

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

I am writing to express my concern about the prevailing issue of forced conversions and marriages among minority girls in Pakistan. Please allow me to bring to your attention the case of 13-year-old Shakaina Masih, a Christian girl who was abducted on February 19. Upon contacting the police, the girl's parents Jhonson and Samina Masih were merely presented an Islamic marriage certificate and a conversion certificate, and told that their underage daughter had married a Muslim man named Ali Bashir and converted from Christianity to Islam. At the time of writing, Shakaina has still not been able to regain contact with her parents and still finds herself in the custody of her abductor in Okara District.

Your Excellency, earlier this year, the Senate's Committee on Religious Affairs rejected a bill seeking protection for Pakistan's minorities against religiously motivated violence, including forced conversions. Similar legislation has previously been opposed, which continues to create issues because it emboldens transgressors and increases the vulnerability of minority girls. I believe that Pakistan is an upholder of fundamental human rights, and that the country aspires for its entire population to be respected and protected from violations, including minority girls.

Based on this case and several previous ones, it may seem that falsified conversion certificates and marriage certificates might influence the police to pardon abductors and kidnappers. If this is indeed the case, it is not only extremely worrying, but also a violation of Pakistani laws that ban underage marriage. Respectfully, I would recommend the police to make further investigation into cases where there is a suspicion of forced conversion and underage marriage, in order to make sure the rights of minority girls are honoured and protected.

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

- Shakaina Masih is immediately rescued from her forced marriage and reunited with her parents;
- the bill seeking protection for minorities against religiously motivated violence is enacted into law;
- police apply the laws banning underage marriages in cases concerning forced conversions and marriages, as well as exposing false conversion certificates and marriage certificates.

Sincerely,