

**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/COVID-19: Hazara Shia's scapegoated in Balochistan**

*"We are troubled that government officials in Balochistan are scapegoating the already vulnerable and marginalized Hazara Shi'a community for this public health crisis"*

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (31.03.2020) – <https://bit.ly/3dPl6wm> – The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) today expressed its concern over reports of the provincial

government of Balochistan, Pakistan targeting Hazara Shi'a for the spread of coronavirus.

*"We are troubled that government officials in Balochistan are scapegoating the already vulnerable and marginalized Hazara Shi'a community for this public health crisis,"* stated USCIRF Commissioner Anurima Bhargava. *"This virus does not recognize religion, ethnicity, or border and should not be used as an excuse to discriminate against a single community."*

In the provincial capital Quetta, the government completely sealed off two Hazara areas—Hazara Town and Marriabad—as part of a lockdown in the city; forbade government employees from traveling into Hazara neighborhoods; and reportedly forced Hazara policemen to go on leave under suspicion they are infected by relatives. Social media users have made allusions to coronavirus as the "Shi'a virus," given fears of its spread by pilgrims returning from Iran. This isolation and further stigmatization of the Hazara minority could limit their ability to receive proper medical care as the coronavirus continues to spread within Pakistan and stretch its public health infrastructure.

USCIRF Commissioner Johnnie Moore added, *"We are gravely concerned about Pakistan's Hazara Shi'a community. We understand the many challenges the Pakistani government, and many other governments around the world, are facing to contain this deadly virus. Yet, we urge the Pakistani leadership to work to protect all its citizens, regardless of religion or belief, and ensure that everyone has equal access to the necessary medical treatment. In fact, governments have a greater obligation to protect the most vulnerable in an emergency like this one."*

In its 2019 Annual Report, USCIRF noted the rise in sectarian violence in Pakistan in recent years, and how Hazara Shi'a Muslims have been targeted by extremist groups including the Islamic State, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and the Pakistani Taliban.

**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_footer\_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1266

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**Notice:** Undefined index: et\_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public\_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268