



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Pakistan: Genocide Watch August 2020

Prime Minister Imran Khan's government has cracked down on journalists, activists, nongovernmental organizations, and the political opposition. Arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial killings by law enforcement agencies continue with impunity. Blasphemy-related violence against religious minorities, such as Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and others, fostered by government persecution and discriminatory laws, is frequent. Women, religious minorities, and transgender people continue to face violence, with authorities often failing to provide adequate protection or hold perpetrators accountable.

For decades, the Pakistan Penal Code has been used against anyone who is perceived to insult Islam. These laws target the three percent of Pakistanis who belong to non-Muslim minority groups. Blasphemy laws have provided a [pretext for state violence](#) against religious minorities, as well as hundreds of arbitrary arrests and prosecution. The death penalty is mandatory for blasphemy. Those sentenced to the death penalty are often Christians and Buddhists, but also Muslims accused of love affairs with non-Muslims. Under-age Hindu girls are forced to convert to Islam or face blasphemy law death penalties.

Freedom of the press is under attack, as media outlets face pressure for criticizing the government. Some television channels have been forced off the air or have had their audience's access restricted as punishment for their critical editorials of the government. Arbitrary detention, torture, deaths in custody, forced disappearances, extrajudicial execution of journalists, and more indiscriminate killings by the police are rampant. Human rights advocates live under constant threat of arrest. The Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) is a state within a state, unrestrained by law. Pakistani law enforcement agencies are responsible for human rights violations, including detention without charge and extrajudicial killings.

[Amnesty International](#) reports a persistent pattern of human rights violations in Pakistan. The government of Pakistan has failed to protect individuals – particularly women, religious minorities and children – from violence and other human rights abuses committed in the home, in the community, and while in legal custody. Child marriage driven by traditional or religious customs and low education levels, especially of young girls, is an ongoing issue of concern. In August 2019, the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Law and Justice rejected a [bill](#) proposing to raise the minimum age of marriage of girls to 18. 21% of girls in Pakistan marry before the age of 18. In 2019, at least 629 women and girls were trafficked to China and sold as “brides.” Many women, children, and transgender people remain victims of “honor killings.” The state has failed to prosecute most perpetrators of such murders.

Many transgender people and members of the LGBTQI community face persecution. In 2018, Parliament passed a transgender rights [bill](#), but the penal code still criminalizes same-sex sexual conduct. LGBTQI individuals are constantly at risk of police harassment and violent attacks by thugs.

Due to persecution of religious minorities and the continuing criminalization of same-sex sexual conduct in the LGBTQI community, Pakistan is currently at **Stage 6: Polarization** in the [10 Stages of Genocide](#).

Genocide Watch urges Pakistan to adopt and implement laws to protect religious minorities, women, children, and transgender people, abolish the death penalty, guarantee religious freedom, prosecute “honor killings,” and repeal all blasphemy laws. Genocide Watch calls upon the UN Secretary General, the UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to keep Pakistan among their countries of special concern.