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The tragic and brutal assassination today of Shahbaz Bhatti, Pakistan's cabinet Minister for Minority Affairs, was an "outgrowth of that country's blasphemy law, which fuels extremism and violence rather than keeping the peace," said the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) today.

Assassinated today in Islamabad by unknown attackers, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the killing. Bhatti was courageously vocal in his call to amend the flawed blasphemy law, which severely abuses the religious freedoms of Christians and Muslims. Bhatti worked tirelessly for interfaith tolerance and understanding.

"The brutal assassination was an outgrowth of that country's blasphemy law, which fuels extremism and violence rather than keeping the peace," said Leonard Leo, USCIRF chair. "Threats against his life were widely known, but Minister Bhatti continued to courageously advocate against the forces of violent extremism and the blasphemy law," said Mr. Leo. "The Commission extends its deepest condolences to the family and friends of Minister Bhatti. He was our friend. He will be missed."