



## Analyzing Post 9/11 Religious Freedom in Pakistan: A Case Study of Christian Minorities



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**Abstract:** *Christians constitute the most significant minority in Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim nation. After the 9/11 incidents, religious intolerance has surged, mainly targeting religious minorities, in particular the Christian community. This research aims to contextualize this narrative by delving into the increased discrimination and injustice faced by Christians following the United States' global counter-terrorism campaign in 2001. The current state of affairs has become more challenging as the measures taken by the government to address religious extremism have not yielded the desired results. This research sheds light on how the escalating religious intolerance has led to the social exclusion and discrimination of Christian minorities in Pakistan. Despite Constitutional assurances of religious freedom, the government has struggled to provide adequate protection. This study identifies the challenges Christians face and proposes potential solutions by analyzing the past twenty-three years of literature. However, substantial efforts are still required to address the issues of religious freedom and intolerance.*

**Key Words:** Religious Freedom, Minorities, Christians, USCIRF, UDHR

### Introduction

Pakistani society may be defined as having a diverse ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional, and cultural heritage. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan's religious demography is dominated by Muslims. Eighty-five to ninety per cent of the population are Sunni Muslims, ten to fifteen per cent are Shia Muslims, and the rest are non-Muslims. The number of religious minorities since the country's independence. i.e., twenty-five per cent has now dropped to less than three per cent. The decrease in their numbers is due to various factors, such as religious extremism and violence, including discrimination against religious minorities, amongst many others.

The freedom to practice one's religion is crucial for everyone, regardless of where they live. The significance of faith is deeply ingrained in human nature, and it compels us to ponder profound questions about the divine. Without this freedom, we would be unable to live and express ourselves fully. Farr argues that "freedom of religion is the right of every person to believe, express, and act in accordance with their own view of ultimate reality, individually and in society with others, in private and in public." (Farr, 2015). Another explanation is, "Any prohibition on the right to express one's faith or belief must be justified if:

- a) As required by law.
- b) Protection of public safety, law, wellness, or morality is required.

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- c) To ensure that they are enforced in a way that does not significantly limit fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, equality of speech, conscience, and faith are among them. Moreover, states must not use their legal or administrative authority to justify acts that explicitly or implicitly violate religious convictions or practices. Attempts to prosecute people or groups for practising their faith under the pretext of law enforcement are heresy courts, which breach basic fundamental rights” (Hubbard [2017](#)).

Pakistan’s Objective Resolution in 1949 made it an Islamic country with equal rights and freedom from discrimination. However, religion in politics has led to discrimination against religious minorities. The Constitutions of 1956 and 1962 provided better protection for minorities than the 1973 Constitution, which declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims. Non-Muslims cannot hold the positions of President or Prime Minister in Pakistan. Religious minorities have representation but not equal legislative power (Khan, 2017).

During General Zia ulHaq’s rule in Pakistan from 1977-1988, religious intolerance between different faith groups increased due to adding new articles to the Pakistan Penal Code as part of the Islamization process. Even secular political leaders like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto used religion to gain support from religious political parties.

Swett has stated that religious minorities in Pakistan face increasing persecution from the state and militants. She argues that the blasphemy law in Pakistan is a clear violation of human rights, and many people, particularly Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis, are on death row or serving life sentences under this law. Swett also points out that this law is being misused to perpetrate violence against religious minorities. Additionally, the legal restrictions imposed on minorities cause concern (Economist, 2015).

Keeping in view the above discussion, the article aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Contextualize the increased discrimination and injustice faced by Christians in Pakistan following the United States’ global counter-terrorism

campaign in 2001, considering historical factors and the association of Christianity with the West and colonialism.

2. Analyze the impact of escalating religious intolerance on the social exclusion and discrimination experienced by Christian minorities in Pakistan, examining the various forms of violence, such as bombings and targeted killings, and the misuse of blasphemy laws.
3. Assess the effectiveness of government measures in countering religious extremism, protecting religious freedom, and providing adequate security and safeguards for Christians while identifying challenges and proposing potential solutions based on a thorough analysis of literature spanning the past 23 years.

### Theoretical Perspective

The theory of International Relations that best suits this study is the constructivist theory, based on its context. According to Finnemore and Sikkink (2001), studying international relations and social phenomena requires considering the impact of ideas, norms, and identities on them. This Constructivist theory acknowledges that these intangible aspects can impact how individuals and groups interact globally. By understanding the importance of these factors, we can gain a better understanding of the complex forces that contribute to many of the world’s major issues. In this study, the analysis of increased religious intolerance towards Christians in Pakistan after the global war on terrorism highlights the role of ideas and norms in shaping the attitudes and behaviours towards religious minorities. There has been an increase in unfavourable opinions towards Christianity, often attributed to its connection with the Western world and its past involvement in colonialism. The research upholds the Constructivist viewpoint, emphasizing the impact of concepts, convictions, and past accounts on state conduct and communal predispositions.

Furthermore, it delves into the consequences of religious intolerance in Pakistan, which has

resulted in marginalization, bias, and aggression toward the Christian minority. Constructivism in International Relations recognizes that social norms and identities play a significant role in shaping power dynamics. This recognition highlights the potential for social exclusion and discrimination against certain groups, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing these issues. This study will delve into the treatment of religious minorities in Pakistan while utilizing the constructivist theory. This approach will aid in analyzing how ideas, norms, and identities affect the behaviour of individuals and groups towards these minorities. Additionally, the theory will enable us to explore how these factors influence state policies and societal attitudes.

### **Christian Minorities in Pakistan**

It is important to note that a considerable number of Christians belong to the minority population in this country, making up 1.6% of the entire population. However, it is concerning that the number of Christians is declining at an alarming rate due to growing religious intolerance, resulting in many leaving the country. It is worth noting that Karachi has the highest number of Christians, with Lahore and Faisalabad following closely behind. Furthermore, a significant Christian population resides in the Punjab villages and Peshawar city. Unfortunately, these individuals live in constant apprehension due to potential cultural, social, and economic marginalization in Pakistan, as Gregory (2008) pointed out. It's troubling to hear that Christians who live in urban areas and have low-paying jobs in Pakistan face discrimination. They earn some of the lowest incomes in their community and are sometimes derogatorily called "Churhas." It's important to recognize and resolve the unfair treatment and bias they experience.

A priest in charge of a Church in Peshawar stresses that our community is hit by tragedy and violence. Shahbaz Bhatti, a prominent leader and member of the National Assembly, was assassinated because he raised his voice against discrimination and the misuse of the blasphemy law. In the past, false allegations have destroyed

many Christian lives. Militants in the country have also targeted this community (John, 2023).

Many people died due to the deadly attacks in Peshawar. Two suicide bombers detonated their bombs, killing at least eighty-three people after the All Saints Church Peshawar prayer services. This has been considered one of the deadliest attacks on the Christian community (Mughal 2018).

Similarly, in 2013 a mob set fire to almost 200 houses belonging to Christians in Joseph Colony. In 2016, Christians were celebrating Easter Sunday when a suicide bomber in Lahore tore through the parking lot of a popular park, killing at least 72 people and injuring more than 300 more. Ispahani states that the killing of 18 Christian worshippers in a church during a Sunday mass was assumed to be a protest against the US airstrikes in Afghanistan that killed many Jihadis and their families (Ispahani, *Cleansing Pakistan of Minorities* 2013). Similarly, another attack in 2017 killed nine and injured fifty-seven people. Such attacks on religious minorities caused huge embarrassment to the country. Many in this regard have been convicted and punished.

As discussed, the violations against the Christians increased after the 9/11 attack, considering their sentiments high towards the West (Group 2014). There have been many other incidents that have been isolated but have continued for years. The incidents that have been taking place show the pattern of persecution, which can be assumed as planned against the minorities of Pakistan. The Institute of Economics and Peace ranked Pakistan 3<sup>rd</sup> in the terrorism index, including the terrorist attacks carried out against minorities of different countries (Dawn 2014). Even though the whole of Pakistan was affected by the terrorist attacks waged against it, the most affected were the religious minorities, including Shia, Sunni, Christians, and Hindus (Ispahani, *Cleansing Pakistan of minorities* 2013). Pakistani Christians are somewhat the source of anger for the extremist organization due to the foreign policy of the Western countries, particularly after the 9/11 attacks and the US invasion of Afghanistan. These attacks have been directly

related to the war on terrorism in which Pakistan had been on the frontline. This is one of the reasons why the Christian community feels a sense of alienation and belonging. There have also been several cases of rape and many forceful conversions in these minority communities, particularly the Hindu community.

### **Religious Freedom in Islam**

Religious freedom in Islam is a multifaceted topic that requires careful examination. Islam acknowledges and promotes the principles of religious freedom within its teachings (Quran 2:256). The Quran emphasizes the importance of individual choice and accountability in matters of faith. Islamic history also presents examples of societies that respected and protected religious diversity. However, the understanding and implementation of religious freedom within Islamic societies can vary depending on cultural, historical, and political contexts. Interpretations differ on issues such as apostasy and blasphemy laws, and perspectives may vary among Muslim scholars and communities. Ensuring religious freedom for everyone, regardless of their beliefs, requires promoting tolerance, engaging in dialogue, and upholding human rights principles (Finnemore and Sikkink 2001).

From a Western perspective, religious freedom is considered a highly personal and private matter. The government cannot interfere with an individual's religious beliefs or practices. This viewpoint stresses the importance of individual autonomy and the right to practice one's faith without outside disturbances freely. In the Western world, religious freedom is a matter of great importance, viewed as highly personal and private. The government cannot intervene in an individual's religious beliefs or practices, as it emphasizes the significance of individual autonomy and the right to practice one's faith without any external interference. This approach underlines the notion that individuals should be free to pursue their religious beliefs and practices without any hindrance from external forces.

The concept of religious freedom varies significantly across different cultural and religious contexts. In the Muslim world, including Pakistan, religion holds a dual role as

both a public and private matter (Ahmad, 2003). This perspective is rooted in the teachings of Islam, as exemplified by the verse revealed in the Quran, instructing Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to convey the message to non-believers. The verse emphasizes the mutual recognition and acceptance of differing religious beliefs:

“I worship not that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have been wanted to worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your way and to me mine.” Surah al-Kafirun (109:2–6)

This verse reflects the Islamic principle of respecting and allowing for diverse religious beliefs and practices.

Understanding the cultural and religious context is crucial when examining religious freedom in Muslim-majority countries like Pakistan. It requires recognizing that the public expression of religion and individual privacy and belief holds significant importance. To ensure religious freedom in such contexts, it is necessary for governments to strike a balance between respecting religious traditions and safeguarding the rights and freedoms of all individuals, including religious minorities. By acknowledging and upholding these principles, Pakistan can create an environment that respects religious pluralism and protects the rights of all its citizens.

In the Quran, it is clearly stated that it does not have an obligation to choose whom to believe. It is for his own good when one acknowledges the truth, and if one holds to the mistake, it is for his own sake.

“Let there be no compulsion in religion. The right way is indeed clearly distinct from error” (Quran 2:256).

According to Saeed (2017), contemporary Muslim interpreters are gradually promoting a Quranic and Islamic case law approach, which would lead Muslims toward a greater understanding of religious freedom. However, he adds further that some sections in Muslim societies try to raise the same texts to invoke and draw a violent picture of Islam which denies the rights of non-Muslims by not favouring equality. According to them, the idea of religious liberty is

a Western approach and a call for a change of religion which can weaken the foundation of Islam (Saeed, 2017).

As a result, many Islamic countries extensively use political power to regulate religious beliefs. However, The Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) speak extensively on religious freedom, largely based on several Quranic verses and the Prophet's (PBUH) hadiths. Islam is consistent with the principle of religious and faith rights. Identifying that religious freedom is interpreted and practised differently in various countries is also essential. Currently, religious freedom is understood as a situation where each individual, without coercion or sanctions imposed by authorities, including the state or the society, is free to assent to and, within limits, express and act on religious convictions and affiliation in civil and political lives (Pew Research Center [2019](#)).

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

Marshal (2010) considers faith as a matter of natural inherited right. This principle has also been identified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948.

The UDHR encompasses the significance of religious freedom as a fundamental human right. According to Article 18 of the UDHR, every individual is entitled to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to change their religion or belief and to manifest it through teaching, practice, worship, and observance (United Nations, 1948). The inclusion of religious freedom in the UDHR underscores its universal recognition as crucial in protecting individuals' rights to hold and express their religious beliefs without coercion or discrimination. This provision is a cornerstone for international human rights law, influencing subsequent conventions and treaties addressing religious freedom and related issues and promoting tolerance and respect for religious diversity.

By the same logic, Robinson (1950) states that freedom of religion serves as a universal human right principle for everyone on the earth and tries to serve the people as to what their notion should be towards their people and

towards their society. It is, no doubt, the Declaration, which is contributing towards a better human life (Akkad [2012](#)).

Here it becomes important to note that every democratic state guarantees religious and conscience rights. However, some states are getting less democratic regarding freedom of religion. Various studies show that human rights origin is due to the long history of religious minorities (Scheinin, 1948). A look at the past exhibits that the Treaty of Westphalia was also one of the treaties which guaranteed non-Muslim protection.

### **Foundation Stones by Muhammad Ali Jinnah**

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the country's founding father, stressed equality and equal treatment for minorities.

“You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in the State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State ... We are starting with this fundamental principle: that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State. Now, I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal, and you will find that in the course of time, Hindus would cease to be Hindus. Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the state”(Noorani [2012](#)).

Jinnah also said:

“Minorities, to whichever community they may belong, will be safeguarded. Their religion or faith, or belief will be secure. There will be no interference of any kind with their freedom of worship. They will have their protection with regard to their religion, faith, their life, their culture. They will be, in all respects, the citizens of Pakistan without any distinction of caste or creed. They will have their rights and privileges, and no doubt, along with it goes the obligation of citizenship. Therefore, minorities have their responsibilities also, and they will play their part in the affairs of this state. As long as the minorities are loyal to the State and owe true

allegiance and as long as I have any power, they need have no apprehension of any kind” (Jinnah, 1947).

Therefore, it is evident that the founding stones of Pakistan were laid on religious pluralism and human rights. As understood by the above paragraphs, religious extremism is further inflicting heavy damage to democracy and nation-building in Pakistan. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, on December 21, 2013, at a pre-Christmas event in Lahore, stated publicly: “Religious diversity can be strengthened if the nation treats minorities as citizens with equal rights” (The News, 2013).

According to historical accounts, Jinnah, a prominent figure in Pakistan’s history, firmly believed in the separation of religion and state. However, it is unfortunate that his vision was overshadowed during the 1980s and 1990s by the military and bureaucracy’s concentration on defining the religion of the state’s people rather than on nation-building efforts. As a result, Jinnah’s original vision gradually faded away, leaving behind a different reality than he had initially envisioned.

### **Post 9/11 Analysis of Religious Freedom and Intolerance in Pakistan**

The tragic events of 9/11 significantly impacted religious freedom in various parts of the world, including Pakistan. In the aftermath of the global war on terrorism, there has been an increased focus on analyzing the state of religious freedom in Pakistan, particularly for religious minorities. Conflicts have persisted since then, leading to internally and internationally displaced people, decimating vulnerable populations, and rising state-approved discriminatory activities. Pakistan presents one such case where discrimination against minorities has risen tremendously. There is a conflict between religious freedom and freedom of speech, leading to violence between communities.

Every human has the equal right to religious freedom, to affirm their faith, to practice and propagate in allegiance to their beliefs. It is not just a human right but a predominant factor of

national stability. According to Pope Francis, freedom of religion implies:

“The freedom to practice religion as our conscience dictates, both personally and communally. However, religious liberty transcends places of worship and the private domain of individuals and families by its very existence.”(Address of Pope Francis, 2015).

Huntington, as cited by Abrams (1998), asserts that the resurgence of religion in recent times has significantly increased the importance of religious freedom and granted religion a powerful role in politics, both within and among nations. Religion has been used to explain many global events, especially after 2001, such as how Pakistan became a breeding ground for terrorism. The Pakistani government and civil society have launched several policy initiatives to address this issue. General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff, recognizing the need to differentiate between counterterrorism and counter-extremism, acknowledged that the army requires the support of Pakistani society, particularly the youth, to eradicate extremism after years of counter-terrorism measures. General Bajwa explained that a radicalized youth is one who lacks a clear sense of their beliefs and identity, and he is determined to address this issue (Dawn, 2017).

Violent extremism is a complex issue that can manifest in various forms, including religious extremism, anti-government, and right-wing extremism. While religious extremism is often the most prevalent, it is important to note that countering violent extremism programs aims to address all forms of violent extremism. Policymakers worldwide recognize the significance of combating violent extremism, counter-radicalization, and counterterrorism, especially considering the rise of transnational terrorism.

Religious extremists have existed throughout history in various cultures and religions, including Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam. These individuals often distinguish themselves from the mainstream population based on factors such as culture, social acceptance, and language. In Pakistan, there has been a rise in extremist behaviour following the events of 9/11. Religious differences were

already present in the country's society but have been exacerbated since then. Extremist groups have targeted the country using tactics such as bombings and suicide attacks. However, these groups have a flawed understanding of Islam and do not follow its true teachings, as noted by Hussain (2012). Pakistan has faced various challenges since its inception, including problems related to governance, policies, corrupt officials, and extremism. As a fragmented society, it is divided along religious, regional, and national lines. According to the WorldFact Book, almost 184 million people reside in Pakistan based on religious identities (Talbot, 2009).

The distance between the government and religious organizations is one of the reasons for the increasing extremism. Many of these organizations believe that the government is collaborating with anti-Islamist countries, which has created a divide. The Lal Masjid case of 2004 exacerbated the wave of extremism and terrorist activities in the country. This has resulted in further alienation between religious organizations and the government (Ali, 2010). After forming an alliance with the US, Pakistan became a dangerous place, particularly after the events of 9/11. Terrorist groups such as Al-Qaida and the Taliban took refuge in the tribal areas of Pakistan, which offered them an ideal location to wage guerrilla warfare against the government. These areas provided safe havens with caves and mountains where they could hide and evade detection. The region between Pakistan and Afghanistan was an impenetrable fortress for these groups, as noted by Shahzad (2011).

These militants did not refrain from their target activities, the security personnel, or the government. It also targeted the tribesmen who opposed them, civilians, women, children, and minorities. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban joined hands with local extremist religious groups, which worsened the situation. It became evident that these tactics were to disrupt the country's economy and enforce their own interpretation of Islam.

### **The Misuse of Blasphemy Law**

The Supreme Court judgment in Malik Muhammad Mumtaz Qadri vs the State, it was

stated that "The Majority of blasphemy cases are based on false accusations stemming from property issues or other personal or family vendettas rather than genuine instances of blasphemy and they inevitably lead to mob violence against the entire community." The Bishop of Lahore, Alexander John Malik, said that the blasphemy law "is a tool for religious cleansing."

The blasphemy laws were implemented during the British colonial period to reduce religious violence between Hindus and Muslims. These laws were introduced in 1860 under Sections 295, 296, 297, and 298, and in 1927 under Section 295-A. Later, explicit Blasphemy Laws were enforced during Zia Ul-Haq's regime. Currently, in Pakistan, the most used blasphemy laws are Sections 295-A, 295-B, 295-C, and 298-A of the Penal Code. These laws pertain to outraging religious feelings, desecrating the Quran, defiling the name of Prophet Muhammad, and defiling the names of his family, companions, or any of the Caliphs. In 1981, the Federal Shariat Court made the death sentence mandatory for Section 295-C. The current Blasphemy laws that exist under the Pakistan Penal Code are as the following:

- 295. Injuring or defiling a place of worship with the Intent to insult the religion of any class
- 295-A. Deliberate, and malicious acts intended to outrage the religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs.
- 295-B. Defiling, etc., of the Holy Quran
- 295-C. Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of the Holy Prophet (PBUH)
- 296. Disturbing religious assembly
- 298. Uttering words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings
- 298-A. Use of derogatory remarks, etc., in respect of holy personages
- 298-B. Misuse of epithets, descriptions, titles, etc., reserved for certain holy personages or places
- 298-C. Person of the Qadiani group, etc., calling himself a Muslim or preaching or propagating his faith

In 2010, Pakistan committed to upholding the International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR), which aims to safeguard the fundamental freedom of religion. Though initially hesitant, Pakistan was urged by the global community to withdraw its reservations and agree to numerous provisions to protect its minorities. However, the country's blasphemy laws are in conflict with the ICCPR and have contributed to a culture of intolerance and incidents of violence driven by pressure from religious groups. These laws date back to the British colonial era but were made more stringent during the leadership of Zia Ul-Haq. Under section 295C, an individual can be punished for blasphemy without even being given an opportunity to defend themselves. This ambiguity and rigour of the law pose a threat of infringement by non-state actors and have the potential to destabilize the country (Amnesty International, 2016).

As per the report by the Human Rights Commission, the Archbishop of Karachi has brought to light that there are presently twenty-five Christians facing charges of blasphemy. These charges often stem from disputes or false allegations, and it can be challenging to find a lawyer who can take on such cases due to their potential prejudices. It is not unusual for attorneys representing defendants in these cases to receive death threats. In a recent case in Sindh, the defendant was subjected to threats by the clergy during the trial and was consequently relocated to another court. As per the 2013 report by Amnesty International, instances, where the court is subjected to external pressure to deliver a particular verdict can significantly impede the attainment of fair and unbiased trials. One such example is the case of Anjum Sandhu, a 63-year-old principal who was arrested on charges of blasphemy in 2015 and subsequently held in judicial custody at Adyala jail. After a prolonged legal battle, he was eventually acquitted of all charges with honour in 2018. However, despite his acquittal, he and his family continued to face harassment and persecution from their neighbours, which forced them to flee their hometown of Gujranwala and seek refuge in Islamabad. This had a profound impact on their ability to lead a normal life, and they continue to struggle to rebuild their lives amidst the fallout from this ordeal. Since the punishment of

blasphemy is death, this has created an environment in which some people feel they have the right to take the law into their own hands.

The laws relating to blasphemy are probably the most egregious example of the misuse of the law by religious bigots. The laws, according to the US State Department, not only violate internationally accepted rights to freedom of faith and speech, but they have also "encouraged an environment of religious persecution that has led to acts of violence directed at Ahmadis and Christians".

### **Prioritizing Religious Freedom**

It is crucial for Pakistan to prioritize religious freedom in order to create a society that respects human rights and acknowledges the diversity of religious beliefs. Religious minorities, such as Christians, face challenges and discrimination, making it essential for the government and other stakeholders to actively address and prioritize religious freedom. This means taking effective measures to counter religious intolerance and extremism and protecting religious minorities from violence and persecution. It also involves reviewing and amending blasphemy laws to prevent their misuse. Encouraging interfaith dialogue, promoting tolerance, and enhancing educational initiatives that value inclusivity and respect for religious diversity can contribute to creating an environment where religious freedom is valued and protected. Prioritizing religious freedom can help Pakistan become a more inclusive and harmonious society that respects the rights and beliefs of all its citizens.

This study's introductory chapter sheds light on Pakistan's early aspirations of fostering an environment of religious tolerance and safeguarding the rights of minority groups. Nevertheless, as the country traversed 73 years of its existence, it strayed from its initial trajectory, leading to a notable deviation from its founding principles.

Constructive dialogue is essential in promoting interfaith harmony, as previously emphasized. While the Pakistani government has taken some steps towards achieving this goal, more significant measures are critically



necessary. The peaceful coexistence of all citizens is indispensable for the stability and security of the nation, particularly in a democratic state. However, the absence of a strong democratic system has had a negative impact on religious freedom in the country. Conversely, a stable and robust democracy can prevent extremist groups from emerging and protect the nation's security.

It has been observed that the government of Pakistan has made statements with regard to the protection of minority rights. However, there are concerns that these objectives still need to be fully achieved. According to reliable surveys and reports, it appears that religious minorities are being denied basic civil rights, which is a matter of concern and controversy. To address this issue, it is imperative to establish a political and educational system that promotes values of tolerance, equality, and brotherhood.

## **Conclusion**

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To establish a society that upholds and respects the inherent rights of every individual, it is imperative to encourage and foster religious pluralism within Pakistan actively. By doing so, we can effectively promote and ensure the protection of human rights for all community members. It is of paramount importance to acknowledge that, despite Pakistan's noble goal of promoting equal citizenship, certain groups within the society continue to perpetuate hatred and violence towards religious minorities, including Christians. This is a grave concern that should not be ignored. To build a more tolerant and inclusive society, it is imperative to recognize this issue and take the necessary steps to address it. Only then can we hope to achieve a harmonious and peaceful coexistence among all community members. It is the responsibility of the government to encourage and uphold peace within society actively. Furthermore, it must actively prevent individuals or groups who seek to incite hatred and violence from causing harm to innocent people. To ensure that all citizens are treated equally, it is crucial to focus on enhancing the social and economic status of religious

minority groups. This can be accomplished by offering them equal access to opportunities and treating them with the same level of respect as other members of society. By doing so, we can work towards creating a fair and just society where everyone has the chance to thrive and succeed. It is important to enforce laws that protect religious freedom, as simply having theoretical provisions is not enough without actual implementation. Moreover, to move forward and achieve progress in Pakistan, it is imperative that we revisit the visionary ideals of the nation's founder, Jinnah. Emphasizing inclusivity, pluralism, and democracy and placing them at the forefront of our priorities will be crucial to achieving the desired societal changes. This requires a commitment to transparency, active citizen engagement, and representing all segments of society in the policy-making process. We can create a brighter future for Pakistan by working together and actively promoting these values. Raising public awareness and educating them about equal rights and opportunities is paramount. While certain strides have been made, a distinct disparity exists between the efforts made by organizations and their execution. One critical aspect that must be given utmost importance is the prompt resolution of legal disparities and the guarantee of safeguarding the rights of religious minorities. It is imperative to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their beliefs or affiliations, are granted equal treatment and protection under the law. It is imperative for Pakistan to prioritize upholding its fundamental principles of equality and safeguarding the rights of all citizens by proactively promoting religious freedom. This crucial objective requires the unwavering cooperation of all stakeholders. We commend Pakistan's efforts in taking proactive measures towards achieving this goal. By demonstrating inclusivity and unity through promoting religious freedom, Pakistan can set a powerful example for its citizens and the international community. Without a doubt, Pakistan has the potential to become a model country that truly values and celebrates diversity while respecting the rights of every individual.

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