I will never go back. I came with the hope that the Indian government will accept us with open hearts, but I do not know why they have been treating us as Pakistanis. We are Indians who have come back home."

Sodha, the activist, said the refugees "have not illegally entered the country, as they own valid passport and visas. Most of those who have come to seek shelters are Bheel tribals with little representation in the government or bureaucracy. Not just poor come from Pakistan, but also some rich business-class people arrive having money and bureaucratic contacts [and] end up getting citizenship easily. It is all about money."



The asylum seekers, many of whom live in dire poverty, often identify with India - not Pakistan - as their country. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Unhygienic conditions in these temporary living spaces often lead to the spread of epidemic diseases. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Jodhpur, a city in India's western Rajasthan state, is home to thousands of Pakistani immigrants. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



In India the migrants are often ostracised and labelled as Pakistanis. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



They have little access to water, good food, electricity and other essential amenities. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



These refugees often live in makeshift homes to bear the harsh desert climate of Rajasthan. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Migrants use pilgrims' visas to enter India, with no intention of returning to Pakistan. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



There are many Pakistani-Hindu immigrant settlements in Jodhpur, with more than 7,000 people living without citizenship from any country. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Maha Kumbha Mela, a Hindu pilgrimage, and other ceremonies open opportunities for these immigrants to obtain a visa. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



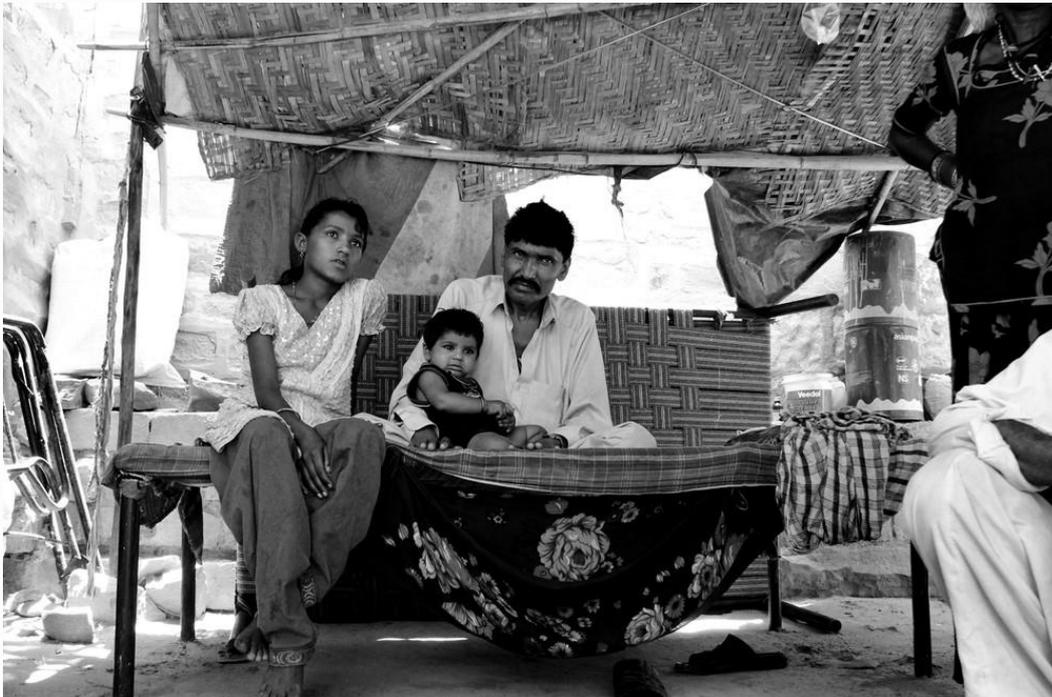
The pre-requisite fee for applying for citizenship has been greatly increased, making it very difficult for them to obtain Indian citizenship. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Many mothers give birth to children in makeshift homes due to a lack of available medical facilities. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



The migrants consider themselves "people of nowhere": they have left Pakistan for India, in search of a home that isn't accepting them. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



These immigrants aren't given refugee status, and obtaining Indian citizenship often seems nearly impossible. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



The minimum time a migrant must live in India before attaining citizenship has been increased from five years to seven years. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Some immigrants have been waiting for more than a decade to get Indian citizenship. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA



Although living conditions are grim for these immigrants, they are hopeful for a better future. SHOWKAT SHAFI/AL JAZEERA

MODERN SLAVES

Jan 03 2017

'Modern slaves': In south Pak, Hindu girls are snatched away for debt payment



In this photo taken on December 1, Pakistani Hindu Jeevti sits in her husband's house in Pyaro Lundh, Pakistan. (AP)

The girl called Jeevti was just 14 when she taken from her family in the night to be married off to a man who says her family owed him \$1,000.

Her mother, Ameri Kashi Kohli, is sure that her daughter paid the price for a never-ending debt.

Ameri says she and her husband borrowed roughly \$500 when they first began to work on the land, but she throws up her hands and says the debt was repaid.

It's a familiar story in southern Pakistan: Small loans balloon into impossible debts, bills multiply, payments are never deducted.

In this world, women such as Ameri and her young daughter are treated as property: taken as payment for a debt, to settle disputes, or as revenge if a landowner wants to punish his worker. Sometimes parents, burdened by an unforgiving debt, even offer their daughters as payment.



In this photo taken December 1, Ameri Kashi Kolhi shows the picture of her daughter Jeevi, right, in Payro Lundh, Pakistan. (AP)

The women are like trophies to the men. They choose the prettiest, the young and pliable. Sometimes they take them as second wives to look after their homes. Sometimes they use them as prostitutes to earn money. Sometimes they take them simply because they can.

“I went to the police and to the court. But no one is listening to us,” says Ameri, who is Hindu. She says the land manager made her daughter convert to Islam and took the girl as his second wife. “They told us, ‘Your daughter has committed to Islam and you can’t get her back.’”

More than 2 million Pakistanis live as “modern slaves,” according to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, which ranks Pakistan in the top three offending countries that still enslave people, some as farm workers, others at brick kilns or as household staff. Sometimes the workers are beaten or chained to keep them from fleeing.

“They have no rights, and their women and girls are the most vulnerable,” says Ghulam Hayder, whose Green Rural Development Organization works to free Pakistan’s bonded labourers. read full on <http://www.hindustantimes.com/>

VEERU KOHLI: A BONDED LABOURER WHO TOOK ON THE BHUTTOS

Veeru Kohli now works to eradicate this form of slavery in Pakistan, home to about two million bonded labourers. by Faras Ghani 13 Apr 2017

Azad Nagar, Pakistan - The car made its way down the narrow, winding, mostly unpaved road towards Azad Nagar - a settlement on the outskirts of the southern Pakistani city of Hyderabad that is inhabited by freed bonded labourers.

Inside was Veeru Kohli, a former bonded agricultural labourer who is now an activist working for the eradication of this form of slavery.

Almost 45.8 million people are trapped in bonded labour across the world and [Pakistan](#) is home to more than two million of them, according to the Global Slavery Index.

Kohli is a familiar face in Azad Nagar, which means land of the free. More than 100 families currently live here in thatched roof houses that lack electricity and running water. A small temple serves as a place of worship for the mostly Hindu residents.

Kohli does not know her age but appears to be around 50 years old. She is wearing a bright pink ghagra and choli - skirt and blouse - with a black shawl draped over her shoulders and a vermilion on her forehead, a practice followed by Hindu women.

She vividly recalls how the contractor at the farm in Umerkot, around 150km from here, where she worked as a bonded labour would beat up her children.

"Life was hell back then," she says. "We worked for a feudal lord and never got to see any sort of payment for all our efforts."



Soomri, left, lost her husband after he was kidnapped and beaten to death by the feudal lord. Sumar, right, is a hindu scholar who looks after a small temple in Azad Nagar. 'We just need our children to go to school and be educated, that's all we ask for,' he said [Faras Ghani/Al Jazeera]

"There was no accountability, sometimes my children used to eat, other times there was no food. We would get random vegetables from the jungle and eat them raw," she explains as she sits on a charpai, or cot, surrounded by other women.

The business of slavery

Bonded labour was outlawed in Pakistan in 1992, but it is still widespread in brick kilns, as well as in the agriculture, mining and fishing sectors.

The bonded labourers become trapped after taking out a small loan - often to pay for medical care or a wedding. As the loan accrues interest - often at exorbitant rates - they are unable to pay it back and future generations of their family remain enslaved.

"I started working when I had two kids," Kohli says, although she doesn't remember which year that was or how old she was. "We were desperate for money. My children worked with me, cutting grass and picking up cow dung.

"Altogether we were eight families, around 45 people, enslaved by that feudal lord for over two years. In addition to beating up my children, he didn't let me marry off my girls. He didn't let us leave despite repeated requests."



Some of the residents of the settlement make a little money working on nearby farms or

selling buffalo milk [Faras Ghani/Al Jazeera]

Members of religious minorities, underprivileged castes and poor Muslims are especially vulnerable to the system of bonded labour.

"If those feudal lords liked someone's girl, they would summon them and convert them to Islam. How can you change someone's religion like that? But this is what happened there. It's not right but it happened openly," Kohli says, struggling to contain her emotions.

After being enslaved for two years, Kohli finally fled in 1998. She didn't use the bus for fear of being caught - as had happened to some before her - but instead, walked barefoot through the jungle.

She walked for two days, her feet bleeding from the thorns that had become embedded in them, before reaching her brother's home about 50km from there.

With his support and the involvement of the police, she then returned to the feudal lord who had enslaved her to demand that he free the rest of her family.

The real struggle

But, Kohli explains: "After being freed, I realised the real struggle had only just started. My aim was to free as many bonded labourers as I could because, having gone through what they do, I feel the pain and the suffering."

"Unfortunately, those in power are either part of it or turn a blind eye, refusing to accept bonded labour exists in Pakistan," she adds.

Kohli has travelled across Pakistan as part of her campaigning work, for which she was honoured with the Frederick Douglass Freedom Award, named after the African-American former slave and abolitionist and given by the NGO Free the Slaves, in 2009. She was also invited to speak on the issue in neighbouring India.

With the belief that boardroom talks and lectures have limited impact, she decided to enter politics.

"We beg these politicians for small things but never hear back. I hoped to win a seat in the Assembly [Sindh Province] and work for the poor," she says.

"I got death threats and was also offered bribes following that decision, but I stood firm."

She failed to win a seat in the 2013 Assembly but her courage in taking on the then ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in a region where it is well-established inspired many of those looking for a political alternative.



Most of the 150-odd children in Azad Nagar spend their days playing outside as the school there has been shut for the past four months [Faras Ghani/Al Jazeera]

Then last December, she decided to challenge Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, the son of the assassinated former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, in the PPP stronghold of Larkana, in Sindh, about 300km north of Azad Nagar.

Larkana has in the past elected Benazir Bhutto to the National Assembly. It is also the birthplace of the party's founder Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father.

The elections are yet to be held but before Kohli's election campaign could pick up momentum, she decided to withdraw her name.

Limited funding and resources are the main reasons she cites for pulling out of the race.

"I really wanted to stand up against Bilawal and show him that ordinary people have a voice too, but it's unfortunate that fighting against the influential requires a lot of resources," she says.

"Larkana is in a big mess right now. We could've worked to improve the condition of the city. But we're poor, we're labourers and barely have enough to eat. We couldn't carry out the plan we had."

A hero for other women

In Azad Nagar, women come out of their houses to greet Kohli as she walks past. They tell her how much better their lives are now that they are no longer bonded labourers.

The settlement was built with help from a local NGO Green Rural Development Organization (GRDO) and Action Aid in 2006.

With space for 310 families over 4.5 hectares of land, Azad Nagar was planned as a place where freed bonded labourers would live temporarily as they began their new lives. But it has become a permanent home for many of its residents.

"We started with two or three families, we thought they could come here, stay for a bit and then move on to where they would find work," says Ghulam Haider, one of the founding members of GRDO.

"Some families arrive and stay for longer, some even become a permanent fixture. We don't force them to leave. They have found work here on the fields or in the nearby towns. They are happy here and more importantly, they live a free life."

In the middle of the settlement, a small school now lies unused. Of the 150 or so children who live here, only 16 go to school. They attend one that is about 1km away. The other children play in the fields or help their parents with chores.

As we enter the closed school, some children are quickly ushered in to recite the alphabet in English. They smile as they jump from chair to chair.

The older residents of Azad Nagar also seem happy.

"This life is so much better for us. We work on the brick kilns next door and are able to earn some money," say Soomri, who gave just one name. "Earlier, we were kept in bondage literally. My three sons were chained up. The two years we spent there were hell," she adds.

Her face is wrinkled and her hands rough from the work she was made to do as a bonded labourer. On one of her fingers is a wedding ring.

"After we fled, they kidnapped my husband who was later beaten to death," she says. "They wouldn't even let us bury his body."



Most of the residents at Azad Nagar are Hindu. Kasturi, right, demonstrates how the bonded labourers were chained up [Faras Ghani/Al Jazeera]

Sharing tales of misery

Such stories are not uncommon here. But still the women laugh and talk animatedly about what has happened in the settlement since Kohli last visited.

But Kohli cannot stay long. She is on a mission to free some other bonded labourers. So she walks towards the car, stopping at one house to enquire about the wellbeing of those who live there.

"These people are like family to each other," she says. "They share a past full of struggle. But if we stay together, we can form a better future."

Kohli might have withdrawn from the election race but she continues to inspire others to fight for their rights and for a brighter future.

"I tell them to earn an honest living and send their kids to school. There is no fear any more," she reflects.