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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom strongly condemns a series of terror attacks that took place on January 10 targeting Pakistani Shi'a Muslims. The United States must press the Pakistani government to do more to protect their minority Shi'a Muslim community.

“The murder of innocent civilians because of their religious beliefs is outrageous and tragic, and we extend our condolences to their families,” stated USCIRF Chair Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett. “In response, the Pakistani government must take concrete and meaningful action to protect the minority Shi'a Muslim community. Over the past year, more than 400 Shi'a reportedly have been murdered. If the government doesn't crack down on militants openly targeting Shi'a Muslims, the body count will continue to rise and the religious life of the Shi'a community will further be threatened.”

The January 10 bombings killed 120 individuals across Pakistan, including 81 who died in twin bombings on a pool hall in a Shiite area of Quetta in Baluchistan province. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, a Sunni militant group affiliated with the Pakistani Taliban, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Other attacks have targeted religious processionalists and pilgrims travelling to religious sites.

“The Pakistani government has not acted and the worsening climate has reached critical levels for all religious communities in Pakistan, Muslim and non-Muslim alike,” said Lantos Swett. In addition to the increasing number of targeted attacks on Shi'a Muslims, USCIRF is aware of 17 individuals who are on death row and 20 serving life sentences under Pakistan's blasphemy law. Furthermore, the murderers of Shahbaz Bhatti, the assassinated Federal Minister for Minority Affairs, remain at large and the investigation has ended. The Ahmadi community continues to suffer from violence, discrimination and abuse, and Hindus increasingly are among the victims of Pakistan's climate of intolerance.

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