

Ambassador Zaheer Pervaiz Khan
Embassy of Pakistan to Norway
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Your Excellency,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the abductions, forced conversions and forced marriages of underaged girls from religious minorities in Pakistan. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, around 1000 girls were forcibly converted in Sindh province alone in 2018. Many more are likely abducted, forcibly married and raped across Pakistan. This violates Article 20 in Pakistan's Constitution and of Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that mandates the freedom of religion or belief for all, and the freedom to adopt a religion or belief of free will, not through coercion.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan also reports that the police often turns a blind eye to reports of abduction and forced conversions, thereby creating impunity for perpetrators. Neither the lower nor the higher courts of Pakistan have followed proper procedures in cases that involve accusations of forced marriage and forced conversions. The Commission indicates that the judiciary is being threatened by extremists or influenced by personal beliefs into accepting claims that the women and girls convert by their own free will, despite evidence of force.

I appreciate Pakistan's efforts to overcome this issue by ratifying laws such as the Hindu Marriage Bill and the Sindh Assembly's Forced Conversions Bill. However, forced conversions and marriage still occur frequently and must be addressed in order for Pakistan to fulfil their national and international human rights obligations to uphold Freedom of Religion or Belief for its citizens.

I, therefore, humbly petition your intervention to ensure that:

- laws protecting minorities are adopted in every province in Pakistan;
- the police system is reformed to secure faster response in cases where abduction is suspected;
- the judiciary is reformed to ensure fair trials when abduction and forced conversion or marriage is suspected. Legal training and a system requiring greater accountability should be set up to assure best practice in all cases.

I thank you in advance for using your influence as ambassador and conveying this message to the relevant authorities in your home country.

Yours sincerely,