



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Pakistan: Christians and Christian converts

Version 6.0

July 2026

Executive summary

Pakistan is a majority-Muslim country. There are between 3.3 and 4 million Christians out of the total population of nearly 241 million. Most Christians live in Punjab, with smaller populations in Sindh and other urban centres. Christians have their own personal laws, are generally able to practise their faith, attend church and participate in religious activities.

Proselytising to Muslims, or being perceived to do so, may expose Christians to blasphemy allegations and, in some cases, violence. Blasphemy laws continue to be applied, with reports of rising accusations, weak procedural safeguards and misuse in personal disputes or for economic gain. Although the number of Christians accused is overrepresented in proportional terms, it remains low relative to the size of the Christian population. Blasphemy allegations may lead to arrest, prolonged detention, or mob violence.

There are reports of forced conversion to Islam and forced marriage of Christian women and girls to Muslim men, mainly in Punjab and Sindh. Reported cases often involve minors, and sources indicate that police complaints may be dismissed, investigations may be inadequate and family pressure can be significant.

Although conversion from Islam is not expressly prohibited in law, renouncing Islam is widely regarded as apostasy and may be treated as a form of blasphemy. Christian converts may face hostility from family, community members and radical Islamist groups, and apostasy can increase the risk of blasphemy allegations.

Christians by birth are unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state or non-state actors. However, if the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing charges, they may be able to establish a real risk of persecution.

Christians who have converted from Islam who are open about their conversion, may face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from state and non-state actors.

Protection may to be available for Christians by birth, unless they can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges.

Protection is unlikely to be available to Christian converts who are open about their conversion or can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges.

Internal location is, in general, likely to be available to Christians by birth, but not for Christian converts.

Where a claim based on a fear of the state or non-state actors is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Each case must be considered on its individual facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate they face persecution or serious harm.

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Assessment

Section updated: 10 June 2026

About the assessment

This section considers relevant evidence – including [country information](#), refugee and human rights law and policy, and case law – to assess whether, **in general**:

- a person faces a real risk of persecution or serious harm by state or non-state actors because they are a Christian
- the state (or quasi state bodies) can provide effective protection
- internal relocation is possible to avoid persecution or serious harm
- if refused, a claim is likely or not to be certified as ‘clearly unfounded’ under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

Each case must be considered on its individual facts.

For details on how CPIT makes its assessments, and information on disclaimers (including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in developing CPINs), see [About country policy and information notes](#).

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1.1 Decision makers must:

- assess credibility (see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#)).
- check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the Asylum Instruction on [Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).
- consider making an international biometric data-sharing check, when one has not already been undertaken (see [Biometric data-sharing process \(Migration 5 biometric data-sharing process\)](#)).
- consider language analysis testing, where available, in cases where there are doubts surrounding a person’s claimed place of origin (see the Asylum Instruction on [Language Analysis](#)).

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2. Exclusion

- 2.1.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons to apply one (or more) of the exclusion clauses. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 2.1.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection, which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status.
- 2.1.3 For guidance on exclusion and restricted leave, see the Asylum Instruction on [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and the instruction on [Restricted Leave](#).

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3. Convention reason(s)

- 3.1.1 Actual or imputed religion.
- 3.1.2 Establishing a convention reason is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the person has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of an actual or imputed Refugee Convention reason.
- 3.1.3 For further guidance on the 5 Refugee Convention grounds, see the Asylum Instruction, [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4. Risk

4.1 Risk from the state – Christians by birth

- 4.1.1 Christians by birth are, in general, unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from the state solely on account of their religion. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.1.2 Christians by birth who proselytise or are perceived to proselytise, may face blasphemy allegations. Where the person can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges, they may be able to establish a real risk of persecution. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 4.1.3 In the country guidance (CG) case [AK & SK \(Christians: risk\) Pakistan \(CG\) \[2014\] UKUT 569 \(IAC\) \(15 December 2014\)](#), heard on 16, 17, 19 and 20 June 2014 and 24 July 2014 and promulgated on 15 December 2014, the Upper Tribunal (UT) held that ‘Christians in Pakistan are a religious minority who, in general, suffer discrimination but this is not sufficient to amount to a real risk of persecution’ (paragraph 240).
- 4.1.4 The UT further held that ‘Unlike the position of Ahmadis, Christians in

general are permitted to practise their faith, can attend church, participate in religious activities and have their own schools and hospitals' (para 241).

4.1.5 In [AK & SK](#) the Upper Tribunal held that:

'Evangelism by its very nature involves some obligation to proselytise. Someone who seeks to broadcast their faith to strangers so as to encourage them to convert, may find themselves facing a charge of blasphemy. In that way, evangelical Christians face a greater risk than those Christians who are not publicly active. It will be for the [decision maker] to assess on a case by case basis whether, notwithstanding attendance at an evangelical church, it is important to the individual to behave in evangelical ways that may lead to a real risk of persecution' (paragraph 242).

4.1.6 The Upper Tribunal held in [AK & SK](#) that 'Along with Christians, Sunnis, Shi'as, Ahmadis and Hindus may all be potentially charged with blasphemy. Those citizens who are more marginalised and occupy low standing social positions, may be less able to deal with the consequences of such proceedings' (paragraph 243).

4.1.7 The country information in this note does not indicate that there are 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to depart from these findings.

4.1.8 Pakistan is a majority-Muslim country. According to the 2023 census, Christians numbered just over 3.3 million, or 1.37% of the total population of nearly 241 million. Other estimates place the Christian population at more than 4 million (at least 1.66% of the total population) (see [Demography](#)).

4.1.9 Most Christians in Pakistan live in Punjab province and belong to either Catholic or Protestant denominations. Open Doors International describes the Catholic Church and Church of Pakistan as 'historical Christian communities', while Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal groups as 'non-traditional' (see [Demography](#) and [Churches and Christian communities](#)).

4.1.10 The state provides a constitutional framework for freedom of religion, and Christians are generally able to practise their faith, attend church and participate in religious activities. However, certain constitutional provisions favour Islam over minority religions. For example, the positions of President and Prime Minister are restricted to Muslims, and all existing laws must conform to the principles of Islam. Although there are no official figures for the number of churches, estimates range from several thousand to the low tens of thousands. There are no laws that specifically target Christians, and they are governed by their own personal laws on marriage and divorce. Christian festivals are officially recognised and observed (see [Legal context](#), [Churches and Christian communities](#) and [Christian festivals](#)).

4.1.11 Christians are represented in parliament and provincial assemblies through constitutionally reserved seats for non-Muslims. However, participation is limited because these seats are allocated by political parties rather than directly elected by minority communities. Senior offices such as president and prime minister are reserved for Muslims (see [Political representation](#)).

4.1.12 In education, non-Muslim students may have to declare and verify their religion, often lack access to equivalent non-Islamic religious instruction, and may be exposed to curriculum content centred on Islam. In employment, Christians are disproportionately represented in low-status and sanitation work, and sources reported discrimination in recruitment, despite some legal

action to challenge discriminatory practices (see [Access to education](#) and [Access to employment and income](#)).

- 4.1.13 Christians are generally able to practise their faith, but proselytising to Muslims or possessing Christian material beyond personal use may expose them to suspicion, discrimination or blasphemy allegations. Preaching may be possible in some contexts, particularly in Christian neighbourhoods, but evangelising to Muslims is described as risky and, in some places, may lead to arrest or threats of violence. However, evidence of attacks occurring solely because a person possessed Christian symbols or evangelised is limited (see [Proselytising and possessing or displaying Christian material](#)).
- 4.1.14 Blasphemy laws continue to be applied in Pakistan and can result in penalties ranging from fines, to one to 10 years imprisonment, to the death penalty. Certain provisions specifically criminalise blasphemy against Islam (and only Islam). There are reports of rising accusations, weak procedural safeguards and use against religious minorities, including Christians. According to the Centre for Social Justice Pakistan, 20 Christians were among the 344 people accused under the blasphemy laws in 2024, compared to 11 of 329 accused in 2023. Although cases of blasphemy against Christians are reported, the numbers are very low, particularly relative to the overall population (see [Application of blasphemy laws](#)).
- 4.1.15 At least 9 Pakistani Christians were reported to be imprisoned and sentenced to death or life imprisonment for blasphemy, and a further 9 were held in detention on blasphemy charges. Courts have acquitted some Christians, including individuals who had spent many years in prison or on death row. Although no state-sanctioned executions have been carried out, sources report concerns about due process, misuse in personal disputes and increasing use of cybercrime provisions alongside blasphemy charges (see [Blasphemy-related convictions and acquittals](#)).
- 4.1.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4.2 Risk from non-state actors – Christians by birth

- 4.2.1 Christians by birth are, in general, unlikely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from non-state actors solely because of their religion. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.2.2 Christians by birth who proselytise or are perceived to proselytise, may face blasphemy allegations. Where the person can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges, they may be able to establish a real risk of persecution. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 4.2.3 In [AK & SK](#) the Upper Tribunal held that:

‘The risk of becoming a victim of a blasphemy allegation will depend upon a number of factors and must be assessed on a case by case basis. Relevant factors will include the place of residence, whether it is an urban or rural area, and the individual’s level of education, financial and employment status and level of public religious activity such as preaching. These factors are not exhaustive.

‘Non-state agents who use blasphemy laws against Christians, are often motivated by spite, personal or business disputes, arguments over land and property. Certain political events may also trigger such accusations. A blasphemy allegation, without more will not generally be enough to make out a claim for international protection under the Refugee Convention. It has to be actively followed either by the authorities in the form of charges being brought or by those making the complaint. If it is, or will be, actively pursued, then an applicant may be able to establish a real risk of harm in the home area and an insufficiency of state protection’ (paragraphs 244 and 245).

- 4.2.4 The UT in [AK & SK](#) held that ‘Like other women in Pakistan, Christian women, in general, face discrimination and may be at a heightened risk but this falls short of a generalised real risk. The need for a fact-sensitive analysis is crucial in their case. Factors such as their age, place of residence and socio-economic milieu are all relevant factors when assessing the risk of abduction, conversions and forced marriages’ (paragraph 246).
- 4.2.5 When considering the evidence before them, the Upper Tribunal in [AK & SK](#) concluded that ‘although there is some risk of abduction and forced conversion of young Christian girls, largely in rural areas and in Punjab, it does not amount to a serious risk in itself’ (paragraph 238).
- 4.2.6 The country information in this note does not indicate that there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to justify a departure from these findings.
- 4.2.7 For further information on the general situation of women in Pakistan, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence](#).
- 4.2.8 Blasphemy allegations and attacks against Christians are reported. Sources indicate that non-Muslims, including Christians, are disproportionately affected in relative terms, and that allegations may be used to pursue personal disputes or for economic gain. Reported incidents include threats, mob violence and fatal attacks – 31 Christians (including a convert from Islam) have been extrajudicially killed following a blasphemy allegation between 1948 and May 2024 (see [Blasphemy allegations and attacks against Christians](#)).
- 4.2.9 Forced conversions to Islam and forced marriage of Christian women and girls to Muslim men are reported, mainly in Punjab and Sindh provinces. According to CSJ, 421 cases involving the abduction and forced conversion of minority girls and women were reported between January 2021 and December 2024, including 137 Christian girls. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) reported 94 cases in 2025, of whom 24% were Christian, but added that cases were likely underreported. Sources indicated that many reported cases involved minors and that complaints were often dismissed or inadequately investigated (see [Forced conversions and forced marriage](#)).
- 4.2.10 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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4.3 Risk from the state and non-state actors – Christian converts

- 4.3.1 Christians who have converted from Islam, who are open about their

conversion, may face a real risk of persecution or serious harm from state and non-state actors.

- 4.3.2 Christians who have renounced Islam (apostasy), and those who proselytise or are perceived to proselytise, may face blasphemy allegations. Where the person can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges, they may be able to establish a real risk of persecution. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 4.3.3 In the CG case [AJ \(Risk, Christian Convert\) Pakistan CG \[2003\] UKIAT 00040 \(August 2003\)](#), heard on 21 July 2003 and promulgated on 15 August 2003, evidence assessed by the Immigration Appeal Tribunal fell, in their view 'far short of showing that a person who converts to Christianity faces as such in Pakistan a real risk of treatment which can be described as persecutory or otherwise inhuman or degrading treatment' (paragraph 36).
- 4.3.4 The country information in this note indicates that there are 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to justify a departure from these findings. Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 4.3.5 There is no law prohibiting religious conversion, but renouncing Islam (apostasy) is widely regarded as a form of blasphemy. In practice, conversion from Islam is highly restricted. It is possible to change a person's registered religion with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) where they convert to Islam, but not where they convert from Islam to another faith (see Legal context – [Apostasy \(renouncing Islam\)](#)).
- 4.3.6 Sources indicate that converts from Islam to Christianity are generally viewed as apostates and may be regarded by wider society as having committed an act of betrayal. They may face hostility from radical Islamist groups as well as from family, friends and neighbours, and apostasy may increase the risk of blasphemy allegations (see [Christian converts](#)).
- 4.3.7 A person who converts from Islam to Christianity while abroad may be able to continue practising Christianity discreetly on return to Pakistan if they do not actively proselytise, do not publicly express their faith, or regard their religion as a personal matter. If they choose to conceal their faith on return, decision makers must consider the reasons for doing so.
- 4.3.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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5. Protection

- 5.1.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state, they are unlikely to be able to obtain protection.
- 5.1.2 A Christian by birth who has a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a rogue state actor and/or a non-state actor may be able to obtain protection from the state, unless they can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges.
- 5.1.3 Christians who have converted from Islam, who are open about their conversion, or can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges, are unlikely to be able to

obtain protection from the state.

- 5.1.4 In general, Pakistan has a functioning legal framework and mechanisms for protection, and a person may be able to seek state protection. However, implementation is inconsistent in practice, particularly in cases involving blasphemy allegations, mob violence, or intimidation by extremist actors.
- 5.1.5 The authorities have taken some action to address misuse of the blasphemy laws, including enhanced penalties for false accusations, court-ordered attempts to investigate abuse, and the announced ban on the right-wing Islamist party, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). However, sources indicated that some key safeguards were not always enforced in practice, including the requirement for a senior police officer to investigate allegations of blasphemy under section 295-C of the penal code, proper police investigation and evidence-gathering, and effective action against those responsible for false accusations, intimidation and blasphemy-related violence (see Legal context – [Blasphemy](#) and [Response to the misuse of blasphemy laws](#)).
- 5.1.6 There have also been some broader efforts to protect religious minorities, including a National Assembly resolution condemning mob violence, the creation of a statutory National Commission for Minorities Rights in 2025, the establishment in Sindh of a special police force for the protection of minority places of worship and minority facilitation desks, and security measures around churches during major Christian festivals. However, sources indicated that protections were applied inconsistently in practice, accountability for attacks remained limited, and progress in delivering justice and compensation to victims of major incidents such as the 2023 Jaranwala attacks was slow (see [Protection of minorities and minority rights in practice](#)).
- 5.1.7 For further guidance on assessing state protection, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Actors of protection](#).

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6. Internal relocation

- 6.1.1 In general, a person with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from the state is unlikely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk.
- 6.1.2 In general, a Christian by birth with a well-founded fear of persecution or serious harm from a non-state or rogue state actor is likely to be able to internally relocate to escape that risk, particularly where the risk is localised and no blasphemy charge is being actively pursued.
- 6.1.3 Internal relocation is unlikely to be reasonable for Christian converts who are open about their conversion, or they can show that the state is actively pursuing a blasphemy allegation against them by bringing formal charges.
- 6.1.4 In the CG case of [AK & SK](#), the UT found that ‘Relocation is normally a viable option unless an individual is accused of blasphemy which is being seriously pursued [by the state, meaning that formal charges have been brought against the person]. In that situation there is, in general, no internal relocation alternative’ (paragraph 247).
- 6.1.5 In analysing the evidence before it, the UT in [AK & SK](#) noted, ‘Figures of

blasphemy charges, deaths and attacks on individuals, communities and churches are all of concern but they must be viewed against the size of the population and the fact that most take place in Punjab where radical Islamists have a strong presence. The option of internal relocation must be viewed against that background' (paragraph 227).

- 6.1.6 The country information in this note does not indicate that there are 'very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence' to justify a departure from these findings.
- 6.1.7 Pakistan is a majority-Muslim country. According to the 2023 census, Christians number just over 3.3 million, accounting for 1.37% of a population of nearly 241 million, although some church and external estimates place the Christian population higher. Most live in Punjab, with smaller populations in Sindh and other urban centres. Christian communities are concentrated in Lahore and are also present in Karachi, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar, as well as in smaller communities in central Punjab (see [Demography](#)).
- 6.1.8 For further guidance on internal relocation and factors to consider, see the Asylum Instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#) and the [Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Internal relocation](#).

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7. Certification

- 7.1.1 Where a claim based on a fear of the state is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 7.1.2 Where a claim based on a fear of non-state actors or rogue-state actors is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 7.1.3 Each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 7.1.4 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

For details on how CPIT gathers and presents country information, its research methodology, and information on disclaimers (including the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)), see [About country policy and information notes](#).

The cut-off date for COI included in this note is **31 May 2026**. Any event(s) that took place or report(s) published after this date are not included.

Maps, where included, are not intended to reflect the UK Government's views on any boundaries.

Decision makers must use relevant COI as the evidential basis for decisions.

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8. Background

8.1 Demography

8.1.1 The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Population and Housing Census 2023 provided official census data on religious composition^{1 2}. The PBS recorded 3,300,788 Christians nationwide, 1.37% of the nearly 241 million population³. Data was disaggregated by province, sex, and rural/urban residence⁴.

8.1.2 Census 2023 results showed the number of Christians in Pakistan by province⁵. These figures indicated that, in absolute terms, the largest Christian population was in Punjab, while in proportional terms the highest share was in Islamabad Capital Territory.

Province	Christian population	Total population	% Christian
Punjab	2,458,924	127,333,305	1.93%
Sindh	546,968	55,638,409	0.98%
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)	134,884	40,641,120	0.33%
Balochistan	62,731	14,562,011	0.42%
Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)	97,281	2,283,244	4.26%

8.1.3 The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) 2024 COI report on Pakistan, based on a range of sources, noted that 'Christians live scattered throughout the country, with a high concentration in Punjab, and especially Lahore. They also live in Karachi, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Peshawar, in addition to many small communities in central Punjab.'⁶

8.1.4 For a breakdown of the Christian population in each province, see Table 9 of the 2023 [7th Population and Housing Census – Detailed Results](#).

¹ PBS, [Table 9: Population by Sex, Religion and Rural/Urban, Census 2023](#), 2023

² PBS, [National Census Report 2023](#) (page 137), 2024

³ PBS, [National Census Report 2023](#) (page 137), 2024

⁴ PBS, [Table 9: Population by Sex, Religion and Rural/Urban, Census 2023](#), 2023

⁵ PBS, [National Census Report 2023](#) (page 137), 2024

⁶ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 49), 5 July 2024

- 8.1.5 Despite a reported increase in Christians in Pakistan since the last census (up from 2.67 million in 2017 to 3.30 million in 2023), church leaders reacted to the 2023 census results, stating that Christian population figures may be under-represented due to several factors. These included incomplete census forms, and a lack of citizenship registration and identity documentation amongst the Christian community⁷. Bishop Marshall of the National Council of Churches in Pakistan estimated there were at least 3.5 million Christians in Punjab province alone⁸, while a member of the Punjab Assembly said in October 2024 that there were ‘four million Christian voters in Punjab ...’⁹
- 8.1.6 According to the World Christian Database, cited by the global Christian network Open Doors in their World Watch List (WWL) 2026, covering the period from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025¹⁰, there were over 4.7 million Christians in Pakistan¹¹. The Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) stated in their April 2025 Country Information Report on Pakistan that ‘... the Catholic Church estimates 14 to 17 million people living in Pakistan may identify as Christian.’¹²

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8.2 Churches and Christian communities

- 8.2.1 The WWL 2026 described the Christian communities in Pakistan, noting that the 2 main historical churches were ‘... the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Pakistan (formed by the merger of Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran and United Reformed churches in 1970).’¹³ Non-traditional Christian communities included ‘Evangelical, Baptist and Pentecostal groups ...’¹⁴
- 8.2.2 Though no official statistics on the number of registered, unregistered or house churches were available, estimates made in 2025 by Independent Evangelical Ministries (IEM), a Christian non-profit organisation in Pakistan¹⁵, put the likely combined number at ‘... several thousand to low tens of thousands, depending on how one counts very small fellowships and Bible-study groups.’¹⁶
- 8.2.3 In October 2024, Punjab Minister for Minorities told the Punjab Assembly that there were 3,225 registered churches in Punjab¹⁷.
- 8.2.4 According to the website Catholics in Pakistan, there were a total of 138 Catholic parish churches in the 7 ecclesiastical units in Pakistan. The figures in parentheses denote the number of churches in each unit, which included: the 2 archdioceses of Lahore (31) and Karachi (16), the 4 dioceses of Faisalabad (25), Multan (15), Islamabad/Rawalpindi (25), Hyderabad (17),

⁷ Christian Daily, [Pakistan's 2023 census 'grossly undercounts' Christians](#), 31 July 2024

⁸ Christian Daily, [Pakistan's 2023 census 'grossly undercounts' Christians](#), 31 July 2024

⁹ News International, [3,225 registered churches in Punjab, PA told](#), 30 October 2024

¹⁰ Open Doors, [WWL 2026 Table of Scores and Ranks](#), no date

¹¹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 2), no date

¹² DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.96), 30 April 2025

¹³ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 3), no date

¹⁴ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 3), no date

¹⁵ IEM Pakistan, [About us](#), no date

¹⁶ IEM Pakistan, [How many churches in Pakistan](#), 15 October 2025

¹⁷ News International, [3,225 registered churches in Punjab, PA told](#), 30 October 2024

and in the Apostolic Vicariate of Quetta (9)¹⁸.

- 8.2.5 The Netherlands MoFA report noted that ‘According to one source, people holding public function within the church are the only Christians to be respected in Pakistan. They are seen as Christian leaders; they have status and they are invited to TV appearances and receptions. According to one source, there is distrust of churches because they are said to be funded by Western “agents”’.¹⁹

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9. Legal context

9.1 International and national laws

- 9.1.1 Pakistan, as a UN member since 1947²⁰, is party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²¹, and a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)²², both of which protect the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to change one’s religion or beliefs, and to practise one’s faith freely in public and private places^{23 24}.
- 9.1.2 Pakistan’s Constitution declares Islam as the state religion²⁵, but also states that ‘subject to law, public order and morality ... every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion’ and ‘every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions’.²⁶
- 9.1.3 Whilst the constitution states that ‘All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law’²⁷, some articles favour Islam over minority religions, such as restricting the positions of president and prime minister to Muslims only²⁸. Furthermore, all existing laws shall conform with the rules of Islam, and no law shall be enacted which is ‘repugnant’ to Islam²⁹.
- 9.1.4 The Pakistan Penal Code criminalises promoting or inciting hatred, enmity or ill-will between groups on religious grounds, punishable by up to 7 years’ imprisonment³⁰.

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9.2 Personal laws

- 9.2.1 Two Pakistan-based law firms provided information relevant to personal status matters in Pakistan (including marriage, divorce, inheritance and guardianship). These matters were governed by religiously specific personal status laws and, for Christians, by a set of statutes including the Christian Marriage Act 1872 and the Christian Divorce Act 1869, alongside other laws

¹⁸ Catholics in Pakistan, [Dioceses](#) (see Parishes), no date

¹⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 65), 5 July 2024

²⁰ UN, [Member States](#) (P), no date

²¹ UN, [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), 1948

²² OHCHR, [Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard](#), no date

²³ UN, [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (Article 18), 1948

²⁴ OHCHR, [ICCPR](#) (Article 18), 1966

²⁵ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Article 2), 1973

²⁶ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Article 20), 1973

²⁷ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Article 25), 1973

²⁸ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Articles 41, 91), 1973

²⁹ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Article 227), 1973

³⁰ Pakistani.org, [Pakistan Penal Code](#) (Articles 153A and 505(2)), 1860

used in practice for related matters such as inheritance^{31 32}.

- 9.2.2 In July 2024, the President of Pakistan signed the Christian Marriage (Amendment) Act 2024 into law. The Act amended the Christian Marriage Act 1872 to raise the minimum age of marriage for Christian men and women to 18 years, replacing earlier provisions which allowed marriage at 16 for males and 13 for females^{33 34}. However, as reported by the Pakistani English-language newspaper, Dawn, the new act was limited to the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) as religious and personal laws were devolved to the provinces³⁵.
- 9.2.3 In April 2026, Pakistani English-language newspaper, The Nation, reported on proposals to reform and regulate Christian family laws in Punjab province. Reported proposals, submitted in a private member's bill to the Punjab Assembly, included amendments to the Christian Marriage Act 1872, such as raising the age of marriage to 18 years, introducing mandatory registration of marriages, restricting eligibility for marriage to where both parties were Christian (the current law allows just one party to be Christian), and widening the range of churches permitted to solemnise marriages³⁶.
- 9.2.4 There was disagreement and criticism among Christian churches and within Christian communities about the proposed amendments, who called for wider consultation before accepting any changes^{37 38}. Legal experts argued that broader reforms were needed beyond marriage, including in relation to 'divorce, annulment, inheritance, child custody, and separation.'³⁹

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9.3 Identity documents

- 9.3.1 Sources noted that data on a person's religion was recorded by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), the national authority for registering citizens and issuing national identity cards^{40 41}. A person's religion was not visible on their identity card, but it was shown on a person's passport⁴².
- 9.3.2 Since December 2018, it has not been possible to change a person's religion from Islam to another religion once Islam has been declared on a computerised ID card (CNIC)⁴³.
- 9.3.3 However, in July 2025, the Lahore High Court ordered NADRA to issue a CNIC identifying a woman as Christian. She had converted from Islam to Christianity in 2008, shortly before marrying her Catholic husband^{44 45}.

³¹ FSC, [Religious and Personal Status Law](#), no date

³² Khadija Law Associates, [Divorce Procedure for Christian Marriages in Pakistan](#), no date

³³ News International, [Pakistan raises marriageable age to 18 for Christians](#), 23 July 2024

³⁴ ICC, [Christian Marriage Act Amended in Pakistan](#), 6 August 2024

³⁵ Dawn, [President Zardari signs amendment to Christian Marriage Act](#), 24 July 2024

³⁶ The Nation, [Bill to regulate Christian family laws on the cards](#), 10 April 2026

³⁷ UCA News, [Pakistan churches reject proposed amendments to Christian ...](#), 27 April 2026

³⁸ Express Tribune, [Christian marriage bill faces opposition](#), 27 April 2026

³⁹ Express Tribune, [Christian marriage bill faces opposition](#), 27 April 2026

⁴⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁴¹ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 40), 5 July 2024

⁴² Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 42), 5 July 2024

⁴³ NADRA, [NADRA Registration Policy, Version 6.0.1](#) (page 14), 15 October 2025

⁴⁴ UCA News, [Pakistan court paves way for official recognition of Christian convert](#), 3 July 2025

⁴⁵ CSI, [Pakistan: In landmark ruling, convert wins right to change religion officially](#), 15 July 2025

Christian human rights group, Christian Solidarity International (CSI), who provided legal support on the case, noted that ‘It is believed to be the first time a court has directed the NADRA to change a convert’s religion on their identity card.’⁴⁶

See also [Christian converts](#).

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9.4 Apostasy (renouncing Islam)

9.4.1 As noted in the US Department of State 2023 International Religious Freedom report (USSD 2023 IRF report), ‘The penal code does not explicitly criminalize apostasy, but renouncing Islam is widely considered by clerics to be a form of blasphemy, which may carry the death penalty.’⁴⁷

9.4.2 CSI noted in July 2025 that ‘Under Pakistani law, it is technically possible for individuals to change their religion. But people who renounce Islam – the state religion – are considered apostates. Within Islam there are schools of thought that consider apostasy an offense that merits the death penalty.’⁴⁸

See also [Christian converts](#)

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9.5 Blasphemy

9.5.1 Pakistan’s so-called blasphemy laws, which consist of articles in Chapter XV ‘Of Offences Relating to Religion’ in the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), criminalise insults or derogatory remarks against religion or religious feeling, which can result in penalties ranging from fines to one to 10 years imprisonment, to the death penalty⁴⁹.

9.5.2 The table below outlines blasphemy laws under the Penal Code:

Blasphemy laws – Penal Code Articles 295 to 298-A		
Article	Title	Penalty
295	Injuring or defiling place of worship, with intent to insult the religion of any class	Up to 2 years imprisonment, or fine, or both
295-A	Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs	Up to 10 years imprisonment, or fine, or both
295-B	Defiling ... of Holy Quran	Life imprisonment

⁴⁶ CSI, [Pakistan: In landmark ruling, convert wins right to change religion officially](#), 15 July 2025

⁴⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁴⁸ CSI, [Pakistan: In landmark ruling, convert wins right to change religion officially](#), 15 July 2025

⁴⁹ Pakistani.org, [Pakistan Penal Code](#) (chapter XV), 1860

295-C	Use of derogatory remarks ... in respect of the Holy Prophet	Death or life imprisonment and a fine
298	Uttering words ... with deliberate intent to wound religious feelings	Up to one year imprisonment, or fine, or both
298-A	Use of derogatory remarks ... in respect of holy personages	Up to 3 years imprisonment, or fine, or both

For the full legal text, see the [Pakistan Penal Code](#)⁵⁰.

9.5.3 A report on blasphemy trials in Pakistan, published in September 2024 by the human rights organisation, the Clooney Foundation for Justice (CFJ), which was based on a range of sources, noted that many of the provisions of the blasphemy laws ‘... focused solely on blasphemy against Islam.’⁵¹

9.5.4 The same report added:

‘Though the Penal Code still includes some offenses criminalizing blasphemy against all religions (including Islam), a feature of these provisions is that they provide less severe sentences than those criminalizing blasphemy against Islam and have no mandatory minimum sentence. For example, Section 295-A of the PPC makes it a criminal offense to perform any “deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs” and carries a maximum sentence of up to ten years of imprisonment. Similarly, Section 298 of the PPC criminalizes the utterance of words “with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person” and can lead to a sentence of up to one year. These are also the only two “non-cognizable” blasphemy offenses, which means that the police must obtain an order from a magistrate to investigate the accused and obtain a warrant before arresting them. Section 295-A of the PPC also includes an additional procedural safeguard, stipulating that a court cannot take cognizance of a case under this provision without sanction from the government.

‘On the other hand, the provisions that specifically criminalize blasphemy against Islam (and only Islam) are considerably more draconian. Section 295-B of the PPC prohibits wilfully “defil[ing], damage[ing] or desecrat[ing] a copy of the Holy Qur’an or of an extract therefrom or us[ing] it in any derogatory manner” and carries a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment.

‘Similarly, Section 295-C of the PPC criminalizes any “words, either spoken or written,” “visible representation,” “imputation, innuendo, or insinuation” that “directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him).” ... Section 295-C, unlike Sections 295-A and -B, also contains no reference to intentionality and the Federal Shariat Court also ruled out any allowance for repentance, apology, or renewal of faith in such cases. Its verdict rests on the premise that only the Prophet possessed the right to pardon those who insulted him. The Court also made no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, men and women, or any other categories of legally distinct persons thus prescribing a fixed and unpardonable death penalty for the crime without distinction.

⁵⁰ Pakistani.org, [Pakistan Penal Code](#) (chapter XV), 1860

⁵¹ CFJ, [Blasphemy Trials in Pakistan: Legal Process as Punishment](#) (page 11, 12), September 2024

‘Another Islam-specific blasphemy provision, Section 298-A, prohibits the use of derogatory remarks against “holy personages” in Islam and, while it provides a punishment of up to three years’ imprisonment, there were attempts made in 2023 to increase this to a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of life imprisonment.’⁵²

- 9.5.5 The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2023, which proposed to raise the punishment under section 298-A to a minimum of 10 years up to life imprisonment and to make the offence non-bailable, was passed by both houses – National Assembly and the Senate – in January and August 2023 respectively⁵³. However, the then President Arif Alvi returned the bill to Parliament without giving assent^{54 55} and therefore it did not become law⁵⁶.
- 9.5.6 The 2024 CFJ report noted that all blasphemy laws, except for Sections 298 and 298-A were ‘... “non-bailable,” which means that the court has discretion regarding whether to grant bail (as opposed to it being available as of right). Under Pakistan’s Code of Criminal Procedure, when a non-bailable offense carries a potential penalty of ten or more years’ imprisonment – as both Sections 295-B and 295-C do – the accused cannot be released if there are reasonable grounds to believe they committed the offense.’⁵⁷
- 9.5.7 For information on Articles 298-B and 298-C, also known as anti-Ahmadi laws, because they are specifically directed towards Ahmadis, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Ahmadis](#).

See also [Application of blasphemy laws](#)

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10. Economic, social and cultural rights

10.1 Global rankings on religious freedom

- 10.1.1 The Freedom House Freedom in the World 2025 report (covering 2024) rated Pakistan as ‘Partly Free’ with low scores for civil liberties, noting attacks and restrictions affecting religious minorities, including Christians⁵⁸.
- 10.1.2 In its WWL 2026, Open Doors ranked Pakistan 8 out of 50 countries where they considered Christians to face the most severe persecution, with a ranking of one indicating the highest level of severity^{59 60}. Pakistan was classified as a country with ‘extreme’ levels of persecution, based on pressure across private, family, community, national and church life, as well as levels of violence⁶¹. Pakistan’s WWL ranking and score remained the same in 2026 as in 2025⁶². Open Doors defined persecution as ‘any hostility experienced as a result of one’s identification with Christ.’^{63 64} The inclusion

⁵² CFJ, [Blasphemy Trials in Pakistan: Legal Process as Punishment](#) (page 11), September 2024

⁵³ HRCP, [Criminal Laws \(Amendment\) Act 2023](#) (page 2), September 2023

⁵⁴ Express Tribune, [President objects to CrPC amendment bill](#), 22 August 2023

⁵⁵ HRCP, [Criminal Laws \(Amendment\) Act 2023](#) (page 2), September 2023

⁵⁶ Soch Fact Check, [President Alvi did not pass an ‘Anti Shia’ Bill](#), 15 September 2023

⁵⁷ CFJ, [Blasphemy Trials in Pakistan: Legal Process as Punishment](#) (page 13), September 2024

⁵⁸ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Pakistan](#) (D2), 2025

⁵⁹ Open Doors, [WWL 2026 Table of Scores and Ranks](#), no date

⁶⁰ Open Doors, [How does Open Doors create the World Watch List?](#), no date

⁶¹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026 – Map](#), 2026

⁶² Open Doors, [WWL 2026 Table of Scores and Ranks](#), no date

⁶³ Open Doors, [Complete World Watch List Methodology](#) (page 7), October 2024

⁶⁴ Open Doors, [How does Open Doors create the World Watch List?](#), no date

of this information should not be taken as an endorsement by CPIT of the Open Doors' definition of persecution.

- 10.1.3 In their 2026 annual report covering 2025, the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (2026 USCIRF report) recommended that the US Government redesignate Pakistan as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) 'for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the [US] International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) ...'⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ The US Secretary of State last designated Pakistan a CPC in December 2023⁶⁷, which remains the most recent (full) round of designations at the time of writing⁶⁸.

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10.2 Political representation

- 10.2.1 Under the constitution, the positions of president and prime minister are reserved for Muslims⁶⁹. As noted in the USSD 2023 IRF Report, 'All senior officials, including members of parliament, must swear an oath to protect the country's Islamic identity.'⁷⁰ The Oaths of Office are in the Third Schedule of the constitution⁷¹.

- 10.2.2 The USSD 2023 IRF Report explained that:

'The constitution reserves seats for non-Muslim members in parliament and provincial assemblies. The 336-member National Assembly (the lower house of parliament) has 10 seats reserved for non-Muslims. The 96-member Senate has four seats reserved for non-Muslims, one from each province. In the provincial assemblies, there are three such reserved seats in KP; eight in Punjab; nine in Sindh; and three in Balochistan. Reserved seats are distributed proportionately to political parties based on the number of seats won in the general election. Party leaders choose the minority individuals who hold these seats; they are not elected directly by the minority constituencies they represent. There is no obligation to appoint members to the reserved seats in proportion to their community's share of the population.'⁷²

- 10.2.3 The Freedom in the World 2025 report noted, regarding the political rights and electoral opportunities of religious minorities, that, 'Members of non-Muslim minority groups are able to participate in general voting while also being represented through reserved party-list seats in the national and provincial assemblies. However, non-Muslims' political participation remains marginal. Parties nominate members to the reserved seats, leaving voters with little say in the selection process.'⁷³

- 10.2.4 According to the USSD 2023 IRF Report:

'Some religious minority leaders continued to criticize the process by which

⁶⁵ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 40), 2026

⁶⁶ USCIRF, [2026 Recommendations](#), 2026

⁶⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Exec summary), 2024

⁶⁸ USSD, [Countries of Particular Concern Special Watch List Countries ...](#), no date

⁶⁹ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Articles 41, 91), 1973

⁷⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁷¹ Pakistani.org, [Constitution](#) (Third Schedule: Oaths of Office), 1973

⁷² USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁷³ Freedom House, [Freedom in the World 2025: Pakistan](#) (B4), 2025

political party leaders selected parliamentarians for reserved minority seats. According to these minority leaders, only “rich businessmen” were selected through the process, and many were not well regarded by the minority communities they were meant to represent. Others said parliamentarians occupying reserved seats had little influence in either their parties or the legislatures because they did not have a voting constituency. Women from religious minority communities criticized political parties for nominating only men to seats reserved for religious minorities in all legislative bodies. Women from these communities demanded amendments to the law to make mandatory the appointment of religious minority women to these seats. Several minority rights advocacy groups disputed the results of the 2023 census, saying the numbers underrepresented their true population and diminished their political influence because minority seat allocation in the national and provincial parliaments is based on census figures.⁷⁴

- 10.2.5 In February 2026, Christian global news source, Christian Daily International, reported that Pakistani Christians had renewed calls for electoral reform relating to reserved minority seats. According to the report, activists argued that the existing nomination-based system deprived minority communities of meaningful political participation⁷⁵.

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10.3 Access to education

- 10.3.1 The USSD 2023 IRF Report noted that students must declare their religious affiliation on application forms to enter all public or private educational institutions, including universities, and that non-Muslims must have their religious affiliation verified by the head of their local religious community⁷⁶.
- 10.3.2 Non-Muslim students were not legally required to study Islam, though most schools did not offer religious education in beliefs other than Islam⁷⁷. Some state-run schools offered lessons in ethics for non-Muslims⁷⁸, although according to the USSD 2023 IRF Report, ‘... sources continued to report many non-Muslim students had to participate in [Islamic studies] because their schools did not offer parallel courses in their own religious beliefs or ethics or there were no teachers available to teach such courses.’⁷⁹
- 10.3.3 The National Curriculum Council issued no-objection certificates in 2023 for publishing religious books for students of 7 minority groups, including Christianity⁸⁰. However, research and advocacy group, the Centre for Social Justice Pakistan (CSJ), noted in their Human Rights Observer 2025 report, covering 2024, which focussed on ‘key issues related to religious freedom and minorities’ rights in Pakistan⁸¹, that implementation of the policy on religious education was slow due to the unavailability of qualified teachers, particularly in schools with few minority students⁸².

⁷⁴ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁷⁵ Christian Daily International, [Pakistani Christians renew push for electoral ...](#), 23 February 2026

⁷⁶ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁷⁷ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁷⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁷⁹ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁸⁰ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

⁸¹ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (front page), April 2025

⁸² CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 16), April 2025

- 10.3.4 The same CSJ report noted regarding religious content in textbooks that it was ‘... heavily embedded in non-religious subjects ... The excessive material from the majority religion in compulsory subjects disproportionately affects students from religious minorities, forcing them to study content that may not align with their faith or personal beliefs.’⁸³
- 10.3.5 Furthermore, the same source stated, ‘The textbooks lack alternative content for minority students, making Islamic teachings in non-religious subjects unavoidable,’ and that ‘Islamic terminology in English textbooks ... reinforces linguistic dominance ... making it challenging for minority students to read, memorize, or write.’⁸⁴ The report added that ‘... when the students progress to higher grades, the volume of religious content increases, particularly in subjects where it does not naturally belong.’⁸⁵
- 10.3.6 According to the Open Doors WWL 2026 report:
- ‘In small towns and remote villages, Christian children have to attend Islamic teaching at the local madrassa while Christian teaching is restricted to Sunday services. Christian parents try to prevent their children from speaking about their faith since they could be pressured to “come back” to Islam. At school, Christian children are often not allowed to use the same water fountain as their Muslim classmates to avoid “defiling” the drinking water. Children are often bullied, and many are asked to clean the latrines or sweep the floor, as Christians are commonly perceived as being sweepers. Some school books incite hatred against Christians. The new school curriculum further Islamizes education and educates children that adherents of other religions are inferior.’⁸⁶

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10.4 Access to employment and income

- 10.4.1 Repeating their 2022 findings⁸⁷, the USSD 2023 IRF Report noted that ‘Christian religious freedom activists continued to report widespread discrimination against Christians in private employment. They said Christians continued to have difficulty finding jobs other than those involving menial labor, with some advertisements for menial jobs specifying they were open only to Christian applicants.’⁸⁸
- 10.4.2 According to the April 2025 DFAT report, ‘Dalit Christians [descendants of lower-caste Hindus who converted during the colonial era⁸⁹] are among the most economically vulnerable groups in Pakistan. In 2024, many Dalit Christians lived in poverty and Christian women and girls faced elevated risks ... Many Dalit Christians were employed as sanitation workers and household “servants”.’⁹⁰
- 10.4.3 Sanitation work typically involved refuse collection, sewage work and street sweeping⁹¹, roles which Amnesty International noted were ‘... often

⁸³ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 19), April 2025

⁸⁴ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 20), April 2025

⁸⁵ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 20), April 2025

⁸⁶ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 6), no date

⁸⁷ USSD, [2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section III), 2023

⁸⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section III), 2024

⁸⁹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.103), 30 April 2025

⁹⁰ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.104), 30 April 2025

⁹¹ HRCP, [Hazardous Matters: Examining the Right to Safe and Dignified Work ...](#) (page 1), 2024

perceived culturally as polluting and “dirty”, contributing to ‘... the social stigmatization of people who are engaged in such work.’⁹² A 2024 report by Pakistan’s National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) estimated that 80% of sanitation workers were Christian⁹³.

- 10.4.4 Open Doors WWL 2026 noted that ‘... Christians typically occupy lower-status jobs, including cleaners, sanitation work or as bonded laborers in brick kilns, with many Christians trapped in debt.’⁹⁴
- 10.4.5 In November–December 2025, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) ruled that advertising sanitation jobs as restricted to ‘Christians’ was unconstitutional and discriminatory, violating equality and non-discrimination provisions in the Constitution. It ordered all employers to cease religion-based recruitment criteria and directed authorities to ensure safe working conditions and implement measures, including provision of protective equipment and safety protocols^{95 96}.
- 10.4.6 However, according to a March 2026 article by Bitter Winter, ‘A magazine on religious liberty and human rights’⁹⁷, despite the IHC ruling, ‘... discriminatory advertisements still appear, both openly and in coded language.’⁹⁸
- 10.4.7 The April 2025 DFAT report noted that ‘In-country sources told DFAT Dalit Christians sometimes experienced issues running businesses, because Muslims did not want to do business with or buy food from them. Christians had been targeted by rival businesses threatening [sic] use of blasphemy laws to run them out of business.’⁹⁹
- 10.4.8 A March 2026 article published by the London School of Economics (LSE) described Christian sanitation workers in Pakistan as facing exclusion linked to both occupation and faith. The article stated that ‘Many Christian sanitation workers live in “Christian colonies” near drainage canals or waste sites. This geographical isolation further reinforces occupational stigma and marginalisation, showing how Christian waste-pickers are affected both by profession and religion.’¹⁰⁰

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10.5 Access to healthcare

- 10.5.1 CPIT found limited reporting specifically on access to healthcare for Christians as a distinct group. For general information on healthcare, see the [Country Policy and Information Note Pakistan: Healthcare and medical treatment](#).

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⁹² Amnesty International, [Discrimination and stigmatization of sanitation ...](#) (page 8), July 2025

⁹³ NCHR, [Inquiry Report: Risks of Sanitation Work in Pakistan](#) (page 5), 2024

⁹⁴ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 2), no date

⁹⁵ Morningstar News, [Landmark Rulings in Pakistan Aid Christian Workers](#), 10 December 2025

⁹⁶ Bitter Winter, [Pakistan: Court Challenges the Bias That Confines Minorities ...](#), 18 March 2026

⁹⁷ Bitter Winter, [About](#), no date

⁹⁸ Bitter Winter, [Pakistan: Court Challenges the Bias That Confines Minorities ...](#), 18 March 2026

⁹⁹ DFAT, [DFAT Country Information Report Pakistan](#) (paragraph 3.103), 30 April 2025

¹⁰⁰ LSE, [Marginalised by Work and by Faith: Social Exclusion of Christian Sanitation ...](#), 9 March 2026

11. State treatment and attitudes

11.1 Christian festivals

- 11.1.1 Media sources reported that Pakistani Christians publicly celebrated Christmas in 2025 with church services, midnight Masses, prayers, decorations and community gatherings in cities including Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi and Islamabad^{101 102 103}. Some provinces saw official participation by political and military leaders^{104 105}. Punjab and Sindh provincial governments also declared 26 December as an additional holiday for Christians^{106 107}.
- 11.1.2 Easter was widely observed by Christians in Pakistan through Holy Week activities, including Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday services^{108 109}. Reports described midnight prayers, church services, family gatherings and public greetings by political leaders^{110 111}. At Easter 2025 and 2026, Christian residents in Peshawar's cantonment areas (army bases) were provided with a free shuttle-bus service by the Cantonment Board Peshawar (CBP), allowing transportation to and from their places of worship^{112 113}.

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11.2 Proselytising and possessing or displaying Christian material

- 11.2.1 Open Doors WWL 2026 reported that it was 'dangerous' for Christians to share their faith with Muslims due to the blasphemy laws¹¹⁴. See Legal context – [Blasphemy](#).
- 11.2.2 The same report added, 'It is dangerous for Pakistani Christians to keep Christian materials beyond their immediate personal use, as they could be suspected of evangelizing Muslims. Displaying Christian symbols or having a Christian name can trigger discrimination or vandalism of property.'¹¹⁵
- 11.2.3 Citing confidential sources, the Netherlands MoFA report stated:
- 'Christians can preach in Pakistan. Permits for events in the church are usually granted, provided the neighbourhood is Christian.
- 'According to one source, evangelising can be dangerous in Pakistan. The danger is related to those whom one intends to convert. Converting Hindus to Christianity would not be a problem; converting Muslims would be. There are 'white' missionaries in Sindh. According to one source, in the north, people can be arrested for evangelising. It is not known if this is the case

¹⁰¹ Geo TV, [Christians across Pakistan celebrate Christmas with prayers ...](#), 25 December 2025

¹⁰² Express Tribune, [Christmas celebrated across Pakistan amid tight security](#), 25 December 2025

¹⁰³ RVA, [Pakistan: Church Leaders Hail Government's Two-Day Christmas ...](#), 24 December 2025

¹⁰⁴ Geo TV, [Christians across Pakistan celebrate Christmas with prayers ...](#), 25 December 2025

¹⁰⁵ Express Tribune, [Christmas celebrated across Pakistan amid tight security](#), 25 December 2025

¹⁰⁶ RVA, [Pakistan: Church Leaders Hail Government's Two-Day Christmas ...](#), 24 December 2025

¹⁰⁷ ICC, [Pakistan Shows Surprising Respect for Christian Community During ...](#), 12 January 2026

¹⁰⁸ APP, [Hope, peace mark Easter 2026 as Christian community celebrates across ...](#), 5 April 2026

¹⁰⁹ Daily Times, [Hope, peace mark Easter as Christian community celebrates across ...](#), 6 April 2026

¹¹⁰ Pakistan Today, [Shehbaz, Zardari Laud Pakistan Christians on Easter](#), 5 April 2026

¹¹¹ Dawn, [On Easter, President Zardari and PM Shehbaz hail Christian community's ...](#), 5 April 2026

¹¹² Dawn, [Free shuttle service for Christians on Easter](#), 22 April 2025

¹¹³ The Nation, [Free shuttle service being provided to Christians](#), 6 April 2026

¹¹⁴ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 6), no date

¹¹⁵ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 6), no date

everywhere. According to another source, people cannot evangelise openly, as it could result in a fatwa [a formal ruling by an Islamic scholar on a point of Islamic law¹¹⁶] with a death sentence ...¹¹⁷

11.2.4 Regarding foreign Christian missionaries, the 2023 USSD IRF Report noted:

‘The government continued to permit limited, non-Muslim foreign missionary activity and to allow those missionaries to preach if they did not do so against Islam and acknowledged they were not Muslim. According to the government’s immigration website, the Ministry of Interior processed visa applications for “Christian missionaries” invited by organizations registered in the country. The sponsoring organization had to certify that the applicant was a bona fide member of the organization and assume responsibility for the missionary’s financial support. In their visa applications, missionaries had to commit to “respect and abide by the laws of Pakistan” and “refrain from indulging in internal politics.” Missionary visas were valid for one year and permitted one reentry per year and a single one-year extension. According to missionary sources, only “replacement” visas for those taking the place of departing missionaries were available for long-term missionaries seeking to enter the country for the first time. According to the ministry website, “Entry visas are not granted to foreign missionaries desirous of opening new missions or strengthening existing ones engaged in proselytizing activities.” Civil society sources continued to state that missionary activity was permitted by the government but was limited in practice by general societal intolerance of proselytizing to Muslims. Civil society contacts continued to report that visas for foreign missionaries were sometimes refused or delayed for so long that the mission had to be cancelled.’¹¹⁸

11.2.5 CPIT did not find information in the sources consulted of attacks occurring solely because a person possessed Christian symbols or evangelised the Christian faith (see [Bibliography](#)).

See also [Christian converts](#)

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11.3 Application of blasphemy laws

11.3.1 Although the offence of blasphemy carries the death penalty, no state-sanctioned executions have been carried out^{119 120}.

11.3.2 In their concluding observations on Pakistan, dated 24 September 2024, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN CERD) noted that it was:

‘... alarmed by the increase in the total annual number of cases concerning blasphemy, from 11 in 2020 to 213 in 2023, and in particular by those brought under sections 295 and 298 of the Pakistan Penal Code and under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act ... the Committee is concerned that the State party has taken insufficient measures to enforce the relevant domestic laws to guarantee the right to a fair trial and prevent reprisals. The Committee reiterates its concern about the broad and vague definitions of

¹¹⁶ Britannica, [Fatwa](#), 29 May 2026

¹¹⁷ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 66), 5 July 2024

¹¹⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section II), 2024

¹¹⁹ HRW, [“A Conspiracy to Grab the Land”: Exploiting Pakistan’s Blasphemy Laws ...](#), 9 June 2025

¹²⁰ CSOH, [Systemic Persecution of Religious Minorities in Pakistan](#) (page 1), August 2025

the crimes established under sections 295, 295-A, 295-B, 295-C, 298-A, 298-B and 298-C of the Pakistan Penal Code ...¹²¹

- 11.3.3 The CSJ reported that at least 344 people were accused under the blasphemy laws in 2024, compared to 329 in 2023^{122 123}. The majority of those accused were Muslim^{124 125}. In 2023, 247 of the accused were Muslim, 65 Ahmadis, 11 Christian, one Hindu, and the rest unknown¹²⁶. Of those accused in 2024, 242 were Muslim, 49 Ahmadi, 32 Hindu, 20 were Christian, and one unknown¹²⁷.
- 11.3.4 The September 2024 CFJ report noted that ‘While Section 156-A of the Pakistan’s Code of Criminal Procedure states that in cases involving Section 295-C “no officer below the rank of a Superintendent of Police is authorized to investigate into the matter,” this is not necessarily observed in practice ...’¹²⁸
- 11.3.5 Following complaints about ‘the entrapment of young individuals on blasphemy charges’¹²⁹, the NCHR conducted a year-long investigation which began in October 2023., The findings were published in November 2024. The report noted that, as of November 2023, 331 people aged 17 to 33 were imprisoned under the blasphemy law, most of whom were Muslim, and 6 were Christian¹³⁰. The investigation found ‘... a sharp increase in registration of blasphemy cases, majority of whom were initiated by the Federal Investigation Agency’s (FIA) Cybercrime unit, frequently in collaboration with a private entity.’¹³¹ The report added that:
- ‘... due process was notably disregarded, with significant procedural violations observed at multiple stages. Arrests were often carried out by private individuals rather than law enforcement, and there were disturbing reports of torture both during apprehension and immediately afterward. Detainees’ written statements were frequently obtained under duress, compromising the legitimacy of their content. Legal aid and support for the accused were systematically obstructed and, in some instances, actively threatened.’¹³²
- 11.3.6 USCIRF’s September 2025 Pakistan country update reported on the use and enforcement of blasphemy laws by the authorities ‘... to target religious minorities and as a means to “resolve” interpersonal disputes’¹³³, whilst the 2026 USCIRF report noted that the blasphemy law was used to ‘punish those deemed to have insulted Islam.’¹³⁴
- 11.3.7 The September 2024 CFJ report noted that the ‘Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) has increasingly started charging people for “social media

¹²¹ UNCERD, [Concluding observations on the combined ...](#) (paragraph 15), 24 September 2024

¹²² CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 1), April 2025

¹²³ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2024](#) (page 6), March 2024

¹²⁴ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 1), April 2025

¹²⁵ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2024](#) (page 6), March 2024

¹²⁶ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2024](#) (page 6), March 2024

¹²⁷ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 1), April 2025

¹²⁸ CFJ, [Blasphemy Trials in Pakistan: Legal Process as Punishment](#) (page 13), September 2024

¹²⁹ NCHR, [NCHR Investigation into Blasphemy Cases](#) (page 1), October 2024

¹³⁰ NCHR, [NCHR Investigation into Blasphemy Cases](#) (page 14), October 2024

¹³¹ NCHR, [NCHR Investigation into Blasphemy Cases](#) (page 1), October 2024

¹³² NCHR, [NCHR Investigation into Blasphemy Cases](#) (page 2), October 2024

¹³³ USCIRF, [Country update: Pakistan](#) (page 1), September 2025

¹³⁴ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 40), 2026

blasphemy” by alleging violation of Pakistan’s cybercrime law, the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA), alongside existing blasphemy laws.¹³⁵ An August 2025 report by the Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH), a US-based think tank, similarly noted that the blasphemy laws were ‘... often enforced in tandem with the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) that empowers the state to exert comprehensive control over social media.’¹³⁶

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11.4 Blasphemy-related convictions and acquittals

- 11.4.1 According to the NCHR, as of July 2024, there were 767 prisoners incarcerated for blasphemy, the majority (581) in Punjab province¹³⁷. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) noted that as of 17 June 2025, there were 729 prisoners in Punjab prisons on blasphemy charges, 679 of whom were under-trial. HRCP added that data from other provinces was not readily available¹³⁸. The NCHR and HRCP reports did not provide a breakdown of prisoners by their religious affiliation.
- 11.4.2 As recorded in the USCIRF [Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief Victims List](#) (accessed 27 May 2026), at least 9 Pakistani Christians (Catholic, Protestant or unspecified affiliation) were imprisoned and sentenced to death or life imprisonment for blasphemy¹³⁹. Another 9 Christians of unspecified affiliation were held in detention on blasphemy charges¹⁴⁰.
- 11.4.3 The 2025 CSOH report cited convictions of Christians for blasphemy in 2024, including ‘In July 2024, Ehsan Shan, a Christian man, was sentenced to death for posting defaced pages of the Quran on TikTok. Shan wasn’t involved in the desecration of the Quran but was accused of reposting the pages on his TikTok account. In September 2024, Shagufta Kiran, a Christian woman, was sentenced to death for blasphemy. According to the judges, Kiran was guilty of sharing an offensive message against Islam on WhatsApp.’¹⁴¹
- 11.4.4 In March 2024, the Anti-Terrorism Court in Faisalabad acquitted 2 Christian brothers who were accused of desecrating the Quran, an accusation that triggered violent attacks on Christian neighbourhoods in Jaranwala in 2023^{142 143}. The acquittal came after the court ruled the brothers had been framed by 2 individuals who held a grudge against them.
- 11.4.5 The 2026 USCIRF report noted that ‘Pakistani authorities acquitted several individuals accused of blasphemy throughout [2025] ...’¹⁴⁴
- 11.4.6 The same report provided examples of acquittals of Christians in 2025, noting that ‘In July, Pakistan’s Supreme Court acquitted a Christian man,

¹³⁵ CFJ, [Blasphemy Trials in Pakistan: Legal Process as Punishment](#) (page 2), September 2024

¹³⁶ CSOH, [Systemic Persecution of Religious Minorities in Pakistan](#) (page 1), August 2025

¹³⁷ NCHR, [NCHR Investigation into Blasphemy Cases](#) (page 15), October 2024

¹³⁸ HRCP, [Streets of Fear, Freedom of religion or belief in 2024/25](#) (page 15), 2025

¹³⁹ USCIRF, [Victims List](#) (filter by Pakistan, Christian – Catholic/Protestant/unspecified), no date

¹⁴⁰ USCIRF, [Victims List](#) (filter by Pakistan, Christian – Catholic/Protestant/unspecified), no date

¹⁴¹ CSOH, [Systemic Persecution of Religious Minorities in Pakistan](#) (page 20), August 2025

¹⁴² Dawn, [Brothers ‘framed’ for Jaranwala desecration freed after acquittal](#), 2 March 2024

¹⁴³ CSW, [CSW welcomes acquittal of three individuals charged with blasphemy](#), 4 March 2024

¹⁴⁴ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 41), 2026

Anwar Kenneth, of blasphemy charges after he served 23 years on death row. In October, a high court acquitted Christian pastor Zafar Bhatti of blasphemy charges after he spent 13 years in prison. Days after his release, Bhatti succumbed to cardiac arrest after years of medical neglect.¹⁴⁵

- 11.4.7 In January 2026, a district court in Faisalabad acquitted 2 Christian nurses, who were charged under Section 295-B of the PPC in 2021, citing failure of the prosecution to substantiate allegations. The appeal deadline lapsed without challenge¹⁴⁶.
- 11.4.8 Christian Daily International reported in March 2026 on the acquittal of a Catholic man by a Punjab court after the accuser withdrew his complaint. The defendant claimed the blasphemy accusations stemmed from a personal dispute with his neighbour in 2024¹⁴⁷.
- 11.4.9 According to the same article, 'Although courts have occasionally granted bail or acquitted defendants in cases where evidence is deemed insufficient, such outcomes remain relatively rare due to the highly sensitive nature of blasphemy allegations in Pakistan.'¹⁴⁸
- 11.4.10 Human rights group, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), noted in their May 2025 briefing on Pakistan, that 'Lawyers defending blasphemy-related or other sensitive cases relating to minority issues frequently face intimidation and threats of violence, and in some cases extra-judicial killings. Judges have been physically attacked and threatened with torture, even during court hearings. Many are afraid to hear prominent minority cases for fear of reprisal, resulting in slow progress in these cases.'¹⁴⁹

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11.5 Response to the misuse of blasphemy laws

- 11.5.1 A July 2025 report on the abuse of blasphemy laws, by Human Rights Watch (HRW), based on research undertaken in Pakistan between May 2024 and January 2025, stated that:

'The police generally fail to investigate and gather evidence in vigilante attacks, whether from fear or prejudice. Wary of retaliation, they are particularly reluctant to investigate cases in which religious clerics or violent Islamist groups have taken part. The government seldom brings charges against those responsible for violence and discrimination. Human Rights Watch's research indicates that almost no one apprehended in connection with such attacks has been convicted in the last several years.'¹⁵⁰

- 11.5.2 The same report noted:

'The Pakistan government has occasionally tried to introduce safeguards against abuse of the blasphemy law. A 2005 criminal law amendment required a high-ranking officer to investigate allegations under section 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code. However, this procedural requirement is routinely disregarded. In June 2014, the Supreme Court created a federal

¹⁴⁵ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 41), 2026

¹⁴⁶ ACN UK, [PAKISTAN: Jubilation as Christian nurses are finally acquitted ...](#), 23 January 2026

¹⁴⁷ Christian Daily International, [Christian acquitted in baseless blasphemy case ...](#), 19 March 2026

¹⁴⁸ Christian Daily International, [Christian acquitted in baseless blasphemy case ...](#), 19 March 2026

¹⁴⁹ CSW, [General Briefing: Pakistan](#), 29 May 2025

¹⁵⁰ HRW, ["A Conspiracy to Grab the Land": Exploiting Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws ...](#), 9 June 2025

task force to promote religious tolerance; new educational curricula to encourage religious harmony and social tolerance; the curbing of hate speech on social media; the establishment of a national council for minorities' rights; police reform; employment opportunities; and prompt action whenever the constitutional rights of religious minorities were violated or places of worship desecrated. However, the Supreme Court decision remains largely unenforced, despite demands from religious minorities and civil society groups for implementation. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2017 enhanced the punishment for false accusations. However, it too failed to curb the persecution, violence, and intimidation that the blasphemy law facilitated.¹⁵¹

- 11.5.3 The 2026 USCIRF report noted that, 'In July [2025], Justice Ishaq Khan of Islamabad's High Court ordered the government to open an investigation into the use of the blasphemy law. This announcement received widespread opposition by the TLP [Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, a right-wing Islamist political party¹⁵²], and the order was subsequently suspended'¹⁵³. The order was suspended after the Court heard appeals from individuals accused of being part of a 'blasphemy business group'¹⁵⁴, an alleged racket that made fraudulent accusations of blasphemy to entrap young people¹⁵⁵. Their lawyer argued they had not been given a full hearing and questioned the court's authority to form such a commission¹⁵⁶.
- 11.5.4 The 2026 USCIRF report noted that 'In October [2025], the Pakistani government announced it would ban the activities of the TLP, known for its defense of Pakistan's blasphemy law. Prior to and throughout 2025, the TLP incited violent mobs to attack religious minorities, including Christians and Ahmadiyya Muslims, under the guise of enforcing Pakistan's blasphemy law.'¹⁵⁷
- 11.5.5 For more information on the TLP, see the [Country Policy and Information Note on Pakistan: Political parties and affiliation](#).

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11.6 Protection of minorities and minority rights in practice

11.6.1 The USSD 2023 IRF Report noted that:

'Members of religious minority communities continued to say that the Ministries of Law and Justice, Interior, and Human Rights inconsistently applied laws that safeguarded minority rights and enforced the protections of religious minorities. Religious minority community members also stated the government was inconsistent in safeguarding against societal discrimination and neglect, and that official discrimination against Christians [and other religious minorities] persisted to varying degrees ...'¹⁵⁸

¹⁵¹ HRW, ["A Conspiracy to Grab the Land": Exploiting Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws ...](#), 9 June 2025

¹⁵² BAMF, [Briefing Notes, Group 62](#) (page 8), 27 October 2025

¹⁵³ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 41), 2026

¹⁵⁴ Christian Daily International, [Order for Panel to Probe Blasphemy Law Abuse ...](#), 25 July 2025

¹⁵⁵ Voicepk.net, [Concern over 'blasphemy business group' echoes in National ...](#), 26 June 2025

¹⁵⁶ Christian Daily International, [Order for Panel to Probe Blasphemy Law Abuse ...](#), 25 July 2025

¹⁵⁷ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 41), 2026

¹⁵⁸ USSD, [2023 Report on International Religious Freedom: Pakistan](#) (Section III), 2024

11.6.2 In their concluding observations on Pakistan, dated 24 September 2024, the UN CERD expressed their concern that Pakistan had:

‘... taken insufficient measures, in law and in practice, to ensure the rights of persons belonging to ethno-religious minority groups, in particular non-Sunni ethno-religious minority groups. The Committee regrets the lack of information on the development of a law on interfaith intolerance. While acknowledging the steps taken by the State party to provide the communities affected by religious intolerance with reparations, including the reconstruction of churches and compensation of families, the Committee is concerned about the risks faced by persons belonging to religious minority groups in freely exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. In particular, the Committee is concerned about reports of physical attacks, the desecration of religious or cultural symbols and the destruction of places of worship, including the destruction, in 2023, of ... 26 Christian churches [in Jaranwala] ...’¹⁵⁹

11.6.3 On 23 June 2024, the National Assembly of Pakistan adopted a resolution condemning recent incidents of mob violence and lynching in Swat and Sargodha, including against a Christian man, and reaffirmed that ‘the right to life is the most cherished right’ under the Constitution and that all persons must be treated in accordance with the law^{160 161}. The House expressed serious concern at the increase in such incidents, stating they ‘cannot be tolerated in any civilized society,’ and urged the federal and provincial governments to ensure the safety and security of all citizens, including religious minorities and other vulnerable groups^{162 163}. It also called on the provincial governments of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab to take immediate steps to identify, investigate and prosecute those responsible for the attacks in Swat and Sargodha, and emphasised the need for the courts to ensure prompt and effective justice^{164 165}.

11.6.4 In July 2025, UN human rights experts urged Pakistan to take concrete measures to prevent violence, ensure accountability for attacks on minorities, and address impunity. Though not referring directly to Christians, they highlighted continued risks faced by religious minorities and called for effective investigations and prosecutions¹⁶⁶.

11.6.5 Responding to a 2014 Supreme Court order to ensure ‘practical realisation’ of minority rights, Pakistan enacted the National Commission for Minorities Rights Act 2025 in December 2025, establishing a statutory body mandated to promote and protect the human rights of religious minorities. The National Commission was empowered to monitor the implementation of constitutional safeguards, review legislation and policies, investigate complaints, and make recommendations to federal and provincial authorities¹⁶⁷.

11.6.6 Sindh Police indicated in January 2024 that a special force for protection of

¹⁵⁹ UNCERD, [Concluding observations on the combined ...](#) (paragraph 23), 24 September 2024

¹⁶⁰ Business Recorder, [NA passes resolution, condemning nationwide mob ...](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁶¹ The Standard, [NA Resolution Seeks Action over Violence against Citizens ...](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁶² Business Recorder, [NA passes resolution, condemning nationwide mob ...](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁶³ The Standard, [NA Resolution Seeks Action over Violence against Citizens ...](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁶⁴ Business Recorder, [NA passes resolution, condemning nationwide mob ...](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁶⁵ The Standard, [NA Resolution Seeks Action over Violence against Citizens ...](#), 24 June 2024

¹⁶⁶ OHCHR, [Pakistan: Widespread impunity for violence and discrimination against ...](#), 24 July 2025

¹⁶⁷ LoC, [Pakistan: Parliament Creates National Commission to Protect Religious ...](#), 26 January 2026

minorities and their places of worship places would be ‘established soon.’¹⁶⁸ A May 2025 notification from the Government of Sindh Police Department, reproduced on Vocal Pakistan, a platform that publishes government notifications¹⁶⁹, stated that a ‘Special Police Force (SPF)’ had been established within Sindh Police for the protection of minority places of worship. The notification recorded that a force of 1,828 constables was appointed to the SPF in 2022 to 2023 and linked the initiative to implementation of the Supreme Court’s 2014 judgment. The notification requested details of deployed SPF personnel¹⁷⁰.

- 11.6.7 Reporting in August 2024 indicated that Facilitation Desks were established by Sindh’s Minorities Affairs Department at a divisional level across the province to ‘address and resolve the grievances’ of minority communities¹⁷¹. In November 2025, the Karachi Police Office (KPO) established ‘Minority Facilitation Desks’ across Karachi with the stated aim of ‘strengthening coordination, accessibility, and support for the religious minority communities across Karachi ...’ The initiative was inaugurated by the Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Provincial Assembly^{172 173}.
- 11.6.8 Christmas 2025 celebrations included visible security operations around churches across major cities^{174 175}. State-security measures were reported around churches during Easter 2026 celebrations^{176 177 178}. The 2024 Netherlands MoFA report noted that, according to a confidential source, police were ‘... positioned at principal churches on Sundays ...’¹⁷⁹
- 11.6.9 In January 2026, independent Catholic news source, UCA News, reported that police in a Muslim-majority village in Punjab province arrested a Muslim man for allegedly vandalising a church and desecrating the bible. The attack reportedly occurred following a dispute with a local Christian youth. Though security was increased following the incident, the local priest indicated that Muslims and Christians lived ‘together as one community in the village.’¹⁸⁰
- 11.6.10 The 2026 USCIRF report noted that ‘Christian community members criticized the Pakistani government for failing to deliver justice and accountability for the 2023 Jaranwala attacks, where mobs destroyed churches following blasphemy allegations. In June [2025], Christian communities accused authorities of ignoring evidence after a Pakistani court acquitted 10 Muslims involved in burning a church during the 2023 attacks.’¹⁸¹
- 11.6.11 In September 2025, Dawn news reported that victims of the 2023 Jaranwala attacks had yet to receive the financial compensation promised to them by the government. The same report added that ‘Despite the passage of two

¹⁶⁸ Dawn, [Special police force to be established for protection of minorities, their ...](#), 25 January 2024

¹⁶⁹ Vocal Pakistan, [About us](#), no date

¹⁷⁰ Vocal Pakistan, [Sindh Police Establishes Special Force for Protection of Minority ...](#), 15 May 2025

¹⁷¹ The Nation, [Facilitation desks set up to address minority community grievances](#), 11 August 2024

¹⁷² RVA, [Pakistan: Karachi Police launches ‘Minorities Protection Desks’ ...](#), 28 November 2025

¹⁷³ APP, [Karachi Police launches minority facilitation desk to strengthen ...](#), 27 November 2025

¹⁷⁴ Business Recorder, [Foolproof security to be ensured on Christmas](#), 17 December 2025

¹⁷⁵ Express Tribune, [Christmas celebrated across Pakistan amid tight security](#), 25 December 2025

¹⁷⁶ APP, [Over 30,000 cops to be deployed for Easter, Good Friday security in Punjab](#), 1 April 2026

¹⁷⁷ Pakistan Today, [30,000 Police on High Alert for Easter Events in Punjab](#), 1 April 2026

¹⁷⁸ News International, [Easter celebrated amid tight security](#), 6 April 2026

¹⁷⁹ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 64), 5 July 2024

¹⁸⁰ UCA News, [Pakistani Muslim nabbed for Church vandalism, Bible desecration](#), 6 January 2026

¹⁸¹ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 41), 2026

years ... only 381 out of 5,200 accused had been arrested while 380 accused had been released on bail.¹⁸²

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12. Societal treatment

12.1 Blasphemy allegations and attacks against Christians

- 12.1.1 According to a 2024 report on blasphemy-related extrajudicial killings, by the Pakistan think-tank, the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), between 1948 and May 2024, 104 people were extrajudicially killed following a blasphemy accusation. Of those, 30 were Christian and one was a convert to Christianity from Islam¹⁸³.
- 12.1.2 HRW noted in their June 2025 report that the blasphemy laws 'disproportionately harmed non-Muslim minorities'¹⁸⁴, adding in an explanation that 'In absolute numbers, most victims of blasphemy violence and persecution are Muslims. However, given that more than 98 percent of Pakistan's population is Muslim, non-Muslim victims of blasphemy are significantly overrepresented in proportional terms.'¹⁸⁵
- 12.1.3 The June 2025 HRW report described cases of blasphemy allegations made against Christians for potential economic gain, all of which pre-dated 2024, for example:
- in 2021, a Christian man was blackmailed with threats of blasphemy and apostasy allegations by his Muslim wife's family, who forced him to transfer ownership of his automobile business in exchange for their silence
 - in 2023, a Christian woman refused to sell her home to a neighbour, after which she was falsely accused of blasphemy and felt forced to sell up out of fear¹⁸⁶
- 12.1.4 A lawyer, who had represented several blasphemy defendants over the 10 years prior to the report's publication, told HRW 'In my experience, almost all blasphemy accusations in Pakistan are driven by personal motives and mostly by economic reasons. The accusation is a weapon to settle all kinds of scores. Religious minorities are additionally vulnerable, but everyone is vulnerable, even Muslim religious clerics are not immune. Anyone can weaponize this against anyone at any time in Pakistan. This is the sad reality.'¹⁸⁷
- 12.1.5 The 2025 CSOH report cited an attack against a 72-year-old Christian man in Sargodha, Punjab, in May 2024, after he was accused of desecrating pages of the Quran. He later died in hospital of his injuries. The report noted how hundreds of people '... ransacked Masih's house, burned down his shoe shop, and injured other Christians living in the same settlement as Masih before police intervened.'¹⁸⁸

¹⁸² Dawn, [Two years on, no justice for Jaranwala's Christians](#), 16 September 2025

¹⁸³ CRSS, [Faith and Fury: The Rise of Blasphemy-Driven Violence in Pakistan](#) (pages 21 to 22), 2024

¹⁸⁴ HRW, ["A Conspiracy to Grab the Land": Exploiting Pakistan's Blasphemy Laws ...](#), 9 June 2025

¹⁸⁵ HRW, ["A Conspiracy to Grab the Land": Exploiting Pakistan's ...](#) (footnote 11), 9 June 2025

¹⁸⁶ HRW, ["A Conspiracy to Grab the Land": Exploiting Pakistan's ...](#), 9 June 2025

¹⁸⁷ HRW, ["A Conspiracy to Grab the Land": Exploiting Pakistan's ...](#), 9 June 2025

¹⁸⁸ CSOH, [Systemic Persecution of Religious Minorities in Pakistan](#) (page 10), August 2025

- 12.1.6 The 2026 USCIRF report stated that ‘Violent attacks against religious minorities occurred with impunity ...’¹⁸⁹ Citing attacks on Christians, the report noted that,
- ‘In March [2025], a Muslim man attacked his coworker Waqas Masih, a 22-year-old Christian man, by slitting his throat, accusing him of committing blasphemy by touching an Islamic textbook with “unclean hands.” ... In September [2025], two gunmen attacked Christian pastor Kamran Naz as he traveled to Islamabad to lead a church service. The pastor previously received death threats and was accused of “proselytizing among Afghan refugees.”’¹⁹⁰
- 12.1.7 In December 2025, Pastor Kamran Naz, who had survived an assassination attempt the previous September, was shot dead in Gujranwala district by unknown gunmen^{191 192}. It was later reported by Christian news site, Worthy News, that the pastor’s murder was not ‘an act of Islamic extremism’, but was planned by his wife and her alleged lover. It was not clear whether the earlier attempt on the pastor’s life was connected to his murder¹⁹³.

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12.2 Forced conversions and forced marriage

- 12.2.1 According to Pakistani law, marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim person is allowed if the non-Muslim partner accepts Islam and converts voluntarily¹⁹⁴.
- 12.2.2 The 2025 CSJ report noted that ‘While forced conversion itself is not legally defined and explicitly criminalized in Pakistan, offenses such as abduction, child marriage, forced marriage, and sexual violence are recognized under the law. However, weak enforcement, judicial biases, and societal pressures enable perpetrators to act with impunity.’¹⁹⁵
- 12.2.3 In March 2026, a bill was introduced in the Punjab Assembly that would expressly criminalise forced religious conversions and provide penalties of up to five years’ imprisonment. At the time of reporting, it was a proposed provincial law rather than enacted legislation^{196 197}.
- 12.2.4 The CSJ report noted:
- ‘According to data compiled by CSJ, at least 83 cases involving the abduction and forced conversion of minority girls and women were reported in 2024 in Pakistan. Among the girl victims, 63% were Hindu, and 37% were Christian. Geographically, 72% of these cases occurred in Sindh, while 28% were reported in Punjab.
- ‘At least 421 cases were reported between January 2021 and December 2024 in Pakistan of abduction and forced conversion of minority girls and

¹⁸⁹ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 40), 2026

¹⁹⁰ USCIRF, [2026 Annual Report](#) (page 40), 2026

¹⁹¹ CLAAS, [Pastor Kamran Naz Shot Dead in Gujranwala After Surviving Earlier ...](#), 8 December 2025

¹⁹² Worthy News, [Pakistani Police Investigate Killing of Pastor](#), 8 December 2025

¹⁹³ Worthy News, [Pakistan Pastor Murder Case Takes Dramatic Turn As ...](#), 29 December 2025

¹⁹⁴ Court Marriage Karachi, [Religious conversion process under Pakistani law for ...](#), 8 January 2026

¹⁹⁵ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 11), April 2025

¹⁹⁶ Pakistan Today, [Punjab Assembly Criminalizes Forced Conversions](#), 31 March 2026

¹⁹⁷ Morning Star News, [Bill Would Criminalize Forced Conversion in Punjab, Pakistan](#), 1 April 2026

women. Among the victims, 282 Hindu girls were the most affected, followed by 137 Christian girls and 2 Sikh girls.¹⁹⁸

12.2.5 CSW reported that, in 2025, its partners in Pakistan had documented 94 cases involving the abduction, forced conversion and forced marriage of religious minority women and girls – an increase from 83 in 2024 – of whom 24% were Christian and 76% Hindu¹⁹⁹. CSW added that ‘The true figures are assumed to be much higher as many cases are not reported due to the intimidation of victims and their families by abductors, their relatives, or extremist groups.’²⁰⁰

12.2.6 HRCP reported in 2025 that:

‘According to a veteran human rights activist from the Christian community in Punjab, the issue of forced conversion is much more complicated: “It is not merely a religious issue but also economic and social as the minorities, especially the Christians, belong to the lowest rung of society.” According to him, the underage Christian girls constitute the bulk of those converting to Islam. In such cases, the police are often perceived as siding with the abductor. “They now say that since the girl has converted to Islam, it would be haram to send her back. Even if the FIR [First Information Report, a document which initiates a criminal investigation²⁰¹] is filed, the parents are threatened so severely that they give up their claim to their daughter,” he says.’²⁰²

12.2.7 In April 2026, UN experts reported their concern at continued patterns of abduction, forced religious conversion and forced marriage to Muslim men, affecting women and girls from minority communities, around 25% of whom in 2025 were Christian. The statement noted that many cases involved minors and that complaints were often dismissed by police, investigations were inadequate and victims’ ages were not properly assessed²⁰³.

12.2.8 Christian Daily International reported on protests that took place on 29 March 2026 following a Federal Constitutional Court ruling that upheld the forced conversion and marriage of a 13-year-old Christian girl to a 30-year-old Muslim man²⁰⁴. According to UCA News, the court had questioned the reliability of NADRA and union council records regarding the girl’s age²⁰⁵. Speakers at the rally warned of a ‘rising pattern of abductions, forced conversions and marriages involving Christian girls.’²⁰⁶

12.2.9 The 2025 CSOH report noted that:

‘In February 2025, a civil court in Punjab, Pakistan, annulled the marriage of 25-year-old Shahida Bibi, a Christian woman who was forced to convert to Islam as a child by her abductor. The court declared her marriage to Shehzad Akhtar Khan invalid and restored her Christian identity upon her request. According to reports and statements by her lawyer, “the ruling also

¹⁹⁸ CSJ, [Human Rights Observer 2025](#) (page 13), April 2025

¹⁹⁹ CSW, [CSW welcomes criminalisation of child marriages in Punjab](#), 30 April 2026

²⁰⁰ CSW, [CSW welcomes criminalisation of child marriages in Punjab](#), 30 April 2026

²⁰¹ Law Juriist, [First Information Report and its History](#), 28 December 2024

²⁰² HRCP, [Streets of Fear, Freedom of religion or belief in 2024/25](#) (page 10), 2025

²⁰³ OHCHR, [UN experts concerned by forced conversion through marriage in Pakistan](#), 22 April 2026

²⁰⁴ Christian Daily International, [Protests mounted over forcible conversion/ ...](#), 31 March 2026

²⁰⁵ UCA News, [Pakistan courts questioned on Christian girl's marriage ruling](#), 22 April 2026

²⁰⁶ Christian Daily International, [Protests mounted over forcible conversion/ ...](#), 31 March 2026

directed the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to issue a new identity card for Bibi, reinstating her religious status as Christian and deleting her marital status.”²⁰⁷

- 12.2.10 For further information on early and forced marriage, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Pakistan: Women fearing gender-based violence](#).

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12.3 Christian converts

- 12.3.1 Echoing their 2024²⁰⁸ and 2025²⁰⁹ WWL reports, the Open Doors WWL 2026 noted that Christians with a Muslim background were regarded as apostates by ‘radical Islamist groups’, and that other members of society saw conversion as ‘a shameful act of betrayal.’²¹⁰ The WWL 2026 did not provide further detail, but said that converts to Christianity from Islam ‘suffer the greatest religious freedom violations’ from ‘radical Islamist groups’ as well as from their families, friends and neighbours²¹¹.
- 12.3.2 Without providing further detail, a confidential source told the Netherlands MoFA that ‘... Muslims who convert (particularly if they do so openly) risk being killed.’²¹² The report added ‘Pakistani society is highly hostile to ... converts from Islam to other faiths, and the dangers to those concerned are great.’²¹³
- 12.3.3 The Netherlands MoFA report noted ‘An apostate can very easily be charged for blasphemy under the blasphemy laws.’²¹⁴ UCA News stated in July 2025 that ‘People who renounce Islam in Pakistan are often branded murtad (apostates) ...’²¹⁵

See also Legal context – [Apostasy \(renouncing Islam\)](#) and [Proselytising, and possessing or displaying Christian material](#)

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²⁰⁷ CSOH, [Systemic Persecution of Religious Minorities in Pakistan](#) (page 7), August 2025

²⁰⁸ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2024: Pakistan](#) (pages 1 and 3), no date

²⁰⁹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2025: Pakistan](#) (pages 2 and 3), no date

²¹⁰ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 1), no date

²¹¹ Open Doors, [World Watch List 2026: Pakistan](#) (page 3), no date

²¹² Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 66), 5 July 2024

²¹³ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 69), 5 July 2024

²¹⁴ Netherlands MoFA, [General COI Report on Pakistan](#) (page 69), 5 July 2024

²¹⁵ UCA News, [Pakistan court paves way for official recognition of Christian convert](#), 3 July 2025

Annex A

Letter to CPIT from the British High Commission (BHC), Islamabad

Dated: 15 February 2021

Re-issued: 21 February 2024, 9 July 2026

Can converts to Christianity live freely and openly in Pakistan? Are they at risk of an “honour” killing owing to their conversion? Is internal relocation an option, i.e. would any areas be deemed “safer” for Christians than others?

We consulted internally with our Political Section, who deal with humanitarian and human rights issues. In short, it is difficult to corroborate the real situation, as this is a frequently hidden problem; our view is that converts would probably not want to draw additional attention to themselves. However, we have ascertained the following anecdotal evidence from our dealings with external contacts in Pakistan:-

- Firstly, in our opinion it would be difficult for Christian converts to live freely and openly in Pakistan, as converts over and above being Christian. It is our view that people who are known to have converted to Christianity suffer serious discrimination, for example in the workplace or by the authorities. It is far more difficult for people in Pakistan who are known to have converted to Christianity, than it is for people who were born Christian.
- We understand that it would be rare for someone to convert to Christianity, or at least to do so openly, in Pakistan. It is therefore something of note for the community, with potential repercussions.
- Our Political Section considered that internal relocation may be possible, in theory, as there were Christian communities in many urban areas such as Rawalpindi, and across Punjab and Sindh provinces. Due to the anonymity afforded by moving to an urban area, it may be feasible to relocate and not reveal the fact of the conversion. However, our view was also that the Christian communities were themselves becoming increasingly isolated from other communities. Therefore whilst it may be more difficult to socially exclude and harass a Christian who lives in a larger Christian community, it does not necessary preclude that harassment.
- Finally, it was our view that Christian converts were not at risk of an honour killing, despite these difficulties, as these are normally related to property disputes or perceived dishonourable behaviour rather than matters of faith or principle.

This letter has been compiled by staff of the British High Commission in Islamabad entirely from information obtained from the sources indicated. The letter does not reflect the opinions of the author(s), or any policy of the British High Commission. The author(s) have compiled this letter in response to a request from the Home Office and any further enquiries regarding its contents should be directed to the Home Office.

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Terms of Reference

The 'Terms of Reference' are the main topics and issues relevant to the scope of this note and provides the framework for the country information. In this note, they were:

- Demography
 - Population
 - Location of communities
- Churches
 - How many
 - Accessibility
- Legal framework
 - Legal rights for minority religious groups
 - Personal laws
 - Apostasy and blasphemy laws
- Social, economic and cultural rights
 - Access to education and employment
 - Political representation
- State treatment and attitudes
 - Christian festivals
 - Protection and security
 - Blasphemy – application, convictions, response to misuse
- Societal treatment and attitudes
 - Blasphemy allegations
 - Attacks against community
 - Forced marriage and conversion to Islam
 - Converts to Christianity

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

3rd Floor

28 Kirby Street

London

EC1N 8TE

Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

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