

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

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PAKISTAN: Foreign NGO women under threat of forced marriage

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Senior clerics in Kohistan stated that if a single foreign woman is caught accompanying a marriageable Pakistani man, she should marry him.

by Massimo Introvigne

Bitter Winter (07.11.2023) – Several NGOs operate in Pakistan to bring charitable aid to afflicted areas. Although there may always be exceptions and incidents, both men and women in international NGOs are normally instructed about the cultural sensitivities prevailing in Pakistan and try to respect them.

However, what happened last week in Kohistan, a part of the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, took the NGOs by surprise. A group of twelve local clerics issued a fatwa against NGO women seen in the streets walking or “mingling” with Pakistani men.

The statement says that if the foreign woman is single and the Pakistani man is in a position to marry her, they should marry. With respect to the man, this means that he should be either single or have three wives or less, and they consent to a new marriage, as Pakistani law allows Muslim men to practice polygamy according to the shari’a.

While single NGO women seen with marriageable local men should marry them, those who are not single or who have “accompanied” a man who is not in a position to marry them should be expelled from the country.

The local civil authorities told the media that the fatwa has no legal value. But radical Muslims circulate it through social media and in a restless area there are always extra-legal ways to enforce such pronouncements.

A senior cleric told the media that, “NGO women who disregard our directives should consider leaving Kohistan voluntarily, otherwise, we may take measures to either remove them or facilitate their marriages to the colleagues they are seen with.”

Obviously, such incidents would also discourage foreign women to work in Pakistan as volunteers, to the detriment of those who need their help.

Photo : Kohistan clerics. From Facebook.

Further reading about FORB in Pakistan on HRWF website

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