

HINDU AMERICAN FOUNDATION

Promoting Understanding, Tolerance and Pluralism

DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION: THE PLIGHT OF HINDUS IN PAKISTAN

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Non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are treated as separate and unequal citizens in a form of religious apartheid. The Constitution and laws of the land are overwhelmingly preferential to Islam, the State Religion, and Muslims. Systematic exclusion of Hindus and other minorities ranges from humiliations such that a non-Muslim lawyer cannot appear before Federal Shariat Court to Constitutional provisions that the President and Prime Minister of Pakistan must be Muslims. Religious extremism and fanaticism sponsored by the State that disenfranchise its own minority populations have engendered fringe factions that endanger the wellbeing and lives of minorities, including Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Ahmadiyas, and Shias.

Alleged blasphemy of the Prophet Mohammad carries a mandatory death sentence. Most of these cases are either false accusations or pursuits of personal vendettas—a tool of repression often used against Hindus and other minorities. Several of the judges in the High Courts, as for example, Justice Akhter of the Lahore High Court, are advocating that it is the duty of a Muslim to silence the voice of a blasphemer.ⁱ

A report recently published by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, notes:

"Four primary themes that emerge most strongly as constituting the bulk of the curricula and textbooks...are that Pakistan is for Muslims alone; Islamiyat is to be forcibly taught to all the students, whatever their faith, including compulsory reading of Qu'ran; the ideology of Pakistan (sic) is to be internalised as faith, and hate be created against Hindus and India; and students are to be urged to take the path of Jihad and Shahadat." Further, "Associated with the insistence on the Ideology of Pakistan has been an essential component of hate against India and the Hindus..."ⁱⁱ

Many of the approximately 2 million Hindus in Pakistan are compelled to pay regular sums, as a type of ransom, to extortionists and local leaders in exchange for the physical security of their families and themselves.ⁱⁱⁱ It is conventional wisdom that no job higher than a clerk's post may be obtained by a Hindu. Furthermore, Hindus usually need a Muslim as a silent partner in order to run a business.

Many Hindu temples have been desecrated, destroyed, or converted into government offices in Pakistan. In 1992 alone, hundreds of Hindu temples were destroyed in Pakistan in response to communal riots in India, in which Pakistani Hindus played no role. Despite official promises to rebuild these temples, in many cases, little or no action has been taken to redress the situation. Illegal encroachments on Hindu temples and lands, molestation and abduction of Hindu girls, demanding of huge ransoms in kidnap cases, and frequent arrests of Hindus on false charges have become commonplace in Pakistan.

The plight of Hindus in Pakistan is nowhere more evident than in the fact that the population of Hindus in 1947, at the time of Partition, was estimated to be anywhere from 15 to 24 percent. There is no authoritative claim on these numbers. In 1998 the Hindu population in Pakistan was 1.60 percent^{iv}. Where and how have these Hindus disappeared? The Hindu American Foundation urges the following:

- 1) ***That the United States of America publicly and unambiguously acknowledge and decry the persecution of Hindus in Pakistan;***
- 2) ***That the United States of America rescind the non-NATO major ally status designation for Pakistan;***
- 3) ***That the United States of America condition monetary assistance (\$700 million proposed for 2004), debt relief and granting of non-NATO ally status to Pakistan on cessation of legal and functional discrimination against religious minorities, including Hindus, in Pakistan as well as revision of current hate-mongering and biased educational materials and curricula in schools.***

ⁱ Daily Dawn dated August 28, 2000.

ⁱⁱ "The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan," Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan. [http://www.sdpi.org/what%27s_new/reporton/State%20of%20Curr&Textbooks\(final-BB\).pdf](http://www.sdpi.org/what%27s_new/reporton/State%20of%20Curr&Textbooks(final-BB).pdf).

ⁱⁱⁱ Newsline Special, Pakistan. December 2000, pages 77-79.

^{iv} Census of Pakistan, http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_religion.pdf

