

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1215

Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

PAKISTAN: Concerns about two bills that increase blasphemy punishment

PAKISTAN: Concerns about two Bills that increase blasphemy punishment and fail minorities

CSW (11.08.2023) – CSW is concerned about two Bills passed in Pakistan’s legislature that increase the punishment for blasphemy offences, and fail to adequately safeguard minority rights.

The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2023 was passed in Pakistan's Senate on 7 August, which increases the punishment for blasphemy offences. On the same day, Pakistan's lower house, the National Assembly, passed the National Commission for Minorities Bill 2023 which fails to adequately safeguard the rights of religious minorities.

The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2023 increases the punishment for insulting the Prophet Mohammed's companions, wives, and family members from three years to life imprisonment, not to be less than ten years. Civil society and minority communities in Pakistan warned that the legislation could fuel rights abuses and be used to further target religious minorities when it was first approved by the National Assembly in January 2023.

Minority groups in Pakistan have expressed their concerns that the government has ignored their calls, and a plea from the Human Rights Minister Riaz Hussain Pirzada who in a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in February 2023 requested that the Bill be revisited and reversed.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws criminalise anyone who insults Islam, including by 'outraging religious feeling', which carries either the death penalty or life imprisonment. These laws are poorly defined and require low standards of evidence. As a result, they are often used as a weapon of revenge against both Muslims and non-Muslims to settle personal scores or to resolve disputes over money, property or business.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly of Pakistan passed the

National Commission for Minorities Bill 2023 on 7 August. According to civil society groups in Pakistan, the bill's provisions are inconsistent with the UN Paris Principles, which outlines how national institutions should promote and protect human rights. The Bill also falls short of meeting the directives of the Pakistan Supreme Court judgement of 19 June 2014, which urged the government to take immediate steps towards enacting a more robust and comprehensive National Commission for Minorities' Rights. While the Bill was passed to address the concerns of minorities, civil society groups assert that it falls short of creating a truly functional, effective, independent, autonomous, and resourceful institution to safeguard minority rights.

CSW's Founder President Mervyn Thomas said: 'CSW is deeply disappointed by the passage of the Criminal Amendment Act 2023, given the overwhelming evidence of how the existing blasphemy legislation has resulted in extra-judicial killings and countless incidents of mob violence based on false accusations. Making the blasphemy laws more stringent could inflame the situation further and is the opposite of what is needed. The National Commission for Minorities Bill 2023, meanwhile, is a missed opportunity to enact legislation that safeguards the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan as policymakers have failed to engage with the demands of civil society organisations and minority community leaders. Pakistan must do more to protect its most vulnerable minority communities by upholding its international obligations and the guarantees enshrined within the country's constitution. The government must also consult and listen to these communities.'

[Further reading about FORB in Pakistan on HRWF website](#)

Notice: Undefined index: et_footer_layout in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-**

content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line **1267**

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1267**

Notice: Undefined index: **et_footer_layout** in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1268**

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1268**

Notice: Undefined index: **et_template** in **/home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php** on line **1269**