

PAKISTAN

USCIRF-RECOMMENDED FOR COUNTRIES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN (CPC)

KEY FINDINGS

In 2025, religious freedom conditions in Pakistan continued along a troubling trajectory. The government continued to enforce its strict blasphemy law, impacting people of all faiths, including religious minorities. Increasing vigilante attacks and mob violence targeting religious minorities, specifically Ahmadiyya Muslims and Christians, contributed to an intensified climate of fear and intolerance.

Authorities continued to wield the blasphemy law and its death penalty provision to punish those deemed to have insulted Islam. In January, four individuals were sentenced to death for allegedly posting blasphemous content on social media. The same month, a mentally ill Christian man, Farhan Masih, was imprisoned on blasphemy and terrorism charges. Despite being acquitted, Masih could not return to his village out of fear for his safety. In February, a sessions court sentenced another man to death after a member of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) accused him of “insulting religious sentiment.” The following month, the Lahore High Court removed from its case list [Junaid Hafeez’s](#) appeal hearing related to charges of blasphemy. Authorities have held Hafeez in solitary confinement since 2014, and a sessions court sentenced him to death in 2019. His trial has been pending since 2020.

Violent attacks against religious minorities occurred with impunity and in some cases under accusations of forced conversions. In March, 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.” Days later, a Muslim man shot and killed a Hindu man, Nadeem Naath, after he allegedly refused to convert to Islam.

In September, 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.”

Reports of forced conversions among Hindu and Christian girls in Punjab and Sindh Provinces continued throughout 2025. In February, a 12-year-old Christian girl was reportedly forcibly converted to Islam and married to a 35-year-old man in Sindh Province. In July, the Sindh Human Rights Commission expressed concern about the alleged abduction and forced conversion to Islam of a 15-year-old Hindu girl, Shahneela, in Matli. In a police report, her uncle alleged that two armed men forcibly entered the family’s home and kidnapped Shahneela.

Throughout Pakistan, authorities continued to impose restrictions on Ahmadiyya Muslims’ ability to practice their faith and allowed for assaults against Ahmadiyya mosques. In February, a mob of TLP members destroyed minarets of an Ahmadiyya mosque in Sialkot without police intervention. In March, authorities arrested dozens of Ahmadiyya Muslims, including children, for offering Friday prayers. Days later, police issued two First Instance Reports against two dozen Ahmadiyya Muslims, based on a complaint from TLP members that the community was sacrificing animals for Eid-ul-Adha. In April, a mob affiliated with the TLP stormed an Ahmadiyya mosque to prevent the community from offering Friday prayers. During the attack, the mob beat to death an Ahmadiyya man, Laeeq Cheema. Police allegedly did not intervene to stop the attack. In December, parliament passed the National Commission for Minority Rights Bill, which the law minister insisted would not override the existing anti-Ahmadiyya law.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

- Redesignate Pakistan as a “country of particular concern,” or CPC, for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA);
- Lift the existing waiver, or do not issue a waiver, releasing the administration from taking otherwise legislatively mandated action as a result of the CPC designation;
- Impose targeted sanctions on Pakistani officials and government agencies responsible for severe violations of religious freedom by freezing those individuals’ assets and/or barring their entry into the United States under human rights-related financial and visa authorities, citing specific religious freedom violations; and
- Enter into a binding agreement with the Pakistani government, under Section 405(c) of IRFA, to encourage substantial steps to address violations of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) with benchmarks, including but not limited to:
 - Releasing individuals imprisoned for blasphemy or their religion or beliefs;
 - Repealing blasphemy and anti-Ahmadiyya laws and, until such repeal, enacting reforms to make blasphemy a bailable offense, require evidence by accusers, conduct proper investigations by senior police officials, and allow authorities to dismiss unfounded accusations; and enforcing existing penal code articles criminalizing perjury and false accusations; and
- Holding accountable individuals who incite or participate in vigilante violence, targeted killings, forced conversion, and other religiously based crimes.

The U.S. Congress should:

- Incorporate religious freedom concerns into its larger oversight of the U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relationship through hearings, letters, resolutions, and congressional delegations and advocate for the release of FoRB prisoners in Pakistan.

KEY USCIRF RESOURCES & ACTIVITIES

- **Country Update:** [Pakistan](#)
- **Spotlight Podcast:** [Persecution of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Pakistan](#)
- **Frank R. Wolf Freedom of Religion or Belief** [Victims List](#) and [Appendix 2](#)

Background

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a constitutional democracy, led by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. Pakistan's estimated population is 252 million, of which 96.5 percent are Muslim (85–90 percent Sunni and 10–15 percent Shi'a) and 3.5 percent belong to other religious communities, including Christians and Hindus. Pakistan's constitution establishes Islam as the state religion while including provisions designed to prohibit faith-based discrimination and guaranteeing the right to religious practices, with the exception of Ahmadiyya Muslims. A 1974 amendment to Pakistan's constitution declared Ahmadis as non-Muslims, excluding them from political representation and equal voting rights. Additionally, Pakistan's stratified social system confines Christians, Hindus, and other religious minorities to low wage and dangerous jobs.

Long-Term Impacts of Blasphemy Accusations

While Pakistani authorities acquitted several individuals accused of blasphemy throughout the year, societal discrimination and years of poor treatment in prison continued to severely impact the released prisoners. In July, Pakistan's Supreme Court acquitted a Christian man, [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.

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, Christian communities accused authorities of ignoring evidence after a Pakistani court acquitted 10 Muslims involved in burning a church during the 2023 attacks. In August, victims of the Jaranwala attacks held protests to mark the two-year anniversary and reiterated calls for government action.

In July, 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, and the order was subsequently suspended. In October, 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.

Opposition to Address Forced Conversions

In May, Pakistan's National Assembly unanimously passed the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Bill to curb child marriages and, by extension, forced conversions of underage girls. Under the legislation, those who facilitate or coerce a child into marriage, including family members or clerics, can face up to seven years' imprisonment. Pakistan's Council of Islamic Ideology strongly opposed the bill and declared it "un-Islamic" for not conforming with Islamic injunctions. Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman called for rallies protesting the law. Leaders of the Mili Yakjethi Council (MYC) similarly condemned the bill, calling it un-Islamic and unconstitutional.

Attacks on Places of Worship

In 2025, several attacks or threats of violence against places of worship occurred. In February, the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad [reported](#) that Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) threatened to attack Faisal Mosque. In response, the embassy prohibited U.S. employee travel to the area. In March, at least six people, including a chief clerk, were killed by a suicide attack after Friday prayers at an Islamic seminary in northern Pakistan. In May, an estimated 445 religious seminaries in Pakistan-administered Kashmir closed for 10 days, citing fear of Indian air strikes following the deadly attack on Hindu tourists in Kashmir. In October, three gunmen attacked an Ahmadiyya mosque in Rabwah, wounding six worshippers. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Deportation of Afghan Refugees

Throughout 2025, the Pakistani government continued its efforts to forcibly expel thousands of Afghan refugees, including religious minorities, back to Afghanistan. This included Hazara Shi'as, whom the Taliban persecute and view as apostates. In July, the United Nations (UN) [reported](#) risks of arbitrary detention and torture for those involuntarily returned to Afghanistan. Following its September deadline to repatriate Afghan refugees, including those holding Proof of Registration (PoR) cards and seeking U.S. resettlement, the Pakistani government announced it would shut down 16 refugee camps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Punjab.

Key U.S. Policy

In 2025, the United States continued to engage diplomatically with the Pakistani government on issues of counterterrorism, trade, and tensions in Kashmir. In May, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio [announced](#) a "U.S.-brokered" ceasefire between India and Pakistan over escalations in Kashmir. Subsequently, in June, President Donald J. Trump hosted Pakistani Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir at the White House to discuss Kashmir tensions. In September, President Trump hosted Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif at the White House to discuss trade negotiations. In April, the U.S. Department of State's senior official for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Eric Meyer, [traveled](#) to Pakistan "to advance U.S. interests in the critical minerals sector." In August, the governments of the United States and Pakistan held the [U.S.-Pakistan Counterterrorism Dialogue](#) in Islamabad, where they discussed approaches to addressing threats posed by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-Khorasan, and TTP. The same month, Secretary Rubio announced the designation of the BLA as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

In July, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a [hearing](#) examining political repression in Pakistan. Witness testimony included discussion of the Pakistani government's persecution of religious minorities. In September, Congress introduced the [Pakistan Freedom and Accountability Act](#) with bipartisan support. The resolution calls on the U.S. government to impose sanctions on those deemed to have violated human rights in Pakistan, including high-level officials.

The U.S. Department of State last [redesignated](#) Pakistan as a CPC under IRFA for particularly severe violations of religious freedom on December 29, 2023. Any presidential action taken as a result of this designation terminates by the end of 2025 unless expressly reauthorized by law.