



Jubilee Campaign Submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material

Sexual Exploitation of Pakistani Girls

I. The Abduction, Forced Marriage, and Coerced Religious Conversion of Minority Girls in Pakistan

In Pakistan, one of the most egregious human rights and religious freedom violations is the trend in which religious minority girls – primarily Christian and Hindu – are kidnapped by radical Muslim men, coerced into abandoning their faith and converting to Islam, and forced to marry their abductors despite that they are children. One of the most famous cases is that of 13-year-old Christian girl Arzoo Raja who, in October 2020, was abducted by her 45-year-old Muslim neighbor Azhar Ali. Ali then submitted falsified documentation to register Arzoo's forced conversion to Islam, which the authorities approved without any investigation whatsoever. Ali further provided forged documents that alleged that Arzoo was 18 years old and therefore legally marriageable; authorities turned a blind eye to the documentation submitted by Arzoo's family (i.e., birth certificate, school registration records) which proved that Arzoo was underage and that she was subjected to child marriage.¹

While Arzoo's case may be the most widely known of Pakistan's abduction, conversion, and marriage cases, hers is neither the first nor last in a long string of related incidents. In October 2019, 14-year-old Christian girl Huma Younus was kidnapped by Muslim man Abdul Jabbar and transported to a faraway city; in the days following her disappearance, Huma's family received religious conversion papers and a marriage certificate, both of which Huma's mother Nagina insists are fake. Huma's family has received numerous threats of violence by the girl's captor and his brother, including pictures of lethal weapons, if they try to look for their daughter. Despite that the family provided a baptism certificate and other documentation of Huma's age, authorities have refused to investigate the case and it was reported in July 2020 that Huma has become pregnant due to the sexual violence inflicted by her abductor.²

¹ Jubilee Campaign, *Abduction, Conversion and Child Marriage: of Religious Minority Girls in Pakistan*, November 2020.

² Oplndia, "[Pakistani Christian girl abducted and forcibly converted to Islam, now pregnant and confined to one room due to sexual assault by abductor Abdul](#)", 18 July 2020.

Also in 2019, 14-year-old Christian girl Neha Pervaiz was tricked by her Muslim aunt to visit her cousin in the hospital; instead, Neha was taken to her aunt's in-laws and was told she would marry her aunt's 45-year-old Muslim brother-in-law named Imran. Neha initially refused, but she gave in when her aunt threatened to harm her and her two-year-old brother. Under coercion, Neha married Imran in court, signed documents with her new forced name 'Fatima', and was locked in a room for a week and sexually abused. In May 2020, with the help of Imran's daughter, Neha escaped and returned home; now, Neha is safely housed in a church in Karachi, and in November 2020 the Islamic cleric who performed the marriage of Neha and Imran was arrested.³

In April 2020, 14-year-old Christian girl Myra Shehbaz was on her way to complete activities as a domestic worker in Faisalabad when she was abducted from the street and forced into a vehicle by a group of Muslim men led by Muhammad Naqash. Myra's mother fears her daughter may be "raped, forcefully converted to Islam, or even killed."⁴ Despite Myra's family providing documents proving Myra to be a minor, the court accepted false documentation of the perpetrator, Naqash, which alleged that Myra was of age. In August, the High Court decided that the marriage and religious conversion were both legal and that Myra must remain with Naqash and "be a good wife".⁵

In June 2020, 12-year-old Christian girl Farah Shaheen was kidnapped by three men, forced to marry one of her captors, a 29-year-old Muslim man, before he shackled her, raped her, and subjected her to forced labor in inhumane conditions.⁶ After authorities rescued her in December 2020, Farah provided a likely-forced statement that she had married her captor and changed religions by choice, and police dropped the case.

In July 2020, 15-year-old Saneha Kinza Iqbal was kidnapped on her way to church by 30-year-old Muslim man Saeed Amanat. When Saneha did not return home after church prayers, her family contacted the police after hearing that a neighbor saw Saneha and Amanat in a car together. Police refused to register a case or investigate, and Saneha's brother visited Amanat's home, where Amanat's father reassured that Saneha would be returned in a few days' time. However, Saneha's family later received a phone call from Amanat that he would not return Saneha to her family.⁷

In November 2020, 13-year-old Hindu Dalit girl Sonia Kumari was kidnapped by armed men and forcibly converted to Islam in Sindh province. Shortly following the incident, Sonia's mother and four siblings pleaded in a video for Prime Minister Imran Khan and the nation's Supreme Court to recover Sonia and safely return her home; however, a Hindu human rights activist recently received a letter from Sonia's family alleging that Sonia had willingly converted and married to her 36-year-old captor. The activist believes the family was coerced into making this statement and that in reality they have given up hope on Sonia's case.⁸

³ Kathy Gannon, "[Each year, 1,000 Pakistani girls forcibly converted to Islam](#)", ABC News, 28 December 2020. ; Zahid Hussain, "[Pakistani cleric faces arrest for marriage of Christian girl](#)", *Union of Catholic Asian News*, 11 November 2020.

⁴ International Christian Concern, "[14-Year-Old Pakistani Christian Girl Abducted in Faisalabad District](#)", 2 May 2020. ; Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab, "[Yet Another Girl In Pakistan Abducted, Forcibly Converted And Forcibly 'Married' To Her Abductor](#)", *Forbes*, 8 May 2020.

⁵ The Voice of the Martyrs, "[Teen Girls Kidnapped for Forcible Marriages](#)", 3 September 2020.

⁶ Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab, "[Another Religious Minority Girl Kidnapped, Raped And Chained Up By Her Abductor In Pakistan](#)", *Forbes*, 5 February 2021.

⁷ The Voice of the Martyrs, "[Teen Girls Kidnapped for Forcible Marriages](#)", 3 September 2020.

⁸ Church Leaders, "[Each Year 1,000 Pakistani Girls Forcibly Converted to Islam](#)", 28 December 2020. ; Vikram, "[13-year-old Sonia Kumari's mother pleads with Pakistani State to recover her daughter](#)", *Hindu Post*, 7 November 2020.

In February 2021, an underaged Hindu girl, Neena Kumari failed to return home from school one day, and her family later learned that policeman Ghulam Maroof Qadri abducted Neena, forced her to convert to Islam, renamed her 'Maria', and then married her in Karachi, 400 kilometers away from her home. The marriage certificate, which was later uploaded to social media, alleges that Neena is 19 years old, but her family asserts that she is a minor.⁹

Also in February 2021, Hindu girl Reena Meghwar was abducted from Keriogjar, Badar, and forcibly converted to Islam and married to her kidnapper; though the family filed an FIR, the police did not register the case nor did they search for the girl. Two months later in April 2021, Reena was filmed on the terrace of a house crying and asking passersby's to help her escape and return home.¹⁰

In March 2021, 13-year-old Hindu girl Kavita Oad was kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam in Sindh Province by Islamic cleric Mian Mithoo; it is still unconfirmed if she has been married off to her kidnapper. Days after the incident, an unidentified group of radical Islamist individuals set fire to Kavita's family's home.¹¹

In May 2021, 13-year-old Christian girl Nayab Gill was kidnapped in Punjab by a Muslim man named Saddam who is already married with four daughters, and forced to marry him against her will and convert to Islam. Nayab's mother explained that in a call with her daughter, Nayab claimed that she did not want to return and that she wishes her family would consider her dead; Nayab's mother strongly believes she was forced into making these statements out of fear of reprisal from her kidnapper. She also believes that Saddam had brainwashed Nayab into believing that Christianity was an "irrational faith" and that the only true religion is Islam. The Pakistani court refused to hear Nayab's family's pleas nor review the victim's birth certificate and ruled in favor of the perpetrator.¹²

In July 2021, 9-year-old Christian girl Elisha from Hyderabad was alone at home when 45-year-old Muslim man Babar forcefully entered the home, beat, and raped Elisha.¹³

In August 2021, an unnamed 14-year-old Christian girl went missing from her family home while preparing for an exam she was to take the following morning. The ninth-grader's parents were initially suspicious of a local resident and the son of a PTI party leader. Noreen was initially told by the PTI leader that her daughter would be returned soon, but she received more information later on that her daughter had married her abductor and converted to Islam. When Noreen reached out to the PTI later on, he threatened both her daughter's and her family's safety. Noreen has since reported that the local authorities refused to file a First Information Report (FIR), claimed that her daughter likely eloped and converted willingly, and ignored the case.¹⁴

In August 2021, two Christian sisters, 16-year-old Muqds Nadeem and 12-year-old Mehwish Nadeem were alone at home when a group of six Muslim men led by Muhammad Azeem forced

⁹ Yudhvir Rana, "[Pakistani Hindu girl abducted by cop, forced to convert](#)", *The Times of India*, 17 February 2021.

¹⁰ OpIndia, "[Pakistan: Hindu girl who was kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam seen in a video pleading for help](#)", 27 April 2021.

¹¹ OpIndia, "[Pakistan: Goons torch the house of 13-year-old Kavita who was kidnapped and forcefully converted to Islam in Sindh](#)", 2 arrested.

¹² OpIndia, "[Pakistan: Father of four abducts and marries 13-year-old Christian employee after forcefully converting her to Islam](#)", 21 June 2021.

¹³ Pakistan Christian Post, "[A Christian girl raped in Hyderabad Pakistan](#)", 11 July 2021.

¹⁴ OpIndia, "[Pakistan: Minor Christian girl abducted forcibly converted to Islam, married off to abductor. Here is what we know so far](#)", 13 August 2021.; Dawn, "[Christian family from Haripur alleges kidnapping, forced marriage of 'underage' daughter](#)", 12 August 2021.

themselves into the home armed with guns, beat the two girls, then kidnapped the elder and dragged her onto the street.¹⁵

In August 2021, radical Muslim man Muhammad Ali Nawaz entered the home of Hindu man Mangal Bheel, physically assaulted him, and abducted his 15-year-old daughter Chatro. It is assumed that Nawaz intends to forcibly convert her to Islam and marry her.¹⁶

In August 2021, two Christian cousins, 15-year-old Simran and Sheeza, were left home alone to care for one of the disabled family members while the rest of the family attended a funeral. When the family returned home, Simran and Sheeza were no longer at home and the disabled relative informed the family that the girls were kidnapped at gunpoint outside of the home while they were leaving to purchase some food.¹⁷

Also in August 2021, Christian father and rickshaw driver Gulzar Masih reported to the police that his daughter, 14-year-old Chashman Kanwal, had gone missing after he went to pick her up from school and was unable to find her. Days later, Chashman's kidnapper sent her family a video of her claiming that she had converted to Islam willingly and that she had changed her name to Aisha Bibi. The kidnappers also sent Chashman's family a letter signed by Muhammad Ijaz Qadri certifying Chashman's religious conversion; Muhammad Qadri is the district president of the Sunni Tehreek organization, which is known for supporting the death penalty for blasphemy.¹⁸

In September 2021 in Karachi, an 8-year-old Christian girl by the name of Liza Younas was kidnapped and raped by 20-year-old Muslim neighbor Muhammad Bota; after committing the sexual assault, Bota attempted to kill Liza by hitting her with a stone and leaving her unconscious on the ground outside before fleeing. Liza's family found her on the street in poor condition and took her for an examination at Sahiwal Hospital which confirmed she was raped. Authorities have arrested Bota and he is liable to punishment of between 10 and 25 years in prison.¹⁹

In October 2021, it was reported that 17-year-old Christian girl Misbah Imdad has gone into hiding with her family in Faisalabad after receiving threats of abduction and forced marriage from Muslim man Muhammad Saqib. Initially, upon Misbah's father's refusal to hand over his daughter for marriage against her will, Saqib falsely accused Misbah's brother Shahnawaz of stealing money and kidnapping his daughter; with neither a proper investigation nor evidence, the police arrested Shahnawaz, who currently remains in prison. Fearful of what other actions Saqib might take to carry out revenge, Misbah and her family have been living in hiding for over a month "in fields and makeshift shelters".²⁰

These heinous crimes are able to be perpetrated with relative impunity for multiple reasons. 96 percent of Pakistan's population is Muslim; simultaneously, religious minorities are viewed as apostates and are rejected because they do not subscribe to the majority theology Islam. Even moderate Muslims who question certain tenets of Islam or challenge the status quo have reason to fear that they will lose respect from the broader Muslim society. This is why many federal authorities – who should be penalizing acts of abduction, child marriage, and forced conversion –

¹⁵ International Christian Concern, "[Gunmen Break into Home, Beat Two Christian Girls and Kidnap One](#)", 24 August 2021.

¹⁶ Yudhvira Rana, "[Teenage Hindu girl raped and abducted in Pakistan](#)", *The Times of India*, 11 August 2021.

¹⁷ Pakistan Christian Post, "[Teenage Christian cousins kidnapped at gunpoint outside their house](#)", 21 August 2021.

¹⁸ Barnabas Aid, "[Pakistani Christian Girl, 14, Kidnapped and Forced to Marry Muslim Man](#)", 13 August 2021.

¹⁹ Agenzia Fides, "[ASIA/PAKISTAN – Raped Christian minor escapes torturer: the culprit arrested](#)", 21 September 2021.

²⁰ Shafique Khokhar, "[Faisalabad: Misbah, 17-year-old Christian girl hiding to escape Muslim \(VIDEO\)](#)", *AsiaNews*, 26 October 2021.

disregard evidence and rule in favor of the perpetrators. If they take the side of the victim, who is more often than not a faith minority, they face harassment, physical threats, and intimidation by radical Muslims. On the rare occasions when victims are permitted to testify in court against her captor, they usually falsely claim that they are at least 18 years of age and that they converted religion willingly; this is due to the fact that when they are produced in court and throughout the broader trial process, they are still in custody of their abductors and are fearful that they or their families may be physically harmed in an act of retaliation.

II. Best Practices and Recommendations for Pakistan

a. Prevention

- Create an appeal or reporting mechanism to flag judges, police officers, religious institutes, Muslim clerics, and official actors who discriminate against, violate the rights of, or fail to protect religious minorities in cases of abduction, forced conversion, and child marriage. In addition to offering victims of both criminal activity (abduction, forced conversion, forced marriage) a path to addressing miscarriages of justice, it also provides a disincentive to state actors who may otherwise refuse to register cases and investigate relevant crimes, ignore documentation proving minor status, or make judicial decisions in favor of the perpetrators despite evidence pointing to elements of coercion in the kidnapping, religious conversion, and marriage of the victim.
- It should be ensured that secular laws which set the minimum legal age for marriage to 16 or 18 years preside over Islamic laws that allow for marriage as soon as puberty or menarche is reached.
- Education must emphasize that “there is no justification for violence and abuse against women and girls, whenever and wherever it occurs”²¹; moreover, it should educate women and girls on the various paths to achieve prosecutorial justice as well as rehabilitation and therapy if they are or become victims of sexual violence.
- There must be a broader societal shift towards promoting interfaith harmony and tolerance as well as promoting bodily integrity of all, including women and the girl child. Pakistan’s society is largely patriarchal and tends to minimize women’s rights; the promotion of women’s rights and dignity is essential to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Courts must rescind decisions conforming with Islamic jurisprudence stating that a girl who has had her menarche is legally marriageable²², as it emboldens radical Muslim men to routinely conduct abductions and child marriages with impunity.

b. Protection

- Following the recovery of a girl from an abduction, forced conversion to Islam, and/or child marriage, the girl should be taken to a safe house to ensure that she is able to

²¹ Dr. Ewelina U. Ochab, “[The Disappearing Religious Minority Women And Girls In Pakistan](#)”, *Forbes*, 27 September 2020.

²² AsiaNews, “[Court rules that a girl who’s had her first period can marry, thus backing Huma Younus’s kidnapper. For girl’s lawyer, this is shameful](#)”, 5 February 2021.

provide a true, uncoerced testimony of events without fear of retaliation from her abductor.

c. Investigation

- A specially trained and appointed taskforce should conduct proper and objective investigations regarding the circumstances surrounding the girl's conversion and marriage. In particular, authorities must consider documentation provided by victims' families which more often than not prove the minor status of kidnapped girls; at the same time, authorities must examine the fraudulent documentation provided by perpetrators that falsely claim that the victim is of marriageable age. Authorities must investigate specifically any and all conditions of coercion or threat under which marriages and religious conversions are made.
- Allow for the presence of a minority representative or ombudsman to review the case.
- Train judges to interpret laws in accordance with international human rights norms and legislation.

d. Rehabilitation

- Psychological and psychiatric support, including post-trauma therapy and counseling as well as medication when necessary, must be readily and financially accessible to survivors of kidnapping and sexual exploitation.
- Survivors of kidnapping and sexual exploitation who have endured physical injuries should be provided with free or financially accessible intervention, including: emergency contraceptives; pregnancy testing; testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections; routine follow-up medical reviews; and physical therapy.